

ARTICLES

YOUNG ZHANG WENTIAN AND HIS “GOETHE’S FAUST”*

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The aim of this study is to show how the first extensive Chinese article on J.W. Goethe’s *Faust* was written and to point out in this way the typical features of modern Chinese literary criticism in the age of transition between the old and modern treatment of literary problems.

Written on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s birthday and of Zhang Wentian’s 100th *sui* [1]

In the history of Chinese literary criticism, the name of Johann Wolfgang Goethe was mentioned for the first time in 1878.¹ It was more than forty years before Chinese readers could be acquainted with the great German man of letters to a larger extent. In 1922 Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* was published in Chinese² and even before this time *Faust*, Part One, was also translated into this language in 1920, but due to some reasons, published only in 1928.³

In 1922, on the occasion of 90th anniversary of Goethe’s death, exactly on March 23, three short essays and one poem concerned with his life and work appeared in Xuedeng [6] Lamp of Learning, a column of the newspaper Shishi xinbao [7] The China Times. The three essays were written by three then prominent young men of letters: Zheng Zhenduo [8] (1898–1958), Hu Yuzhi [9]

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¹ QIAN ZHONGSHU [2]: *Hanyu diyishou Yingyushi “Renshengsong” ji youguan er san shi* [3] The First English Poem “Psalm of Life” And Two Or Three Things Connected With It. Guowai wenxue [4] Foreign Literature (Peking), 1, 1982, pp. 1–24. “Psalm of Life” is one of the best poems of H.W. Longfellow (1807–1872). One of those “things” analysed here, is concerned with Goethe and his *Faust*.

² *Guo Moruo zhuanji* [5] Guo Moruo’s Life and Work. Vol. 2. Chengdu, Sichuan renmin chubanshe 1984, p. 45.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 100 and GÁLIK, M.: *Reception and Survival of Goethe’s Faust in Guo Moruo’s Works and Translations (1919–1922)*. Asian and African Studies, 26, 1991, pp. 68–69.

(1898–1986) and Xie Liuyi [10] (1898–1945)⁴ and the author of the poem dedicated to Goethe was another woman poet Bing Xin [13] (1900–1999),⁵ who was only one month and some days younger than Zhang Wentian [15] (1900–1976).⁶

In her poem entitled *Xiangwang* [16] Desire, twenty-two year old Bing Xin begs the herald of world poetry, the believer in pantheism and in a pantheistic God, incorporating and expressing “ten thousand” creations, to go more slowly in front of her so that she can understand his serious message in relation to “truth” and “nature”. The “child” of his art seems to present for her a symbol of the “way leading towards freedom and a bright future”.⁷

Zhang Wentian’s attitude to Goethe and especially to his *Faust* seemed to be different.

1

The first who wrote a short Chinese introduction to Goethe’s *Faust* was an even younger, then sixteen year old middle school student from Nanking, who published a short essay *Gede yu Faust* [18] Goethe and *Faust* in the Shanghai journal *Xuesheng zazhi* [17] Students’ Magazine, a year earlier.⁸ His name was Lu Jiye [19] (1905–1951), later known as a traditional and modern Chinese poet and professor of literature. He pointed out three aspects important for his schoolfellows in the time after the May Fourth Movement of 1919 that, according to him, should be studied in relation to the poet and his work: the poet’s life, his place in the world of poetry and scholarship, and his impact on his own country. The young critic stressed especially the dynamic, creative aspects of Faust’s image and of Goethe’s personality, mostly unknown in China and in many countries of the Orient, before the strong impact of the Western civilization in the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. Just as was needed by the Chinese intellectuals of that time who “claimed that not only Western scientific technology, laws, and political institutions ought to be introduced, but also China’s philosophy, ethics, natural science, social theory and institutions should be thoroughly re-examined and modelled after those of the West. It was not half-hearted reform or partial renovation which was being advocated, but a vast and fervent attempt to dethrone the very fundamentals of the stagnant tradition and to replace it with a completely new culture.”⁹

⁴ YANG WUNENG [11]: *Gede yu Zhongguo* [12] Goethe and China. Peking, Sanlian shudian 1991, p. 110.

⁵ Loc. cit. and *Bingxin shiji* [14] Bing Hsin’s Poems. 3rd ed. Shanghai, Beixin shuju 1934, pp. 24–26. This poem has been partly translated in GÁLIK, M.: *Goethe in China (1932)*. Asian and African Studies, 14, 1978, p. 11.

⁶ Bing Xin was born on October 5, 1900 and Zhang Wentian on August 30, 1900.

⁷ Bing Xin’s Poems, p. 25.

⁸ Students’ Magazine, 8, 1921, 11, pp. 36–37.

⁹ CHOW TSE-TSUNG: *The May Fourth Movement. Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*. Stanford, Stanford University Press 1967, p. 14.

The second Chinese critic of *Faust*, Zhang Wentian, was some years older and more experienced. He was a good friend of the two Shen brothers, Shen Yanbing [20] (1896–1981), later better known as Mao Dun [21], a well-known literary critic, translator and writer, and his brother Shen Zemin [22] (1900–1933), who also started as a literary critic and translator, but ended as a representative member of the Chinese Communist Party. In the vicinity of these two, whether in Shanghai or in Wuzhen [23], Zhejiang Province, the native town of the Shen brothers, he had a good opportunity to discuss the questions of common interest or to come across the books, journals and different materials concerned with Western literature, philosophy and different branches of the social sciences.¹⁰

During his studies in Nanking after 1917 and in Japan in the second half of 1920 (in both places as a schoolfellow of Shen Zemin, Zhang Wentian began to devote himself to the social sciences. He was allegedly the first to write about Marxism even before Li Dazhao [28] (1888–1927),¹¹ then to the works of and translations from Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), political anarchism, altruism and non-resistance to evil, decadence and aestheticism of Oscar Wilde (1854–1900)¹² and reading of the *Bible*.¹³ After his return to China in January 1921, Zhang Wentian moved to Hangzhou where he lived and studied in the Chanist monastery Zhiguo chansi [34] under the Baochu [35] Pagoda.¹⁴ Maybe here in this time, or later, he began to read and study Goethe's *Faust*.

Certainly before travelling to Berkeley and studying at California University there,¹⁵ Zhang started and finished the long article entitled *Gede di Fushide* [36] Goethe's *Faust* which originally appeared in the magazine *Dongfang zazhi* [37] The Eastern Miscellany, XIX, 15, (Aug. 10), 17 (Sept. 10) and 18 (Sept. 25), 1922, and was later reprinted in the booklet *Dandi yu Gede* [38] Dante and Goethe in the series *Dongfang wenku* [39] Oriental Treasury in three reprints between 1923–1925.

¹⁰ Cf. CHENG ZHONGYUAN [24]: *Zhang Wentian yu xin wenxue yundong* [25] Zhang Wentian and Modern Chinese Literary Movement. Nanking, Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe 1987, pp. 20, 23–24 and ZHONG GUISONG [26]: *Renjian de Mao Dun. Mao Dun he ta de tongshidai de ren* [27] Among the Men. Mao Dun and the Personalities of His Age. Zhengzhou, Henan renmin chubanshe 1993, pp. 132–141.

¹¹ CHENG ZHONGYUAN: op. cit., pp. 16–18.

¹² Ibid., pp. 29–39.

¹³ Shen Yanbing exhorted him to read the *Bible* in his essay *Wudikangzhuyi yu "ai"* [29] Non-resistance and "Love", originally published in *Juewu* [30] Awakening, a supplement to *Minguo ribao* [31] Republican Daily, July 5, 1921, reprinted in *Mao Dun quanji* [32] The Complete Works of Mao Dun. Vol. 14. Peking, People's Publishing House 1987, pp. 216–220. Zhang Wentian followed his older friend's advice and on January 25, 1922 he bought a copy of *Xin jiu yue quanshu* [33] *Bible. Old and New Testaments*, in its Mandarin Union Version, deposited now in Mao Dun Museum, Peking.

¹⁴ CHENG ZHONGYUAN: op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

This was and remained up to this day an enigmatic piece of writing. Even recently some scholars highlighted its qualities. Professor Yang Wuneng, a well-known Chinese Germanist, was probably the first to point out that it was a solid piece with great value that introduced *Faust* to Chinese readers. According to Yang, Zhang Wentian “put this essay into the broad framework of the development of European culture and spirit of the time, into the concrete system of Goethe’s private life, his thought and personality. In order to understand the contents of this magnificent work, he quoted a wealth of material. Even from the contemporary point of view, one may say that it was not a superficial piece of criticism.”¹⁶

The essay would be really worthy of admiration, if it was really Zhang Wentian’s original work. It was a piece of writing very similar to those published mostly in Xiaoshuo yuebao [40] The Short Story Monthly, and quite common among the members of the Wenxue yanjiuhui [41] The Literary Association, and especially its most prominent spokesman Shen Yanbing and his friends. Western literary and critical works were the guidelines for the new essays in Chinese, which were more or less liberal and “unfaithful” *translationes cum interpretatione*. Sometimes the main source and reference works were indicated, but very often not. The value of such “exercises” in literary criticism was certainly doubtful and is often condemned as pure literary plagiarism, if judged by the ordinary Western standards of literary criticism, but in those times in China, in the early history of East-West literary relations, they could have a great value as the witnesses of the contemporary intellectual history.¹⁷

For many years, I have searched in vain for the *opus* which preceded one published under Zhang’s personal name: Wentian. I was lucky when I succeeded in finding it in the catalogue of the British Library.¹⁸ Zhang Wentian had this book, now completely neglected and unknown to researchers, in his hands, when writing this (for his age) really excellent article. The booklet was entitled *The Faust-Legend and Goethe’s “Faust”*, written by H.B. Cotterill, and published by George G. Harrap & Company, London 1912.¹⁹ A keen observer may see at the first glance that the second part of the title of Cotterill’s booklet and of Zhang’s article are synonymous. The first part of the booklet is different and

¹⁶ YANG WUNENG: op. cit., p. 111.

¹⁷ Cf. GÁLIK, M.: *Mao Dun and Modern Chinese Literary Criticism*. Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag 1969, pp. 15, 39, 151 and MC DOUGALL, B.S.: *The Introduction of Western Literary Theories into Modern China, 1919–1925*. Tokyo, The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies 1971, pp. 55–84.

¹⁸ The present writer expresses his deepest thanks to Dr. Bernhard Fuehrer for his sincere help in acquiring a microfilm copy of this valuable and rare book without which this study would have been impossible.

¹⁹ Zhang Wentian mentions Cotterill’s name once properly and once in its distorted form, as H.B. Cottereal, without any hint concerning using his book as the most important source for his study. See his *Goethe’s Faust*, Oriental Treasury, No. 65, Shanghai, Commercial Press 1924, pp. 40 and 43.

points to the general legend of Faust which might have interested Zhang Wentian at first, even more than Goethe's *Faust* itself. He began to study the natural sciences in Nanking, but later, as mentioned above, under the influence of the new intellectual awakening, he started to read widely in literature and the social sciences.²⁰

2

Probably before the summer holidays in 1922, and certainly after the 90th anniversary of Goethe's death, Zhang read the famous monologue by Faust in a "lofty-arched, narrow, Gothic chamber", sitting there in a "chair at his desk, restless",²¹ he could have some thoughts or feelings, similar to those of the old Magician:

I've studied now Philosophy
And Jurisprudence, Medicine, –
And even, alas! Theology, –
From end to end, with labour keen;
And here, poor fool! with all my lore
I stand, no wiser than before:
I'm Magister – yea, Doctor – hight,
And straight or cross-wise, wrong or right,
These ten years long, with many woes,
I've led my scholars by the nose, –
And see, that nothing can be known!²²

We do not know whether some Buddhist philosophical or theological *zhiguo* [42] the fruit of knowledge,²³ were also included there, but Goethe's *Faust* in Bayard Taylor's classical English translation and in Cotterill's explanation, meant a kind of "enlightenment" which *zhiguo* also implied, for young Zhang Wentian, who was frustrated with bookish knowledge and was just searching for an adequate means for socio-political action. Maybe, he even thought that, for the time being, he found it in this reading.

Zhang Wentian did not follow Cotterill's explanation from the beginning. He did not throw himself *in medias res*, but on the basis of some more general

²⁰ CHENG ZHONGYUAN: op. cit., pp. 13–47.

²¹ GOETHE, J.W.: *Faust. A Tragedy*. Trans. in *Original Meters* by Bayard Taylor. The First Part. London, Strahan & Co. 1871, p. 19.

²² Loc. cit. Zhang Wentian surely had in his hand Taylor's famous translation and used it in his article, for example, ZHANG WENTIAN: op. cit., pp. 91–93 and Taylor's translation of the *Faust*. The Second Part, pp. 506–507.

²³ SOOTHILL, W.E. and HODOUS, L. (eds.): *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*. London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd. (Taipei reprint 1975), p. 375.

source(s), unknown to us, he put Goethe's personality and work into the literary and historical framework against the background of ancient (Homer), late medieval (Dante) and early modern Western literature (Shakespeare).²⁴ From Zhang's literary preferences it ensues that he highlighted the literature of personal engagement, expressing the "inner demands", like his friends from the Chuangzaoshe [43] (Creation Society),²⁵ or the works written after intensive observation, individual experience, sentimental identification and inner agitation.²⁶

At the moment when Zhang Wentian started to speak about Goethe's *Faust* and its antecedents, he immediately reached for Cotterill's work. When introducing Faust as a "great Magician", he paraphrased Cotterill's opinions, or to put it better, "critical insights", but using more easily understandable words.

Here we shall show Zhang Wentian's indebtedness which he himself did not appropriately acknowledge. Here are some examples. The most important catchwords in the citations by both authors are underlined by me:

Cotterill: "At first we shall see our way more clearly if we consider what is really the nature of this **magic**, or black art, which played such an important part in the medieval imagination.

Perhaps we may say that by '**magic**' was denoted that art by which one was supposed to gain a **knowledge** of and a **power** over, the **prime elements of Nature and its cosmic potencies**, so as to be able to combine and use them independently of natural laws...

In almost every age and nation we find a **vital Power**, and **ordering Force**, recognized as present in the **natural world**, and the human mind seems ever prone to believe such **Power** to have affinity to human nature and to be, so to speak, open to a bargain. The **fetish priest**, the **rain doctor**, the **medicine-man**, the **Hindu-yogi**, the **Persian Mage**, the **medieval saint**, and the countless **miracle-workers** in every age, have believed themselves to be, whether by force of will, or by ecstatic contemplation, or by potent charms, in communion with the great **Spirit of Nature**, or with mighty **cosmic influences**..."²⁷

Zhang Wentian: "All those who study the psychology of the aborigines and their legends, know the things we call **myths, magic** and **animism**. The so-called '**magic**' is a method of using the **forces of Nature** and their **secrets** for the needs of human life. The **Chinese shaman**, the **Buddhist monk**, the **Taoist**

²⁴ ZHANG WENTIAN: op. cit., pp. 31–33.

²⁵ More about "inner demands" see, GÁLIK, M.: *The Genesis of Modern Chinese Literary Criticism (1917–1930)*. Bratislava-London, Veda-Curzon Press 1980, pp. 69, 77, 121–129 and its Chinese version Chen Shengsheng [44] et alii (trans.): *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue piping fasheng shi* [45]. Peking, Shehui kexue chubanshe 1997, pp. 62, 77 and 115–123.

²⁶ ZHANG WENTIAN: op. cit., pp. 32–33.

²⁷ Pp. 18–19.

priest, the Hindu yogi, the Persian Mage, the medieval saint, and the countless miracle-makers, all employed this methodology. Faust, about whom we shall speak now, was one of them.”²⁸

We see that apart from the simpler wording, Zhang Wentian’s text is Sinitized. He adapted Cotterill’s explanation to the Chinese situation where the knowledge of world mythology was still rather poor²⁹ and the “accommodation” of the text to Chinese conditions and needs was quite appropriate. We also see that Zhang Wentian stuck to the text and the wording and its meaning in his literary and critical discourse was only slightly changed.

The examples of this kind abound in Zhang Wentian’s treatise. Immediately in Zhang’s text, and in that of Cotterill a few pages later, we may read:

Cotterill: “In the early ages of the Church the final appeal seems to have been an appeal to **miracles**, and we find the apostles and their followers claiming the sole right of working **miracles** in the name of the one **true God** and anathematizing all other **wonder-workers** with **Satan**...”³⁰ Later, “during these ante-Reformation ages the Roman Church claimed...a monopoly in **orthodox magic**. She could send a soul to hell, or by rites and exorcism she could save the sinner from his compact with **Satan**, as one sees in such legends as those of **Merlin**, of **Tannhäuser**, of **Robert the Devil**, and of that **Theophilus** who was converted by the flowers sent him from Paradise by the Virgin-Martyr St. Dorothea.”³¹

Zhang Wentian: “After Christianity rose to power, there was a tendency to reject all heterodox teachings and except for their own way of acknowledging the **miracles**, all other were prohibited. Those who practiced them were recognized as apostates and put to death. In other words, it was only the Roman Church which had a monopoly in **magic**. She could send your soul to hell or to ascent the heaven. Using rites and prayers she could deliver the sinners from compacts with **Satan**. Such examples we may see in the legends as those of **Merlin, Tannhäuser, Robert the Devil**, and that of **Theophilus** who was converted by the flowers sent him from Paradise by the Saint Virgin.”³²

²⁸ P. 37.

²⁹ In 1922 China was only sparsely informed about world mythology. Shen Yanbing in his popular works written and published in the years 1924–1930 became its most important introducer. See GÁLIK, M.: *The Messenger of the Gods: Mao Dun and the Introduction of Foreign Myths into China*. Tamkang Review. 23, 1–4, 1992, pp. 639–669 and its Chinese version in Zhou Ning [46] (trans.): *Zhushen de shizhe: Mao Dun yu waiguo shenhua zai Zhongguo de jieshao (1924–1930)* [47] In: *Mao Dun yu Zhongwai wenhua. Mao Dun yanjiu guoji xueshu taolunhui lunwenji* [48] Mao Dun and Foreign Culture. Proceedings of the International Conference for the Study of Mao Dun. Nanking, Nanking University Press 1993, pp. 264–287.

³⁰ P. 22.

³¹ P. 27.

³² Pp. 37–38.

Here we may see the same, if not an even great measure of dependency of Zhang Wentian's text on that written by Cotterill.

Nobody can doubt about the dependency of the receiver on that of the sender.

On some places Zhang Wentian, word by word, quotes the text from Cotterill's booklet. For instance, the sentences from Cotterill's, pp. 36–37, we may find on pp. 41–42 in Zhang Wentian's essay. This time it is not even necessary to retranslate Zhang's rendering:

“He (i.e. Faust from legend, M.G.) now takes to ‘Zauberei’ – magic. Where four roads meet in the Spessart Wald, a forest near Wittenberg, he inscribes mystic circles and performs incantations for the purpose of summoning the devil. After all kinds of fearful apparitions and noises, by which Faust is almost terrified to death, a demon appears in the shape of a ‘grey monk.’ Faust invites him to visit him at his house in Wittenberg. The demon visits him there and tells him of all the horrors of hell. But Faust persists in his plan and makes a second rendezvous with the demon, who has now procured leave from his lord and master Lucifer to offer his service and attendance. The compact is made... The compact has to be signed with blood. Faust pierces his hand, and the blood flows out and forms the words ‘O homo fuge!’ – ‘O man, escape!’ – but Faust, though alarmed, is not deterred... He then reveals his name: Mephistopheles...”³³

All this is in Zhang Wentian's rendition, even the words in Latin.

3

Just like Cotterill, Zhang Wentian gives a synopsis both of Part One and Part Two of *Faust*. The first is more scholarly, the second simpler, since the Chinese readers at that time did not have possibility to read *Faust* in their mother tongue. Even here the dependence on Cotterill's text is quite obvious:

Cotterill: “Let us however dismiss criticism and turn to what Goethe as the poet has given us – perhaps the noblest picture that dramatic art can give: that of a man striving onward and upward in his own strength, confronting (as Goethe says in reference to Shakespeare's plays) the inexorable course of the universe with the might of human will. We might take as the Alpha and Omega of *Faust* these two lines from the poem:

Es irrt der Mensch so lang er strebt,
and

Nur rastlos betätigt sich der Mann,

the sense of which is that human nature must ever err as long as it strives, but that true manhood is incessant striving.

³³ Pp. 36–37.

It is a noble picture – perhaps the noblest conceivable.”³⁴

Zhang Wentian: “His (Faust’s, M.G.) strains were not concerned with the comfort of his body and the lust of his flesh. His aim was to achieve truth, and not with the help of abstract or scholarly reasoning, but through action and feelings. He went through sins and crimes in his strivings forward. He experienced sufferings and he opposed evil, and in this struggle achieved a better future and power.”³⁵

We may observe that Zhang Wentian did not pay the attention to Goethe’s reference concerning Shakespeare, since it was probably unknown to him, neither did he quote the two lines in German, a language he did not understand, but at the beginning of the analysis of Goethe’s text of *Faust*, he pointed to the aspect, which was most important for him and for his countrymen in Faust’s message: his uninterrupted, everyday strivings onwards in this life of ours on the earth. We may see that he changed Goethe’s *Faust* legacy a bit: he did not mention, or at least did not underline, the strivings upward, towards Heaven. This last strain was in harmony with the efforts of most Chinese intellectuals during and after the May Fourth Movement, and certainly with those connected with Pragmatism and Communism.³⁶ Lu Jiye was the first who pointed to this feature in his short essay, where he mentioned Faust’s change in St. John’s Gospel. He alluded to the difference between St. John’s: “In the beginning was the Word,” and “In the beginning was the Deed” in Goethe’s *Faust*.³⁷ The realm of action was the most important also in Zhang Wentian’s understanding of the Faustian message. Zhang followed both Lu Jiye and Goethe, although he more stuck to Cotterill’s text:

Cotterill: “‘In the beginning was the *Logos* – the Word.’ More than once comes from the poodle (Mephistopheles at his feet, M.G.) a growl of disapprobation. Faust threatens to turn him out and proceeds with his biblical criticism... ‘In the beginning was the *Logos*.’ How shall he translate *Logos*? It cannot mean merely a ‘word’... A word must have meaning, *thought* – and thought is nothing without *act*... So this ‘Word,’ this ‘*Logos*,’ must be translated as Act or Deed.”³⁸

Zhang Wentian: “He (Faust, M.G.) takes in hands the *Bible* and one metaphysical idea stirs his mind: ‘At the beginning was the *Logos*... He tries to trans-

³⁴ Pp. 62–63.

³⁵ P. 46.

³⁶ Cf. GRIEDER, J.B.: *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China. A Narrative History*. New York, London, The Free Press and Collier Macmillan Publishers 1981, 395 pp. and SCHWARTZ, V.: *The Chinese Enlightenment. Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press 1986, 393 pp.

³⁷ LU JIYE: op. cit., p. 37.

³⁸ Pp. 81–82.

late it into German. He thinks that it is not possible to translate it as a ‘word’. A ‘word’ must have meaning, “thought” – and thought is nothing without act. Then he translated it as: ‘In the beginning was the Act.’”³⁹

When translating the last sentence, Zhang Wentian used Bayard Taylor’s rendering. Zhang certainly owned the Chinese *Bible* translation he bought some months before writing the work under analysis here.⁴⁰ When speculating in this way, Faust has seen that the poodle metamorphosed into a monstrous form “huger than an elephant or hippotamus, with fiery eyes and enormous tusks in its gaping mouth”.⁴¹ Was it a symbol of the future accomplishment of this “Act” that changed the overall vision of the Western world with its good and bad, pleasant and terrifying sides.

This vision is a product of activism (*huodongzhuyi*) [49]. Zhang Wentian’s main aim in writing the essay to provoke this activism in the minds and bodies of his compatriots. Zhang Wentian wholeheartedly agreed with Faust’s idea from Part Two of the tragedy, which according to Cotterill was: “to devote the rest of his life to humanity, to the good of the human race.”⁴² In the country bordering the great Ocean, Faust “by means of canals and dykes, dug and built by the demonic powers,” tried “to reclaim from the sea a large region of fertile country and to found a kind of model republic, where peace and prosperity and every social and political blessing shall find a home”.⁴³ According to Zhang Wentian, who follows Cotterill’s analysis very closely, “Faust determined to devote the rest of his life to mankind, for the happiness of humanity. His project, of course, was not admired by the devil, but because of their compact, he could not do anything else only to serve him... win battles, reclaim from the sea a region of country and give it to Faust... where he could work for the people (*ti renmin gongzuo*) [50].”⁴⁴

“Work for the people” was in the time of writing Zhang Wentian’s essay, and still is a nice slogan, although quite often abused in China. But here he did not follow Cotterill’s analysis closely. The names of two old and poor people, called Philemon and Baucis, who according to the old Greek legend, offered hospitality to Zeus wandering among mortals, are withheld from the Chinese readers. They did not want to sell their small cottage in the sea of the property belonging to Faust.

Cotterill: “Faust’s happiness is in a moment changed into bitterness and anger. This cottage, this chapel, this little spot of land are as thorns in his side:

³⁹ P. 55.

⁴⁰ Cf. note No. 13.

⁴¹ COTTERILL: op. cit., p. 82.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 141–142.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 142.

⁴⁴ ZHANG WENTIAN: op. cit., p. 84.

they are the **Naboth's vineyard** which he covets and which alone interferes with his **territorial rights**. He has offered large sums of money, but the peasant will not give up his home."⁴⁵

Zhang Wentian: "Faust's happiness suddenly changed into bitterness and anger. This cottage, this chapel, this little piece of land pricked his heart like thorns. It has destroyed his **inner harmony** (*hexie*) [51]. He paid a great amount of money for that but they did not comply."⁴⁶

Here Naboth's vineyard is not mentioned and territorial rights are replaced by inner harmony. Naboth's vineyard was alluding to the crime from the *Bible*, *I. Kings*, 20, 1–19, where Ahab the king of Israel tried at first to persuade Naboth the Jezreelite, to sell him his vineyard, and when he did not succeed, he accused him of blasphemy against God, and with his helpers, also the elders and the nobles of the city, "stoned him with stones that he died" (*ibid.* 20, 13). Since many Chinese readers, and maybe even Zhang Wentian did not know this story, Naboth's vineyard was excluded from this "translation-adaptation". In reality, the territorial rights of Faust were only an illusion and inner harmony was properly used in Zhang Wentian's text. Certainly not justified was Zhang Wentian's exclusion of Cotterill's criticism from the Chinese text. In order to make the character of Goethe's Faust more attractive to his Chinese readers, Zhang Wentian highlighted Faust's anger against Mephistopheles who set to fire Philemon and Baucis' property. In the flames they both lost their lives, just like Naboth in the biblical story. But he "forgot" to inform his countrymen about Cotterill's reasoning:

"Here I do not find it easy to follow Faust's line of argument. Fair exchange is certainly said to be no robbery – but this theory of 'making everything good with money' is one which the average foreigner is apt to attribute especially to the average Britisher, and **it does not raise Faust in one's estimation**. I suppose he thinks he is doing the poor old couple a blessing in disguise by ejecting them out of their wretched hovel and presenting them with a sum of money of perhaps ten times its value."⁴⁷

If not directly from the juridical point of view, then certainly indirectly from the ethical one, Faust committed a *faux pas*, or even a crime. We may probably say that Zhang Wentian, being a well-meaning philanthropist, made this mistake because he too much believed in human progress. He made Mephistopheles guilty of the arson and murder, but he did not point out that the impulse to these misdeeds, if not intentionally, came in reality from Faust. History teaches us that real progress cannot be achieved through the violation of the laws and human rights of the individuals.

⁴⁵ P. 144.

⁴⁶ Pp. 84–85.

⁴⁷ COTTERILL: op. cit., pp. 145–146.

Work for the people, or even for the whole of mankind (with some exception as we have just seen), was the ideal of Faust. The way to it, as well to the release, or salvation, are the everlasting human strains. Where this is concerned, Zhang Wentian translates the song of angels ascending heaven and bearing Faust's soul:

The noble spirit is now free
 And saved from evil scheming.
 Whoever aspires unweariedly
 Is not beyond redeeming,
 And if he feels the grace of Love
 That from on high is given
 The blessed hosts that wait above
 Shall welcome him to heaven.⁴⁸

When writing about Faust's activism, Zhang Wentian did not follow only Cotterill's analysis of Faustian spirit. "Nature is eternal activity, just as human life itself. More clearly: this activity is an outlet of two kinds relatively mutual or contradictory forces: of Goodness and Evil, Beauty and Ugliness, of upwards and downwards, of extending and shrinking, of the positive (*yang*)[52] and negative (*yin*)[53] principles... It has its fixed aim: that is progress, i.e. tendency towards Goodness, towards Perfection."⁴⁹

Here we may find not only traditional Chinese philosophy of the Yin-Yang School,⁵⁰ but also an echo of Henri Bergson's *élan vital*, whom Zhang Wentian also translated and very probably studied some months before his work on Goethe's *Faust*.⁵¹ Not only that! If we read the last part of Zhang Wentian's treatise, we may find that his studies in the Buddhist Chanist monastery left some imprints in his thought, too. "Human life is an interchange of desires and of sat-

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 153 and ZHANG WENTIAN: op. cit., pp. 90–91. Cotterill's translation is taken from that by B. Taylor, *The Second Part*, p. 384.

⁴⁹ ZHANG WENTIAN: op. cit., p. 94.

⁵⁰ RONAN, C.A.: *The Shorter Science and Civilization in China. An Abridgement of Joseph Needham's Original Text*. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1978, pp. 142–164.

⁵¹ From Cheng Zhongyuan's book we know that already in December 1921 Zhang Wentian translated Bergson's *Le Rire; Essay sur la signification du comique*, which for the time being, together with another influential work of literary criticism, Leo Tolstoy's book *What is Art?*, published in Chinese in the same year, proved to be congenial to his tastes and needs. In Bergson he probably read that life is a "continuous process indefinitely pursued, an indivisible process, on which each visible organism rides during the short interval of time given it to live." Or: "So art, whether it be painting or sculpture, poetry or music, has no other object than to brush aside the utilitarian symbols, the conventional and socially accepted generalities, in short, everything that veils reality from us, in order to bring us face to face with reality itself...it is only through

isfaction. If one of these desires is satisfied, the second desire is born. If the second desire is satisfied, then the third is born... There is no end to this series. This is to say: the life is an infinite string of unfulfilled days.”⁵² Zhang Wentian, of course, did not have in mind the desires in Buddhist sense, but the different aspects of Faustian strains. Therefore Faust, in his eternal onward tendency, is an ideal of modern mankind.

According to Zhang Wentian, Faust was a model worth following for the Chinese of those days after the Fourth Movement of 1919. He strove for self-development (*ziwofazhan*) [56], and happiness for other people (*ti bieren mou xingfu*) [57], fought for their freedom (*ti bieren zheng ziyou*) [58]. He stuck firmly to human life and was for its full development.⁵³

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Shortly after finishing his work on Goethe’s *Faust*, Zhang Wentian left on August 13, 1922, for Berkeley, California,⁵⁴ and for some psychic troubles and depressions, his enthusiasm for Faustian strains disappeared as the snow under the rays of the spring sun. He pondered suicide as the only possible means of solving his inner tensions and life suffering. The first months in California were, for him, a time of unbearable hopelessness and decadent feelings. In his letter to Yu Dafu he expressed his hope to meet this “young man of sorrows” in order to be his “companion in the Saharan wilderness”. He cursed the life, he had admired so much before, belittled the masses (*qunzhong*) [59], he highlighted later, and compared the Californian red leaves of November 1922 to the symbols of no escape.⁵⁵

At the beginning of 1924 Zhang Wentian returned to China and changed his attitude to life and to activity.⁵⁶ He participated in the activities of the young Communists, mainly of Shen Zemin and Xiao Chunü [60] (1896–1927), one of the first propagandists of the *littérature engagée* in China of that time, and during the May 30th Movement of 1925 he entered the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party.⁵⁷

ideality that we may resume contact with reality.” (Quoted according to HALL, Jr. V: *A Short History of Literary Criticism*, New York, New York University Press 1963, pp. 147–149.) Zhang Wentian’s translation of Bergson’s work appeared in 1923 in Commercial Press, Shanghai. Bergson influenced to a great extent the literary theory of Yu Dafu [54] (1896–1945), Zhang’s good friend from the Creation Society. Cf. YU DAFU’s booklet entitled *Wenxue gaishuo* [55] *Outline of Literary Theory*, Shanghai, Commercial Press 1927, and literary and critical analysis by M. GÁLIK in his *Genesis*, pp. 119–121 and 123 and in its Chinese version, pp. 113–115 and 117.

⁵² ZHANG WENTIAN: op. cit., pp. 95–96.

⁵³ Cf. ZHANG WENTIAN: *ibid.*, p. 96 and CHENG ZHONGYUAN: op. cit., pp. 134–136.

⁵⁴ CHENG ZHONGYUAN: op. cit., p. 43.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 47–48.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 64–66.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 312–342.

Zhang Wentian came back to Faustian strains as a part of his *Weltanschauung*, although not to Goethe himself. Only once, and secretly, he used the pseudonym Gete [61] which may be regarded as homophone for Goethe, when criticizing the so-called *zuoqingguammennzhyuyi* [62] leftist closed-doorism of some critics who later became members of the *Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng* [63] Left League of Chinese Writers (1930–1936).

This, of course, is not a prolongation of Zhang Wentian's story from the year 1922. His work on Goethe still remains as a meritorious document in the history of Goethe's reception in China.

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