

»I am a Sinologist and an Expert...«— The Translator Joseph Kalmer as a Propagator of New Literature

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1 *Biographical Sketch of a Literary Agent*

It is no doubt significant that Joseph Kalmer 卡爾瑪 (1898–1959) was born in Galicia, the utmost north-eastern province of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire where German, Polish, Romanian and Ukrainian were spoken, and where roughly one third of the population was Jewish, speaking Yiddish among themselves. He was born into a Jewish family originally named »Kalmus«, and attended college in Czernowitz (Chernivici in present-day Ukraine), then the capital of Bukowina. His family probably fled from the Russian occupation, and thus he graduated at the Viennese »k.u.k. Sophiengymnasium« in 1915. His earliest literary production as a youth at the age of 13 is said to be written in French.¹ Also, his first translation was reportedly from French, the »Conte de Pâques« by Prosper Mérimée (1803–1870), prepared in 1911.²

Upon leaving the Austrian-Hungarian army as an officer who had served both on the Eastern and Western fronts, he took up the study of law at Vienna University. During the years 1918–20 he most likely took a greater interest in the courses of Chinese taught by Arthur von Rosthorn (1862–1945) than in anything else.³ He did not graduate in either field, but soon devoted his energy to

1 Erica Kalmer, »Lebenslauf«, Biography of Joseph Kalmer prepared for Konstantin Kaiser, *Österreichisches Literaturarchiv* (Nachlass Joseph Kalmer, 4.2.2.).

2 Joseph Kalmer, Letter to Anny Fasold, Dec 23rd, 1958, *ibid.* (2.2.).

3 No documentary evidence for his studies of Chinese has been identified so far. Cf. Tanja Gausterer, »Der Literaturvermittler Joseph Kalmer. Versuch einer Annäherung« (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Vienna, 2004), 10–11; and Bernhard Führer, *Vergessen und verloren. Die*

journalism, both following his own expressionist literary career (see his poetry collection *Flug durch die Landschaft* 'Flying across the Landscape', 1927) and became heavily involved in translation and mediation (*Europäische Lyrik der Gegenwart 1900–1925* 'Contemporary European Poetry', 1927). Without leaving Vienna, he was especially appointed literary editor of the prestigious *Prager Presse* (1921–39) newspaper for translations from Slavic literatures. Thus, when forced into exile after the German invasion in 1938, he reached exile in Britain only a few days before it was too late in August 1939. He was only liberated from Nazi secret police custody thanks to a Chinese visa provided by his friend »Dr. Feng Shan-Ho« 何鳳山 (1904–1997), then working at the embassy in Vienna. Kalmer was best equipped, both socially and literarily, for establishing a literary agency, run successfully throughout and after the war with the great help of his wife Erica (1913–1987), born Ehrenfest and of Moravian origin, and commuted between Vienna and London until his death in 1959.

Except for the three noted writers discussed below, Kalmer at least translated from the following Chinese authors: Du Yunxie 杜運燮 (1918–2002), Feng Zhi 馮至 (1905–1993), Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), Lao She 老舍 (1899–1966), Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902–1988), and Yu Dafu 郁達夫 (1896–1945). Among a list of his translations from more than 150 authors, there feature many Asian and African (Indian, Vietnamese, Japanese, Egyptian, Moroccan) writers along with a great number of Russian, Czech, Spanish and French writers. This is, for the time being, just a minimum record because many of his translations are published anonymously, moreover to a great extent in newspapers and journals that are rare and difficult to access even in German-speaking countries.

Beyond this impressive list, Kalmer's agency was the representative (i.e. also the holder of translation rights) for a number of Chinese writers, namely for Ai Qing 艾青 (1910–1995), Ai Wu 艾蕪 (1904–1992), Ba Jin 巴金 (1904–2005), Bai Pingjie 白平階 (1915–1995), Bian Zhilin 卞之琳 (1910–2000), Cao Ming 草明 (1913–2002), Ding Ling 丁玲 (1904–1986), Li Guangtian 李廣田 (1906–1968), [Lin] Liuqi 林柳杞 (b1920), Liu Zhilian 劉植蓮 (1911–?1950), Luo Binji 駱賓基 (1917–1994), Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893–1976), Mo Ye 莫耶 (1918–1986), Peng Jiahuang 彭家煌 (1898–1933), Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899–1946), Xiao Hong 蕭紅 (1911–1942), Xiao Qian 蕭乾 (1910–1999), Xu Jin 徐進 (1923–2010), Yao Xueyin 姚雪垠 (1910–1999), Ye Junjian 葉君健 (1914–1999),⁴ Yu Heiding 于黑丁 (1914–2001),

Geschichte der österreichischen Chinastudien (Bochum: Projekt-Verlag, 2001. edition cathay; 42), 235–236.

4 It may be considered certain (to give just an example) that Joseph Kalmer mediated the publication of the story »The Dream«, in *New Writing and Daylight* (1945), signed by »Chun-chan

and Zhang Tianyi 張天翼 (1906–1985).⁵ Several non-Chinese authors represented by Kalmer were also translators from Chinese, such as Florian Egger (i.e. Franz Florian Kalbeck, 1920–1996), which means that Kalmer took care of their writings as well as their translations.

2 *The First History of Modern Literature in German*

Among the authors for whom Kalmer acted as a representative is the later co-translator of James Joyce's *Ulysses*,⁶ Xiao Qian. The two are most likely to have first met when Xiao Qian was working as a lecturer for Chinese at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London. This is where he became the successor to the later famed linguist and tibetologist »Dr. D. C. Yü« (Yu Daoquan 于道泉, 1901–1992) who was in turn a close collaborator to Kalmer, most likely over many years far into the 1950s. The same goes for a certain George Begley, who cannot be identified yet, but who possibly originated from a family who lived in China in the first decades of the 20th century.⁷ With both of them, who were his human resources in the expertise of Chinese, Kalmer entertained a precarious collaboration in which they provided rough English translations put into elegant German by Kalmer in a way that will be examined in detail below. At least the latter collaborator seems not have minded that the result was similarly labelled the »sole authorized translation from Chinese by Joseph Kalmer«. Upon Kalmer's death in 1959, George Begley wrote to his widow: »I had a lot of things I did with him and I enjoyed it all—even laboriously translating Chinese—which I should never have had the patience to do without

Yeh«; see Ella Whitehaed, *John Lehmann's »New Writing«* (New York: Johnson, 1990). Possibly, Ye Jianjun even wrote the story in English, which is not far-fetched, as he was sent to Britain as a propagandist for Chinese interests and was appointed fellow of King's College at Cambridge University, 1944–49. See also *Zhongguo xiandai wenzue zuozhe biminglu* 中國現代文學作者筆名錄, ed. by Xu Naixiang 徐乃翔 & al. (Changsha: Hu'nan wenyi chubanshe, 1988), 95b.

5 These authors neatly range among more than 500 others, otherwise mainly German (in exile), Russian, Spanish, and French; writers translated by Kalmer are not listed again. Cf. Gausterer, »Der Literaturvermittler...«, 106–112.

6 He actually prepared the translation together with his wife Wen Jieruo 文潔若 (b1926), *Yulixisi* 尤利西斯, 2 vols. (Nanjing: Yilin chubanshe, 1994).

7 Cf. Peter Sturberg, *No Foreign Bones in China. Memoirs of Imperialism and its Ending* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2002), 154 *passim*.

him.«⁸ How exactly this collaboration was handled still remains to be examined. In any case, his aide George Begley, who remained anonymous, once even asked Kalmer to translate himself some Chinese characters he had appended to an English version of Xiao Qian's *Meng zhi gu* 夢之谷 (1938), which remained unpublished as many others.⁹

Probably the most outstanding contribution by Joseph Kalmer resulted in the very first book-length presentation of New Literature in the German language. When Xiao Qian arrived in Britain as the European correspondent of the *Dagongbao* 大公報 in 1939, he experienced not only outright racist discrimination, but also how sympathies for China after Pearl Harbour in 1941 rushed towards a climax.¹⁰ As a consequence, he was repeatedly commissioned to write and give lectures throughout Britain about things Chinese, which resulted in at least four books written in or translated into English, among them *Etching a Tormented Age. A Glimpse of Contemporary Chinese Literature* (1942), which formed a clear and also necessary counterweight to Hu Shi's English publication of a lecture series *The Chinese Renaissance* (1933).

In this booklet, based on a series of lectures presented to the International Pen Club¹¹ and published in Switzerland in a German version by Kalmer in 1947, the expressive journalistic style, nonetheless enriched by a great number of extensive quotations, was even increased by the translator; the New Culture Movement appeared to be a break as radical as the May Fourth intellectuals liked to see it and was dubbed the »first Chinese Renaissance in more than 5000 years.«¹² Writers of the younger generation, i.e. of the same as Xiao Qian himself, or those emerging only in the late 1920s clearly dominate, such as Ai Wu, Bai

8 Letter to Erica Kalmer, July 20, 1959, Nachlass Joseph Kalmer (2.4.1).

9 Translation title »Dream Valley«; cf. Gausterer, »Der Literaturvermittler Joseph Kalmer«, 52.

10 See his *Wei dai ditu de lüren* 未帶地圖的旅人 (1988), tr. by Jeffrey C. Kinkley as *Traveller without a Map* (1990), in its version »Shenhua huiyilu« 生活回憶錄 [Memoirs of a Life], in *Xiao Qian quanji* [Complete Works], 7 vols., ed. by Wen Jieruo 文潔若 & al. (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 2005), 5: 87–208; on the twisted course of the self-representations, see Kinkley, »Xiao Qian: Autobiography as Therapy«, in *China in seinen biographischen Dimensionen. Gedenkschrift für Helmut Martin*, ed. by Christina Neder & al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 157–166. Cf. also Zhao Yiheng 趙毅衡, who gives a vivid account in his *Du'an de yougan* 對岸的誘惑 [Guiding Thoughts from the Other Shore] (Beijing: Zhishi chubanshe, 2003).

11 See Xiao Qian, »Wo de chuban shengya« 我的出版生涯 [My Publishing Life; 1996], in *Xiao Qian quanji*, 5: 744–745, where Kalmer's Swiss version in German is also mentioned.

12 Hsiao Ch'ien [Xiao Qian], *Die chinesische Literatur der Gegenwart. Ein Überblick* (Herrliberg-Zürich: Bühl, 1947. Bühl-Verlags-Blätter; 20), 5.

Wei 白薇 (1894–1987), Bing Xin 冰心 (1900–1999), Cao Ming, Ding Ling, Duanmu Hongliang 端木蕻良 (1912–1996), Ling Shuhua 凌叔華 (1900–1990), Luo Shu 羅淑 (1903–1938), Sha Ting 沙汀 (1904–1992), Xiao Hong, Xiao Jun 蕭軍 (1907–1988), Zhou Wen 周文 (1907–1952), and many others. Yu Dafu is condemned, and—not surprisingly, in 1942—the Zhou brothers Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967) and Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936) are presented as absolute antagonists, while the name of Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879–1942) is already tabooed (according to the official Party line that had expelled him in 1929 as a leftist element), even though he is quoted *verbatim*.¹³ The author comes to the conclusion:

The war was beneficial for Chinese literature in general and in particular for narrative prose. [...] Many writers have been brought onto the right track by the war. [...] Above all, they came into close touch with ordinary people for the first time, with people who lived unaffected by European influence and far away from the large sea-ports. [...] Thus, we may expect much from post-war writers.¹⁴

In Xiao Qian's brief introduction, organized according to genres, this is exemplified in the essayist work by He Qifang 何其芳 (1912–1977), who is said to have moved from 'surrealist' writing to hatred for the countryside and further hope in Chinese farmers. What also stands out is the broad knowledge of foreign models as elaborated in Li Jinfa's 李金髮 (1900–1976) poetry and not least the fact that translation literature is discussed in a separate chapter—which is rare in literary histories, and even more so in such short overviews—including the difficulties presented by the lack of foreign language skills and the various translation fashions that had gone through China since Lin Shu 林紓 (1852–1924). Finally, there is an aesthetically critical attitude throughout.

When this booklet of just 63 pages, translated by Joseph Kalmer from Xiao Qian's English, was published in Switzerland in 1947, it was the first coherent presentation of New Literature in the German language. But why Switzerland? This country had been the only German-speaking area not under Nazi control and therefore became not only a physical exile for many German intellectuals but also the sole place of refuge for books in German in Europe.

13 Cf. Xiao Qian, *Die chinesische Literatur der Gegenwart*, 5–6. The quote is from Chen Duxiu, »Wenxue geming lun« 文學革命論 [On Literary Revolution] (1917).

14 Xiao Qian, *Die chinesische Literatur der Gegenwart*, 24. Due to the difficulties in obtaining a copy of the rare English (original) version, this passage is retranslated from German.

3 *Translations from Lu Xun*

It was after the war that Joseph Kalmer with his agency entered into business relationships with the small Bühl publishing house in Herrliberg near Zurich, not unlikely upon the mediation of Xiao Qian, who travelled to Switzerland after having attended the Nuremberg trials in 1945/46.¹⁵ In any case, no less than three books translated by Kalmer were published there: not only the historical sketch discussed above, but also a hard-cover volume with translations of Xiao Qian stories¹⁶ and a small booklet with a few stories by Lu Xun—again the first time that Lu Xun texts were published in book form in German. It is conceivable that Kalmer had already prepared much more than was actually included in the volume, given that a voluminous book with Lu Xun translations was published a few years later. The publishing house in Switzerland, for which activities are testified between 1940 and 1948, probably fell prone to the beginning Cold War split and the recovery from the ideological and material devastations of the war in Austria and Germany. This is probably why the big volume of more than 500 pp. with Kalmer's Lu Xun translations appeared in a publishing house strongly involved in the new political frontlines, the Progress-Verlag run by the famous anti-rearmament activist Johann Fladung (also Hans Fladung, 1898–1982), a member of the GDR-controlled DKP (Deutsche Kommunistische Partei, 'German Communist Party') and therefore also in close proximity to the great propagandist (translation) effort pervading the whole Soviet block in view of 1956, the 20th anniversary of Lu Xun's death.

Be it as it may, in the following, the Kalmer translation of the Author's Preface to *Naban* 呐喊 (1922) shall be analyzed in detail in order to highlight some of the translations techniques employed by Kalmer and also their flaws:¹⁷

15 See his reportages collected in *Nan-De de muqiu* 南德的暮秋 [Dusk Over Southern Germany] (Shanghai: Wenhua shenghuo chubanshe, 1946).

16 Xiao Qian, *Die Seidenraupen*, tr. by Joseph Kalmer (Herrliberg-Zürich: Bühl, 1947), including an almost complete selection from the two collections *Lixia ji* 篱下集 and *Lizi* 栗子 (both 1936) on some 200 pp.

17 Numerals for the Chinese text refer to *Lu Xun quanji* 鲁迅全集, 18 vols. (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2005); those for the German text, followed by a literal translation into English, if considered necessary, to Lu Xun, *Die Reise ist lang. Erzählungen von Lu Hsün* (1955). Auxiliary translations of key-passages from the German translations are given throughout preceded by the capital letter »E«.

- I: 437 我要到N進K學堂去了
 9 Ich wollte [...] die Kiangnan-Marineakademie in Nanking beziehen
 I: 440 S會館
 12 Studentenheim in S.

In these two passages, the only ones with Latin letters in the Preface, the first indication is decoded correctly, while the second with the *buiguan* is misread as 'students' dormitory'. This is surprising because to my knowledge there is no annotated edition of Lu Xun's works in which not one or both of the shorthands are worded out. This can also be attributed to Kalmer's reading of the Preface as a statement of facts rather than as fiction, also manifest in his decoding of his friend Jin Xinyi 金心異 visiting the Preface writer as »Tsch'ien Hsuan-tung« (錢玄同, C I: 441, G 13), which in turn is a clear indication that annotations were at hand.

- I: 438 那時是用了電影，來顯示微生物的形狀的〔…〕，教師編映些風景或時事的畫片給學生看。
 10 damals wurden Filme verwendet, um die Mikroben zu zeigen [...] führte der Dozent [...] Kulturfilme oder die Wochenschau vor
 E 'movies, films, [electric] projections'; 'culture movies'; '[weekly] news reels'

This is one of the most striking examples of an anachronistic translation that is not only pervasive in various other Lu Xun translations, but was also taken as a core argument in fairly recent studies.¹⁸ As the first movie theatre in Tôkyô was only opened in 1903, and the first Japanese studio in 1908, it may be safely ruled out that Sendai Medical College possessed a film projector before March 1906 when Lu Xun left the school. No doubt, the modern compound *dianying* denotes 'film', yet also denotes the technique of projection and therefore was used for 'slides' as well. The 'culture movies' are a mere invention by the translator, as are the 'news reels', evidently added to emphasize the topic of 'current events'. Thus even the gap of few decades seems to present difficulties not easily bridged.

- I: 439 如置身毫無邊際的荒原，無可措手的了，這是怎樣的悲哀呵，我於是以致我所感到者為寂寞。

18 See e.g. Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions. Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). This is a typical case of 'achronological' translation. Cf. Rainer Schwarz, »Der Traum ist aus im Sonnenhaus. Martin Woeslers Übersetzung der Kapitel 81 bis 120 des *Honglouloumeng* 紅樓夢« [Review of Tsau Hsüä-tjin & al., *Der Traum der Roten Kammer oder Die Geschichte vom Stein*, ed. by Martin Woesler (2nd ed., 2010)], *Monumenta Serica* 58 (2010), 357-394.

12 zu einer wirklichen Tragödie wurde die Sache für ihn, wenn [...], als wäre er ein Rufer in einer grenzenlosen Wüste, der nirgends mit Hand anlegen durfte. Und da begann ich, mich einsam zu fühlen.

E 'somebody crying'; 'desert'

The Biblical origin of Lu Xun's imagery can be considered established, given his extensive reference to the prophet Isaiah in his long essays »Wenhua pianzhi lun« 文化偏至論 (On Cultural Biases) and »Moluo shi li shuo« 摩羅詩力說 (On the Power of Mara Poetry) in 1907, where »a voice cries: "Clear a road through the wilderness [...], prepare a highway across the desert"« (40.3). This is taken up again in the New Testament (Mark 1.2-3 *passim*). As the German biblical translation equivalent for 'wilderness' is »Wüste« ('desert'), Kalmer rightly identified the sources and elaborated the reference beyond Lu Xun's text in his translation.

I: 439 名目是取“新的生活”的意思，因為我們那時大抵帶些復古的傾向，所以只謂只謂之《新生》。

II Zeitschrift, die schon im Titel anzeigen sollte, dass es sich um eine Neuschöpfung handele. Und da wir zu jener Zeit noch ziemlich an den Klassikern hingen, nannten wir sie: Neues Leben.

E 'indicate a new creation'; 'still much devoted to the classics'; 'New Life'

Changes in language register are among the most difficult translation problems to tackle and even more so if they are ironically referred to, as is evidently the case here with Lu Xun.¹⁹ In fact, the term *xinsheng* had become widespread after May Fourth, as were a great number of other compounds with 'new', while the peak of its usage can be seen during the 1930s' GMD New Life Movement and its revival after 1945. Kalmer tries to circumvent the problem with the periphrase of a 'new creation'. With Lu Xun and his mates being no doubt close to the *fugu* 復古 movement around Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1868-1936), it is slightly misleading to say they were 'devoted to the classics'. In this context, an educated European reader would naturally have thought of Dante's *Vita nova*.

I: 439 着就是我們的並未產生的《新生》的結局。

II Das »Neue Leben« endete mit einem Abortus. (11)

19 For an inspiring discussion of the issue, taking the transfer to Slovak as an example and proposing techniques of producing equivalence, see Jana Benická, »Qian Zhongshu a jeho roman *Weibeng*—problémy zmien jazykového registra pri prekladaní« [Qian Zhongshu and His Novel *Weibeng*—Problems of Shift in Language Register in Translation], *Studia Orientalia Slovaca* 9,1 (2010), 83-93.

To render ‘never born’ or ‘not yet born’ with the fairly rude ‘abortion’ might appear excessive, yet it takes into consideration the word-play of *chansheng* and *xinsheng*.

I: 439 無端的悲哀
I2 seltsame Traurigkeit

The ‘sadness’ that comes ‘with no reason’ here is put into a much lower key by denoting it as ‘strange’ and not as ‘unmotivated’ or ‘with no obvious reason’.

I: 439-440 就是我訣不是一個振臂一呼應者雲集的英雄。
I2 dass ich ganz bestimmt nicht der heldische Typus war, auf dessen Ruf sich die Massen versammeln.
E ‘heroic type, kind of hero’

Similarly, and without obvious motivation, the ‘hero’ is not standing alone, but also put into a lower key.

I: 440 深入與國民中
I2 indem ich mich dem Geist der Zeit anpasste
E ‘to adapt to the *zeitgeist*’

This further instance of lowering the key in Kalmer’s translation is slightly more complex than the preceding examples. ‘To sink deep into something’ is definitely more than ‘adapting’, and moreover emphasizes the passive attitude of the subject. ‘To sink deep among citizens’ adds anonymity, yet the ‘citizens’ also have an ironic note because they refer to the populace of the new Republic, who prove anything else other than the *xinmin* 新民 Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) had once imagined, as Lu Xun has repeatedly elaborated. Therefore, *zeitgeist* was represented by the narrator’s visitor Jin Xinyi rather than by the ‘citizens’. Therefore, the rendering is somehow misleading: beyond the frequent references to ‘loneliness’, what the writer expresses is that he had become invisible.

I: 440 遇不到甚麼問題和主義
I2 waren weder mit politischen Problemen, noch auch mit Streitfragen verbunden
E ‘political problems’; ‘controversial issues’

In this passage, the reference to Hu Shi’s (1891-1962) article elaborating on the two key terms in 1919 is obvious.²⁰ From this perspective, the rendering by ‘political problems’ may be as justified as are the ‘controversial issues’. Anyway, the distance of the Preface writer from the *zeitgeist*, as sketched above, is emphasized, though by way of a free transposition that has the advantage of not needing any further explanation in notes.

20 Hu Shi 胡適, »Duo yanjiu xie wenti, shao tan xie zhuyi« 多研究些問題·少談些主義, *Meizhou pinglun* 每週評論 no 31 (July 20, 1919).

- I: 440 因為怕狗，似乎心房還在怦怦的跳動。(I: 440)
 13 er sah so aus, als schlug sein Herz noch immer heftig, wiewohl er den Bogen um die Wachthunde schon gemacht hatte (note of the translator: »To circumvent the watch-dogs is an allegoric Chinese idiom denoting mature age.« G 525)

It is impossible to trace the origin of the adventurous explanation given by Kalmer (in the sole explanatory note provided for in the Preface) as such a usage for the lexical item could not be identified in any reference. Here Kalmer must have been misled by his Chinese language advisor—or he simply provided the external information that Qian Xuantong (born in 1889, i.e. also two years senior to Hu Shi) was indeed slightly older than most *Xin qingnian* 新青年 writers, and in fact close in age to Lu Xun. Otherwise, the note is a typical example of an exoticist statement about the Chinese language.

- I: 441 “假如一間鐵屋子，是絕無窗戶而萬難破毀的，〔…〕。”
 13 »Stelle dir ein fensterloses, vollkommen unzerstörbares Haus vor, [...].«
 I: 441 “然而幾個人既然起來，你不能說決沒有毀壞這鐵屋的希望。”
 13 »Wenn einige erwachen, dann kannst du nicht sagen, es bestehe keine Hoffnung, das eiserne Haus zu zerstören.«
 E ‘undestroyable house’; ‘iron house’

This famous key passage, in just five lines in Chinese, should have deserved some more translational care. The first lapse occurs in omitting the ‘iron’ when the term is introduced, so that the closing ‘iron house’ seems a spontaneously formed metaphor. Moreover, the connotation of ‘seclusion’, emphasized by the nominal suffix *-zi* 子 in the opening, could have been more conveniently rendered by choosing a ‘chamber’ (»Kammer«).

- I: 441 從此以後，編一發而不可收，每寫些小說模樣的文章，以敷衍朋友們的囑托，積久就有了十餘篇。
 13-14 Seither konnte ich nicht aufhören zu schreiben und pflegte auf Verlangen von Freunden von Zeit zu Zeit irgendwelche Erzählungen zu schreiben, bis ich mehr als ein Dutzend davon beisammen hatte.
 E ‘could not help writing on and on’; ‘something like stories’; ‘over one dozen’

Here we find not less than three very different prominent issues of translation that are at play. The first expression can be read as ‘what I wrote was always published’ or ‘what I wrote was immediately published’, and ‘but I could not collect it’ or ‘it was not worth being collected’—the latter in the light of the emphatic mode of modesty connected to the story-writing ‘pieces in the mode of stories’, or finally ‘without coming to an end’ (‘unable to come to an end’). It is evidently this last version that was taken as a basis, leaving out the first part

before *er* 而. For the ‘stories’, the German translation is certainly felicitous. Finally, for the handling of numerals denoting approximate figures, omnipresent also in age indications and the like, Kalmer has found a perfectly idiomatic solution in German.

In conclusion, the Kalmer translation of Lu Xun’s *Nahan* Preface may be considered fairly successful and accurate. Though many solutions found for the German rendering may appear idiosyncratic at first glance, in most cases they prove to be well considered, and cross errors are rare. Although the translations were prepared more than half a century ago, they still read as fresh and versatile, though sometimes as an all-to-clear testament of the experienced editor’s and journalist’s hand. This is why they have been reprinted again and again, and most subsequent translation more or less heavily draw on his work—in both cases, of course, without any acknowledgement of Joseph Kalmer.

4 *Translations from Mao Dun*

Unlike in the case of Lu Xun, Kalmer’s translations from Mao Dun are not in a pioneering position as a tiny booklet was published briefly after the war.²¹ When in 1953 a volume of Mao Dun’s stories in Joseph Kalmer’s version appeared in the former GDR, this happened already in an environment clearly marked by literary reception policies in the Soviet block.²² Two stories from that volume, namely 春蚕 and 秋收 (written in 1932 and 1933, respectively), were reprinted in a series of high circulation in 1955. This is where the following examples are taken from.²³

- 21 It is unclear which stories are included in Mao Tun, *Chinesische Novellen*, tr. by Walter Donat (Berlin; Buxtehude: Hübener, 1946). The translator Walter Donat (1898–1970), who originally came from German literature studies and stayed in Japan from around 1926, becoming noted as a translator from Japanese literature. Given his involvement in Nazi institutions (see his *Das Reich und Japan*, 1943), it is not unlikely that he prepared his Mao Dun translation from Japanese and therefore shifted away from the literature of the former ally of Hitler’s Germany.
- 22 Mao Tun, *Der Laden der Familie Lin*, tr. by Joseph Kalmer (Berlin DDR: Volk und Welt, 1953). See the Russian translations *Rasskazy* [Stories], tr. by V. Rudman (Moskva: Goslitizdat, 1954) and *Sočinenija* [Works], 3 vols., ed. by N. T. Hodorenko (Moskva: Goslitizdat, 1956).
- 23 The page numbers refer to *Mao Dun quanji* 茅盾全集, 40 vols., ed. by Ye Ziming 葉子銘 & al. (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1984–2002), and to Mao Tun, *Seidenraupen im Frühling. Zwei Erzählungen*, tr. by Joseph Kalmer (Leipzig: Insel, 1955), respectively.

Among the notorious and to a certain extent strictly technical difficulties of translation are (1) the system of personal names, especially when it comes to terms of address; (2) numerals and measures; and finally with the most complex implications, (3) religious terms, in particular names of God or gods with regard to the degree of how ‘personal’ their concept is²⁴—a problem with which the Jesuits had to cope already in the 16th century and which has not been solved to the present day, as the *shangdi* 上帝 and *shen* 神 editions of Bible translations co-existing until the present day testify.

passim 媳婦四大娘、阿四
passim Schwester Vier, A Se

In these two terms, with German equivalents employed throughout, denoting one of the story’s protagonists as the ‘fourth son’ and his wife, thus both belonging to the same generation, the numeral indication position in the sequence is rendered semantically as the ‘Fourth Sister’ in the case of the wife, whereas on the male side, the numeral ‘four’ is just given phonetically, thus obscuring an important rule in forming terms of address.

8: 354 三斗米
 55 dreissig Pfund Reis
 8: 357 五升米
 60 fünf Pfund Reis
 8: 359 一百五十擔米
 61 hundertfünfzig Pikul Reis

There are two classes of translation renderings for terms of capacity (*rongliangci* 容量詞), the first one by finding an (historical) equivalent in the target languages, the second one by giving the Malai equivalent for ‘load’ that is established in English and which from there entered German as well. Leaving aside the possibility of regional and also local variation, the rendering does not show the relationship between the two measures, i.e. a »Pikul« equivalent to 100 »Pfund« (or 40 to 70 ‘pounds’, for certain goods). This is in turn preserved for the first two expressions where the relationship of 10 *sheng* as equivalent to 1 *dou* is preserved: two using the same term of capacity, as the German language would not offer any term for the second power of »Pfund«.

8: 340 小寶的父親，今天一早就上鎮裡找他岳父張財發，當真是為的借錢，——好歹要揪住那張老頭兒做個“中人”向鎮上那專放“鄉債”的吳老爺“借轉”這麼五块十块钱。

24 In this field, I owe some methodological inspiration to Milena [Doleželová-] Velingerová, »Kuo Mo-jos Übersetzungen von Goethes Werken«, *Archiv Orientální* 26 (1958), 427–497.

36 Hsiao Baos Vater war nur zu dem einzigen Zweck weggegangen, um ganz gleich, zu welchem Zinsfuss, Geld zu borgen. Der alte Tung Bao hatte sich entschlossen, seines Sohnes Schwiegervater Dschang Tsai-fu zu bitten, er möge bei Herrn Wu, dem berufsmässigen Geldverleiher des Bezirks, eine Anleihe von fünfzig Dollar vermitteln.

E 'fifty dollars'

In this passage, the rendering of the amount of money as '50' instead of '5 or 10' seems a minor misreading in comparison to the very accurate explanatory translation of the more difficult term of *xiangzhai* 鄉債 and the roughly appropriate rendering of the mediation in borrowing money.

8: 359 農民可以向米店賒米·到秋收的時候,一石還一石;

61 Erstens konnten die Bauern von den Händlern Reis auf Kredit nehmen; die gleiche Menge war nach der Herbsterte, um ein Pikul als Zinsen vermehrt, zurückzuzahlen.

Here in turn again the proportion of measures has disappeared, given that a *shi* is equal to 10 *dou*, although in this case—unlike the preceding one—a rough German equivalent would have been available in 'ton' (or 'half ton', »Tonne«). However, what is worse is that the loan of rice ordered by the local administration and to be put into practice by rice merchants appears as if linked to interest (one *shi*, or »Pikul«), whereas in fact it is explicitly stated that no interest shall be charged, i.e. 'for one *shi*, one *shi* has to be returned'.

8: 339 素来就只崇拜兩件東西:一是菩薩,一是健康。

34 liebte nur zwei Dinge: Gott und seine gute Gesundheit

8: 339 老通寶所信仰的菩薩就是“財神”。

34 Im übrigen betete der alte Tung Bao auch den Gott des Glücks an.

The Chinese term for the *bodhisatva* is here casually rendered by 'god', while a specific deity, the one for 'wealth', is modified to 'happiness'.

8: 339 “唉!總共不過睏了個把月,怎麼就變了樣子!

34 »Gott des Erbarmens«, krächzte er schwach, »wie kommt es, dass ich nach einem Monat im Bett wie ausgewechselt bin?«

8: 340 “呀,呀,小寶!你怎麼的?”

35 »O Gott, Hsiao Bao, “kleiner Schatz”, was fehlt dir?«

In these two instances, the simple exclamatory term *ya*, also with iteration, again becomes a singular 'god'. At the same time, we find a third variant in the rendering of a personal name, i.e. the translation added to the transliteration of a personal name that may be both an individual name properly speaking or simply a general term of address for a child.

- 8: 361 老太婆眯着老花眼望着天空念佛。但是一次一次只是高興。
 66 Die alten Weiber starrten zum Himmel empor, beteten und riefen Buddha an, aber ihre Bemühungen waren erfolglos.

In this context, the Chinese term originally denoting ‘reading out aloud Buddhist canonical writings’ that has by extension acquired the colloquial meaning of ‘invoking the Buddha’ is rendered doubly to emphasize the meaning of both ‘praying [to the Buddha]’ and ‘invoking the Buddha’.

- 8: 363 “天老爺顯靈。今晚上落一場雨，就好了！”
 68 »Wenn uns nur Gott seinen Segen gibt, wird ein Regenschauer uns alle heute nacht retten«, erwiderte der Alte fromm und verbarg sein Gesicht in der Reisschale.

In this passage, the term *tian laoye*, literally ‘the senior master of Heaven (or Nature)’ and most likely only coined with the spread of Christianity in China in the 19th century, is employed as a synonym of ‘god’ and as a consequence is similarly rendered into German. However, the author of the translation freely added information about who is speaking and how, namely ‘[...] piously while hiding his face in the rice bowl’. It is not far-fetched to attribute this colourful and imaginative phrase to the hand of Kalmer, who probably was concerned that it might remain unclear from whom the speech was originating.

- 8: 367 只要一次好收成，鄉下人就可以翻身，天老爺到底是生眼睛！ / 但是鎮上的商人却也生着眼睛，他們的眼睛就只看見自己的利益，就只看見銅錢，
 75 Diese reiche Ernte konnte sie alle von ihrer Armut befreien. Endlich hatten die Götter ein Herz für die Elenden. Aber die Händler in der Stadt hatten kein Herz, oder zumindest waren ihre Herzen nur auf den eigenen Verdienst und nicht auf Fürsorge für die Armen bedacht.

The term *fanshen*, simply denoting ‘changing one’s fate’, is here far more explicitly extended to ‘saving from poverty’. It should be noted that the same ‘senior master of Heaven’ from above is now rendered into the plural of ‘gods’ (“Götter”). More importantly, however, the translatorial processing of enchainment of visual metaphorical terms in Mao Dun’s text—*sheng yanjing* (‘to pay attention to’)—is modified to the resulting but semantically equivalent *kan(jian)*, because *sheng yanjing* cannot be used with an object, namely ‘advantage’ and ‘money’ in this context. The definitely appropriate rendering of ‘having a heart for’ (“ein Herz haben”) is handled in the beginning as if it were impossible to employ it without an object, though it would be highly possible also with the variation “ein Herz haben [mit]” (‘to show a heart [for]’). Instead, the ‘gods’ ‘pay attention to the miserable’, and the final elaboration of the term by Mao Dun is without obvious necessity also worded out to ‘own income’, with the totally

liberal addition of ‘instead of a concern for the poor’, while the German language without any further difficulty would have allowed for the development of the parallelism throughout.

- 8: 341 南瓜和芋頭
 36 Kürbis und Jamswurzeln
 E ‘pumpkin and taro/sweet potatoes’

Another important lexical field of difficulties in translation are the terms for plants and animals, and in the field of material culture and to a considerably greater extent, the names of dishes. The ‘pumpkin’ for *nangua* does not pose any problem, yet this is definitely not the case with *yutou*. “Jamswurzel” chosen as an equivalent here is unfelicitous as it denotes the genus of *discorea*, whereas the ‘sweet potatoes’ belong to another genus, although *yu* in Chinese is employed for both genres—evidently because the organization of the Chinese vocabulary does not reflect the Linné classification of the flora. As a consequence—provided possibly correct Latin terms are not employed, as they are out of the question for a literary text—there are just the two options of choosing either roughly approximative terms or one that covers a suggestively equivalent function of the plant or dish. In this particular case, despite its exoticist flavour, the “Jamswurzel” is not satisfying at all as it does not belong to either category.

- 8: 341 小燒餅
 37 süsse Kuchen
 8: 344 燒餅
 41 Semmel

The fate of the ‘sesame seed cake’ in these two instances reveals the dilemma: neither way of translation, ‘sweet cakes’ and the »Semmel« for ‘bun’ or ‘roll’ is satisfactory, as the former is too general and the latter denotes a preparation similar to *mantou* 饅頭.

- 8: 342 到“廊檐口”，坐在門檻上
 38 ruhte sich auf dem hölzernen Sitz unter dem Dachvorsprung aus

Another distinctive aspect of material culture can be found in architecture and construction, where direct equivalents hardly exist. Although it is definitely not a ‘seat’ but the ‘threshold’ on which 阿四 is sitting down, the rendering is a functional approximation.

- 8: 343 這時他家緊鄰李根生的老婆，那出名的荷花！
 Sie gehörten seiner Nachbarin, Li Gen-schengs Frau, der liebestollen Ho-hua.
 8: 346 那母狗白虎星
 43 Ho-hua, der Tigerinnenstern

At first glance, Li Gensheng’s wife is vaguely circumscribed as ‘notorious’

without any further specification. If she is literally labelled as ‘crazy for love’ it is a relatively mild rendering of the fairly harsh and vulgar term *mugou* employed several pages later and reveals that the translation has been prepared taking into consideration the whole text.

8: 346 “道士! (…) 道士, 你說該打不該打?”

43 »Taoist, [...]« —

8: 345 可是老通寶就懂得這黃道士的“斯文話”。

43 aber dem alten Tung Bao machte Huangs gewählte Sprache Vergnügen

As a term of address for *daoshi*, the German rendering is definitely a failure. However, while the distinctive speech of Huang is labelled as being marked by Sanskrit elements (or rather as such due to the Chinese rendering of Buddhist scriptures), it is lost and reduced to a more general expression of ‘exquisite speech’.

8: 347 “豈敢, 豈敢! (…) 舍下還有點小事, 再會, 再會; 保重, 保重!”

45 »Ich bin deines Dankes nicht würdig.« [...] »Jetzt habe ich in meinem armseligen Haus ein paar Sachen zu erledigen. Also auf Wiedersehen, auf Wiedersehen! Pflege deinen kostbaren Körper!«

While the change in register made explicit above as a pattern of Tongbao’s speech is appropriately made evident, the transposition may not have found the convincing equivalents in each and every instance. The ironical hyperbole is lost to a certain extent as is its merging with common speech.

8: 348 老通寶雖然拿出“祖傳”的聖賢人的大道理——“人窮了也要有“志氣”這句話來, 卻是毫無用處。

46-47 Vergeblich hatte er versucht, die Gedanken der leidenden und hungernden Frau mit einem Zitat der Philosophen auf den rechten Weg zu lenken: »Der Mensch muss die richtigen Grundsätze beobachten, wie tief er auch in Armut sinken mag.« Das war ein altehrwürdiger Merkspruch

E ‘high ambitions’

In this passage, where the narrator comments about the effects of Tongbao’s speech, we find a relatively free rendering of the ironical references as well as the respective language register in each single case. In sum, the rendering is synthetic and freely recombines elements from the key terms marked above, such as the marked ‘transmission through the ancestors’, the ‘holy and accomplished men’, here rendered by ‘philosophers’, and the ‘right principles’ where ‘high ambitions’ are clearly referred to.

8: 352 他自己也是從二十多歲起就死心塌學着老爺們的“好樣子”, ——雖然捏又鋤頭柄, 他“志氣”是有的, 然而他現在落得個甚麼呢? 天老爺沒有眼睛!

52-53 Von Jugend an hatte Tung Bao sich bemüht, in Benehmen und Auftreten

‘wohlerzogen’ zu sein wie die Vornehmen der Stadt, er hatte ‘Ehrgeiz’ gehabt und ‘Grundsätze’. Die *Vorsehung* war blind.

The opposition of respect towards conventions (*bao yangzi*) and their consideration by ‘Heaven’s senior master’ is somehow blurred here, as the latter appears as a personalized ‘god’ in the Chinese text, and not just as ‘blind fate’ as the German rendering suggests.

8: 354 他們這樣亂哄哄地喊着。而且多多頭也在內！而且是他敲鑼！

55 Dann aber taumelte der alte Tung Bao vor Schreck zurück: Do-do marschierte an der Spitze der Banditen. Er war es, der den Gong schlug!

In this passage, the rendering is quite free and is in fact a rewording. The German rendering just describes the effect on Tongbao, omitting the fact it appears merely descriptively in the Chinese text without any narrator’s judgement.

8: 359 紳商們很明白目前這時期只能堅守那“大事化為小事”的政策。

61

In turn, a very clear narrator’s comment about the local elite’s behaviour under the conditions of drought is merely omitted, including the explanatory »policy of ‘reducing the weight of a big event to a minor affair’«, so that the concept of a narrator different from Mao Dun’s is emerging.

Although lexical and syntactical interventions in Mao Dun’s text seem relatively frequent, the German rendering in most cases reveals a precise identification of the author’s narrative technique and a broad range of attempts to reflect them in the translation, with some of them possibly due to translational fashion, while others reveal corrective modifications to the narrator’s attitude. In sum, even obvious omissions may be attributed to such concepts rather than to insufficient linguistic penetration of the Chinese text. Most of them remain disputable without being genuinely distortive. Therefore, the Mao Dun translations (which probably also enjoyed the most extended editorial care in early GDR publishing houses) are probably the most balanced pieces in Kalmer’s activities.

5 *Translations from Zhao Shuli*

In the same vein and context as Mao Dun, though much earlier, Joseph Kalmer brought out a German translation of the famed novelette *Li Youcai banhua* 李有才的板話 (1943) by Zhao Shuli. Despite its milieu and its pronounced simple language, the very topic of the work presented considerable difficulties. These are already evident in the translation of the title, where Kalmer did not find any

satisfying solution; this can be seen from his rendering of the final part of ch. 1 (書名的來源) where a detailed explanation on the crucial term *banhua* is given.²⁵

第一章 作詩的人，叫‘詩人’；說作詩的話，叫‘詩話’。李有才作出來的歌，不是‘詩’，明明叫做‘快板’，因此不能算‘詩人’，只能算‘板人’。這本小書既然是說他作快板的話，所以叫做‘李有才板話’。

18-19 Leute, die Gedichte schreiben, werden Dichter genannt, und die Bücher, die berichten, wie es zum Schreiben dieser Gedichte kam, heissen Geschichten der Gedichte. Li Yü-ts'ai's Lieder sind keine Gedichte, sondern nur Knüttelverse oder Schnellreime, und so kann man ihn nicht als Dichter bezeichnen, sondern nur als Reimschmied. Darum habe ich diesem Buch den Namen gegeben: Die Lieder des Li Yü-ts'ai.

第一章 這種歌，在閩家山一帶叫‘圪溜嘴’，官話叫‘快板’。

16 In Peking nennt man solche Lieder »K'uai pan«—Schnellreime; in Jentschia Schan hiessen sie einfach »Schlüpfrige Schnauze«.

Though readers of German are accurately introduced to the *banhua* terminology, with provision of the Mandarin term even in transcription and its local usage, the concluding section explaining the origin of the whole book's title is doomed to remain obscure to a readership unfamiliar with the Chinese language. This is mainly due to the unhappy choice of equivalents in the course of Zhao Shuli's argument, which in fact results in the coining of the new word *banhua*. The connection of the activity *zuoshi* / »Gedichte schreiben« with the 'poet' *shiren* / »Dichter« is still unmistakable. However, the first important obstacle results in failure, as the fairly comprehensive genre *shibua* is certainly much more than just 'a book relating how some poems were written', but may be addressed as 'poetological manuals', to use a learned term. 'Stories about poems' are therefore misleading—and doubly so because the 'stories' are not even taken up again in the final German title. To label the *kuaiiban* as »Lieder« ('songs') is the next grave error (even more so than as »Lieder« is usually reserved as a possible German rendering for 詞), and although insisting on presenting them as »Knüttelverse« or »Schnellreime« ('doggerel' or, in a more general Chinese term, *dayoushi* 打油詩) it is not taken up again. The *banren* appears as the »Reimeschmied« but then abandoned again. So the ironical coining of *banhua* is totally lost—ironical because it plays on contrasting the 'high' register of the genre denotation with

25 Page numbers indicated are from Dschau Schu-Li, *Die Lieder des Li Yü-Ts'ai*, tr. by Joseph Kalmer (Berlin DDR: Volk und Welt, 1950).—The mere fact that in the book's title two different systems of transcription are used is a hint to shaky (linguistic) knowledge of Chinese both with the translator and the responsible editors.

the suffix *-hua* with its prestigious tradition and the 'low' key of the popular *banhua*, and actually even takes up the similarly ironical class distinction according to 老 and 小, based upon terms of address and elaborated by the title character Li Youcai in the immediately preceding parts of the chapter.

Exceptionally, I should like to present a title proposal that might work better, namely »Poetik des Knüttelverses von Li Youcai« ('Poetology of the Doggerel by Li Youcai').

Uncontestably, Li Youcai's numerous *banhua* given throughout the novelette form the core of the work. Not surprisingly, after the above opening a critical assessment of the translated *banhua* results in an even more disastrous assessment, which is remarkable given that Kalmer made his *entrée* into the world of literature with poetry, even though it was not really popular. I shall concentrate on the first sample in the work, given in Chapter 1:

- 第一章 鬼眨眼，閻家祥，
 眼睫毛，二寸長，
 大，腮蛋，塌鼻梁，
 說句話兒眼皮忙。
- 5 兩眼一忽閃，
 肚里有主張，
 強占三分里，
 總要沾些光。
 便宜占不足，
- 10 氣得臉皮黃，
 眼一擠，嘴一張，
 好像母豬打哼哼！
- 17 Seine Augenwimpern
 sind zwei Zoll lang,
 seine Sattelnase
 macht einen krank.
- Die Lider klimpern
 in einem fort,
 zu jedem Blinzeln
 gibt's ein neues Wort.

Du bist immer schuld,
 er hat immer recht,
 verliert gleich die Geduld
 und macht dich schlecht.

Dann schliesst er die Augen,
 lässt offen den Mund
 und sieht wie ein Schwein aus,
 das gerade grunzt.

First of all, the syllabic scheme of the whole *banbua* should be clarified with syntactical units given in brackets () and rhymes indicated by letters at the end of each verse:

3 (1-2), 3 (1-2) a
 3 (2-1), 3 (2-1) a
 3 (1-2), 3 (1-2) a
 7 (2 [1-1]-2-2-1) a
 5 (2-2-1) x [a]²⁶
 5 (2-1-2) a
 5 (2-2-1) x
 5 (2-1-2) a
 5 (2-1-2) x
 10 5 (2-2-1) a
 3 (1-2), 3 (1-2) a
 7 (2-2-1-2) a

This *banbua* has an architecture that could not be more transparent and convincing: three couplets of trisyllabics form the exposition concluded by heptasyllabic verse. The elaboration is done in pentasyllabics before the conclusion takes up a couplet of trisyllabics again and ends on 7 syllables. Before entering into semantical aspects, it should be stated that the translation was arranged into four stanzas of four verses each—which is already a bad start for any possible equivalence. The pattern for the syllabic stresses in the final stanza looks as follows:

26 For the present purpose of translation criticism, the possible congruence of the finals /-n/ and /-ŋ/ according to the hypothetical dialect will not be discussed. However, originating from Qinshui in Shanxi province 山西沁水, Zhao Shuli would be a good candidate.

〇 — 〇 〇 — 〇
 〇 — 〇 〇 —
 〇 — 〇 〇 — 〇
 — 〇 — 〇 —

The opening syllable in the last verse (irregularly for the other stanzas) already hints to what might not be working properly.

The first verse introducing the powerful village head's son is skipped altogether: *gui zhibayan, Yan Jiaxiang* ('devilishly blinking eyes', [name]). So are his 'big boney cheeks' (*da saidan*), but instead, the protagonist's nose 'makes one ill'. The concluding 7-syllable verse after the first part is in turn distributed over a complete second stanza. No wonder that the elaboration in pentasyllabics (Chinese verses 5 to 10) is abbreviated and loses much of its colour, even more so as the translator seems compelled to take recourse to abstractions such as 'You are always wrong, / he is always right.' (as an equivalent to verses 5 to 9).

From these very few hints, it is already evident that Kalmer failed to render convincingly the essentials of Zhao Shuli's novel. Most likely, this can be attributed to the fact that Joseph Kalmer felt much more at home in an urban environment and did not have a highly developed sense for rustic or even vulgar modes of expression in *Li Youcai banhua*. Given that his first translation from Chinese was published in 1946, it can hardly be attributed to a development in Kalmer's linguistic skills. If he chose to translate Zhao Shuli, it was probably also due to the requirements of those who were at the very beginning of the Cold War willing to publish anything from 'Red China'—in this instance, the central GDR publishing house for world literature (and equivalent of the Moscow *Goslitizdat*).

Be it as it may, in any case the translation of a poetic genre with strong local and popular elements poses a number of difficulties that are possibly even harder to tackle than the translation of sophisticated narrative prose, as in Lu Xun for example. If in translating Zhao Shuli Joseph Kalmer had to rely on the help and support of an aide, possibly providing him with a draft translation (which for the time being has not been safely established), then it would not be a surprise that the task could not be completed. The translator's inclination towards and practice in poetry was not sufficient equipment in this case.

Some Conclusions: Multilingualism and Mediation

It is by far not only the multilingual environment in his native Galicia that favoured Kalmer's future role as a translator. It was definitely fostered by the

fact that at the Przemyśl (in present-day Poland) elementary school, he enjoyed teaching not only in Polish and Russian, but also in German. No doubt, however, this environment also met a special interest, manifest in Kalmer's attendance during his college time in Czernowitz, of courses not only in the compulsory classical languages of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, but also in Armenian, English, French, Polish and Ruthenian. Even though his acquaintance with Chinese cannot be testified by desirable documentary evidence, he referred to himself as a professional in Chinese studies:

I am most interested in those poems [*Östliche Seele im Tode* 'Eastern Soul Dying' (1945) by Rudolf Felmayer (1897–1970)] because, as you know, I am a professional Sinologist and am here considered a »Far Eastern Jew«, i.e. an expert in politics and literatures of the Far East.²⁷

According to his own account, after World War I he was making his living in Prague by teaching Spanish—of course to a Czech speaking audience.²⁸ In sum, including his unpublished translations, he would have translated from not less than 49 different languages (in his own terminology counting e.g. »American English« and »Catalan« as separate languages)—no wonder that his mastery could only be uneven, no matter to what extent helping hands were involved. Moreover, during his lifetime Kalmer was compelled to change his environment two times due to war events and to rampant continental European anti-Semitism: moving to Vienna during the war and then escaping to Britain from Nazi rule.

Both his political activities, first as a Soldiers' Delegate in the »Soldatenräte« (Soldiers' Councils) that formed after the war and where he met the famous journalist Egon Erwin Kisch (1885–1948), then as a life-long member of the Austrian Social-Democrat Worker's Party (*Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei*), and his professional activities as a journalist increasingly from the 1930s contributed to making him the ideal mediatic and linguistic mediator. This finally resulted in a breathtaking range of translations, including prominently Chinese literature.

What exactly the extent is of his skills in Chinese and the network he entertained with Chinese writers and institutions remains to be studied more in detail. It should be stated, however, as has been demonstrated above, that his translations display a remarkable mastery that continues to have a sort of

27 Letter to Otto Basil, Nov 9, 1946, *Archiv der Theodor-Kramer-Gesellschaft*, Vienna. I do not agree with Gausterer's judgement (»Der Literaturvermittler...«, 55) that this doubtless ironical remark necessarily refers to knowledge he had acquired recently during extensive studies on East Asia in the British Library.

28 Letter to Ilse Barea, Feb 20, 1958, *Österreichisches Literaturarchiv* (Nachlass Joseph Kalmer, 2.2).

subterranean existence in the German reception of modern Chinese literature, particularly of Lu Xun.

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