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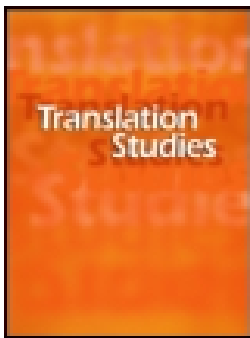
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De-pathologizing perversion: Proust's sexual discourses and their Chinese translations

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ABSTRACT

The sexological aspects of Proust's work have largely been neglected in its Chinese reception. This article focuses on Chinese (re)translations of Proust's sexual discourses in *À la recherche du temps perdu* and expounds the epistemic challenges of and the evolving strategies for translating sadomasochism and homosexuality into Chinese. It further explores how these observations refract the changing and largely de-pathologizing discourses on, and social attitudes to, sadomasochism and homosexuality in China from the late 1980s until now. A close examination of exemplary passages (from *Du côté de chez Swann*, *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, *La Prisonnière*, and *Le Temps retrouvé*) in different Chinese translations reveals a lexical and conceptual appropriation and recontextualization of modern Western as well as traditional Chinese discourses on/of sexology.

KEYWORDS

Marcel Proust; Chinese translation; homosexuality; sadomasochism; sexology

For a long time, Marcel Proust was on the fringe of the foreign canon in the Chinese reception of world literature. It is only in the past three decades that Proust's position as a canonical writer has been secured in China, along with the ever-growing amount of scholarship about Proust that has been either produced in China or translated into Chinese from French or English. For Proust's best-known work *À la recherche du temps perdu* (literally, "in search of lost time"), there is only one full Chinese translation to date, but there are multiple incomplete translations and editions of the novel. The full translation (henceforth referred to as *FT* for *Full Translation*), a collaborative work by fifteen Chinese scholars, was published between 1989 and 1991. In 1992, as part of a much wider translation project entitled "Twentieth-Century French Literature Series", Zhiming Shen adaptively translated *À la recherche*, condensing it into one single volume subtitled *Essential Selection* (henceforth referred to as *ES*). Almost a decade later, two influential Chinese publishers in the area of "foreign studies" each commissioned competing new individual translations of *À la recherche* by Hejin Xu and Kexi Zhou, respectively, the first volumes of which were published in 2004 and 2005.¹

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As has already been argued elsewhere (S. Li 2014), since the 1980s, the period marking a new beginning of Proust Studies in China, Chinese critical interest in Proust's works has revolved almost exclusively around traditional Proustian themes such as time and memory, and the Modernist literary style commonly known as stream-of-consciousness. These aspects of Proust's work seem to resonate particularly well with the long line of Chinese aesthetic and philosophical traditions, as is emblemized by the Chinese title for *À la recherche*: literally, "pursuing the memory of time/years as (flowing) water" (追忆似[逝]水年华) (S. Li 2014, 295–296). In the West, in comparison, perhaps partly reflecting the wider political and cultural movement of sexual liberation since the 1960s, a rich body of critical works that directly deal with the subject of "deviant sexuality" in Proust's works started to appear from the 1980s: J. E. Rivers's *Proust and the Art of Love* (1980), Eva Ahlstedt's *La Pudeur en crise* (1985), and Antoine Compagnon's *Proust entre deux siècles* (1989), to name but a few monographs. In the subsequent decade, Proust became a major point of reference in the writings of literary scholars working in queer theory and studies of gender and sexuality. Notable examples include Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* ([1990] 2008), Douglas B. Saylor's *The Sodomasochistic Homotext: Readings in Sade, Balzac and Proust* (1993), and Leo Bersani's *Homos* (1995). Indeed, the sexological aspect of Proust's work has been so thoroughly explored that *À la recherche* is nowadays recognized as the "first major literary work in France to take on the issue of same-sex sexual relations directly and in an apparently objective manner" (Ladenson 2014, 115), and "has remained into the present the most vital centre of the energies of gay literary high culture, as well as of many manifestations of modern literary high culture in general" (Sedgwick [1990] 2008, 213).

Since the Policy of Economic Reform and Opening Up in 1978, two years after Mao's death, Chinese society has undergone drastic changes, not least in its perception of sexuality. However, despite the influx of Western cultural productions and the intensification of translation activities, the Chinese translators of *FT* were hardly sensitized to Proust's complex sexual discourses. In fact, while Proust's depiction of "deviant sexuality" is morally ambiguous, early Chinese translations of *À la recherche* manifest strong moral condemnation and pathological treatment of the topic, and they additionally display a lack of lexical variety and of conceptual understanding to accommodate Proust's different use of a wide range of vocabulary regarding "homosexual(ity)" and his nuanced formulation of "sadisme/sadique". However, the de-pathologization of Proust's sexual discourses is also evident in later Chinese translations, and it takes place alongside the exponential increase in the translation and (re)introduction of influential Western sexological texts in post-Mao China. By comparing exemplary passages (from *Du côté de chez Swann*, *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, *La Prisonnière*, and *Le Temps retrouvé*) across the available Chinese translations, this article aims to demonstrate the evolving strategies for translating (homo)sexuality and sadomasochism into Chinese, and the extent to which such an evolution reflects changing and largely de-pathologizing discourses on, and attitudes to, these subjects in China from the late 1980s until now.²

Proust in China: an ideological trajectory

The publication of the full translation (1989–1991) was rather belated, indeed: it appeared more than seventy years after the original publication of *Du côté de chez Swan*. The *FT* was

even preceded by its Japanese and Korean counterparts (1953–1955 and 1970–1977, respectively). In this respect, the reception and publication of Proust’s work was uniquely determined and overdetermined by the drastically changing political ideologies and sociological factors behind the several key historical stages of twentieth-century China: from the total exclusion of Proust’s work under the Maoist regime (1949–1976), because of its perceived status as “bourgeois literature” and hence against the “proletarian cause”, to the enthusiastic promotion and official endorsement of his work during the two successive periods of economic reform in the 1980s and 1990s under Deng Xiaoping, when bourgeois values were in the ascendant (S. Li 2014, 296–299). Interestingly, this is also when modern and contemporary Chinese sociological works on homosexuality started to emerge, and the social practices of homosexuality, such as the formation of homosexual group identity and the appearance of cruising venues, as well as the development of a certain codified common language, appeared only towards the end of this period (see Sang [2003], 166–169).

The Chinese intellectual landscape of the 1980s under the banner of “Culture Fever” was marked by a *revived* enthusiasm for translating Western texts, including many Western discourses of sexuality. “Revived” because Western discourses of sexuality *were* briefly introduced in Republican China (1912–1949), but their development, appropriation and recontextualization came to a premature end with the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, as the Communist regime under Mao consistently imposed sexual puritanism, and an overt display of sexuality would have been seen as Western contamination and corruption. That is, modern sexology did not properly commence until the 1980s in the PRC, and the Chinese translation of modern Western sexual discourses was and has been an essential component of that development. *The People’s Daily*, the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, which wields special authority over the voicing of official government policy, published its first formal article expressing a positive take on the issue of sexuality in 1986. In the same year, the newspaper reported the establishment of the first Chinese sexological organization in Shanghai. In 1988, sexology as a discipline was formally introduced in Chinese universities. By the end of the 1980s, official as well as popular attitudes to Freudian theory, for example, are said to have evolved from total negation to general recognition (Y. Li 2014, under “性行为规范的变迁” and “性研究”). One of the initial tasks of this article is to reveal how the translators of *FT* in the mid-1980s responded to the significant lexical as well as epistemic challenges when they were unravelling Western sexual idioms and concepts in Proust’s work. An extensive list of sexual vocabulary needed yet to be (re)invented and adapted in modern vernacular Chinese to accommodate Proust’s sexual discourses. It should be further stressed that, as far as sexology is concerned, it is those Western theories popular in the first half of the twentieth century who received primary attention, and the list of translated or/and (re)introduced authors (other than Freud) includes Magnus Hirschfeld, Havelock Ellis, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and Edward Carpenter.³ Many intellectuals working in translation in the 1980s regard their project as both a recapitulation and a continuation of their predecessors’ work from the early twentieth century, which was brutally interrupted under the Communist regime. The more revolutionary or radical Western discourses of sexuality from the 1960s and 1970s, perhaps most importantly those advocated by Foucault, were not properly introduced in China until the 1990s.⁴

Although the social phenomenon of same-sex eroticism has been well documented since ancient times,⁵ systematic scholarly works on homosexuality in mainland China

did not take off until the late 1980s. The first book-length study of male homosexuality in mainland China, titled *Tamen de shijie* (他们的世界) (literally, “Their World”), co-authored by Xiaobo Wang and Yinhe Li, came out only in 1992, after three years of research which coincided exactly with the first Chinese publication date of *À la recherche*. The sociologist Li subsequently went on to publish one book-length study on sadomasochism (1998a) and another on the (homo)sexuality of Chinese women (1998b). In terms of explicitly, and often sadomasochistically, gay-themed Chinese cultural productions, notable early cinematic works include *East Palace, West Palace* (*Donggong xigong*, 东宫西宫) (Y. Zhang 1996) and *Happy Together* (Wong 1997). In mainland China, although homosexuality is not a criminal act, in a Chinese Classification of Mental Disorder passed as late as 1994 by the Chinese Psychiatric Association homosexuality was still considered a mental disorder (Chou 2000, 111). This pathological designation of homosexuality was finally removed from the official list in 2001.

Those sociological enquiries and artistic productions emerging in the 1990s mean that, by the time that the first volumes of the two new translations of Proust came out in 2004 and 2005, the Chinese scholarly and popular discourses on, and social attitudes to, the subjects of sadomasochism and homosexuality had significantly evolved.

Proust’s sexual discourses

Proust’s conceptualization of homosexuality, as has been widely acknowledged, reflects the dominant theory of homosexuality of his time – the *Zwischenstufen* or man-woman theory formulated by the German sexologist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs in *Memnon* (1868) (Rivers 1980, 262–278) – and is, in Lucille Cairns’s words, “flawed by the limitations of this theory” (1997, 43). This theory is “predicated not on the idea of same-sex attraction per se but rather on the *anima muliebris in corpore virili inclusa* (the soul of a woman trapped in the body of a man)” (Ladenson 2014, 118), which explains Proust’s preference for the designation “invert” or “inversion” over “homosexual” or “homosexuality”. Homosexuality in Proust, as Leo Bersani states, is “nothing but disguised or mistaken heterosexuality” (1995, 134), although Eve Sedgwick’s close analysis of Proust’s “metaphorical models” suggests how Ulrichs’s doctrine of sexual inversion is also constantly destabilized in the novel ([1990] 2008, 219–223). Proust himself clarifies the conceptual differences he makes between “inversion” and “homosexuality”:

D’ailleurs il y a une nuance. Les homosexuels mettent leur point d’honneur à n’être pas des invertis. D’après la théorie, toute fragmentaire du reste, que j’ébauche ici, il n’y aurait pas en réalité d’homosexuels. Si masculine que puisse être l’apparence de la tante, son goût de virilité proviendrait d’une féminité foncière, fût-elle dissimulée. Un homosexuel ça serait ce que prétend être, ce que de bonne foi s’imagine être, un inverti. (*RTP III*, 955)

[Moreover, there is a nuance. As a point of honour, homosexuals do not consider themselves to be invertis. According to the theory which I’m still sketching out here, there are no homosexuals in reality. However masculine the appearance of the “auntie” might be, the taste for virility derives from a fundamental femininity, even if it is disguised. A homosexual is just what an invert claims to be, or in good faith images himself to be.]⁶

Interestingly, Proust also seems to consider the word “homosexual” to be too German and pedantic, linking it to the notorious Eulenberg affair⁷:

“Mais le lecteur français veut être respecté” et n’étant pas Balzac je suis obligé de me contenter d’inverti. Homosexuel est trop germanique et pédant, n’ayant guère paru en France [...] et traduit sans doute des journaux berlinois, qu’après le procès Eulenburg. (*RTP III*, 955)

[“But the French readership wants to be respected” and, without being Balzac, I’m obliged to be content with “invert”. “Homosexual” is too Germanic and pedantic. The word has hardly appeared in France [...] probably translated from the newspapers in Berlin, and it appeared only after the Eulenberg trial.]

These unambiguous and unguarded lines apropos of homosexuality, rather uncharacteristic of Proustian digression, come from Proust’s notebook (*Cahier 49*) which contains draft material for *Sodome et Gomorrhe*. This passage is marked as an extensive note that Proust is ostensibly making to himself, in which he outlines his theory of sexuality, but it is largely obliterated in the published text. And when the “traces” of this theory appear in the novel, it is not articulated through the narrator, but rather the character Charlus (*RTP III*, 810). However, there would be a certain epistemic danger, should we uncritically accept this theory as Proust’s view. For Michael Lucey (2006, 240–241), the development of the novel from these seemingly unequivocal avant-texts to their deliberate obliteration in the fictional texts reflects, in fact, a complicated negotiation among the ambient ideological currents concerning homosexuality of Proust’s time.

In addition to “homosexual” and “invert”, Proust employs “man-woman” (“homme-femme”), “sodomite”, “auntie” (“tante”), “hermaphrodite”, to name but a few, with specific implications and emphases in their different contexts. As will be explored later in detail, translators have struggled to find terminological variants in modern vernacular Chinese to accommodate Proust’s wide range of vocabulary regarding “homosexual(ity)”.

It is worth reiterating that, even in France, the issue of “deviant sexuality” in Proust’s work was largely neglected, or perhaps deliberately ignored, by critics up until the 1980s. André Maurois (1954, xiii–xv), in his preface to the old Pléiade edition of *À la recherche*, claims that “time” and “memory” are the only two central themes of Proust’s novel. Indeed, it is almost inconceivable nowadays for anyone to ignore the thematic centrality of time and memory, which is even reflected in Proust’s initial – up until 1913 – tripartite structural envisioning of the novel revolving around a time “lost”, “sought”, and “regained” in and through memory. However, as his novelistic conception evolved, Proust spent the rest of his life expanding the inner volumes of the novel, which comprise a separate volume of *À l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* and what is known as the *Sodome et Gomorrhe* cycle (including *La Prisonnière* and *La Fugitive*) covering Charlus’s homosexuality and Albertine’s lesbianism (Schmid 2006, 67). In fact, in several crucial avant-texts of *À la recherche* from as early as 1909 – notably *Cahiers 6* and *7* of what we know as the Sainte-Beuve series – the homosexual theme was already emphasized, especially in the fragment “La Race des tantes” (literally, “the race of aunties”, or in Schmid’s translation, “the queer race”) where the author “classifies” different types of male homosexuals (61–62). After the publication of *Du côté de chez Swann* in 1913, Proust, facing strong criticism from influential readers such as Paul Souday, defended his decision to keep the Montjouvain passage in this first volume, where the protagonist first witnesses sadism and same-sex acts, as it both thematically and structurally echoes later volumes of the novel, i.e. *Sodome et Gomorrhe* and *La Prisonnière* (as well as the sado-masochistic scene of flagellation involving Charlus in the last volume) (Proust 1990, 464).

Therefore, as Ladenson (1999, 62) highlights, the Montjouvain scene “bridges the perceived structural binarism between the serious outer volumes addressing the nature of time and memory and the trivia-infused inner volumes that deal with deviant sexuality” in *À la recherche*.

Maurois’s thematically exclusive but nevertheless authoritative preface to the old 1954 Pléiade edition of *À la recherche*, on which *FT* is based, is also duly translated and, in fact, still included in one of the two new Chinese translations of the novel. The preface continues to exercise a huge influence on the Chinese critical reception and literary imagination of Proust’s work today (S. Li 2014, 299–306). Meanwhile, the French original of *À la recherche* underwent two major textual revisions in the late 1980s in France, which resulted in the publications of the Flammarion edition (1984–1987) directed by Jean Milly and the new Pléiade edition (1987–1989) directed by Jean-Yves Tadié. The two new Chinese translations of *À la recherche* are based on the two revised French editions, respectively. For the purposes of the present article, it is worth highlighting the new preface written by Milly ([1987] 2009) for the Flammarion edition, which is translated and included in Xu’s translation in addition to Maurois’s preface. By *selectively* recounting the main plots of the entire *À la recherche*, Milly effectively expands Maurois’s thematic scope of time and memory. In particular, this preface repeatedly puts emphasis on the centrality of issues such as anti-Semitism and homosexuality which are too often neglected in the Chinese reception of *À la recherche*. For example, this is how Milly thematically summarizes the volume *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* in three sentences:

Le narrateur fait retour sur sa découverte de l’homosexualité de M. de Charlus et des relations de celui-ci avec l’ancien giletier Jupien. La scène est longuement décrite. Dans un commentaire très oratoire, la condition des homosexuels est rapprochée de celle des Juifs. (Milly 2009, 16)

[The narrator returns to the discovery of M. de Charlus’s homosexuality and his relations with the ex-waistcoat-maker Jupien. The scene is described at length. In a very oratorical commentary, the condition of homosexuals is compared to that of the Jews.]

Milly’s preface should heighten the translator’s sensitivity to Proust’s sophisticated sexual discourses and make him aware of his own strategy for translating them into Chinese. In fact, Xu (*XT IV*, 704–750) adds a further forty-five-page postscript to his translation of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* largely recapitulating some of the main points on the issue of homosexuality in Proust that were formulated by Emily Eells-Ogée (1987, 11–51) and Antoine Compagnon (*RTP III*, 1185–1261). What follows then is some concrete analysis of this discursive evolution across the available Chinese translations of *À la recherche*.

Translating sadomasochism

As we know, the vocabulary of sexuality was in great flux during Proust’s time. Sadism and masochism, as medical terms and concepts, had only recently been proposed by the German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing around 1900, especially in his *Psychopathia Sexualis*, and sadomasochism was understood as essentially a manifest form of sexual perversion. Although Proust might have been aware of Krafft-Ebing’s influential theory, the word “sadisme” or “sadique” is hardly employed in its clinical sense. In fact, Proust’s use of the word seems rather out of line with Krafft-Ebing’s clinical categorization as it overlaps

with what we now usually understand as masochism. With reference to Georges Bataille's (1957a, 108–157) essays on Sade and Proust, Hendrika Freud (2013, 108) describes both Sade and Mlle Vinteuil as “bogus sadists” because “the true sadist is cruel and does not explain his actions”, or in Bataille's (1957b, 154) words, “les méchants ne connaissent du Mal que le bénéfice matériel” (“the wicked know nothing of Evil but its material benefits”). As H. Freud further demonstrates, in the Montjouvain passage, Proust “tries to clarify the difference between sadism as sexual perversion and actual cruelty” (101) by characterizing the sadists of Mlle Vinteuil's kind as “purement sentimentaux” (“purely sentimental”) and “naturellement vertueux” (“naturally virtuous”), “ce qu'une créature entièrement mauvaise ne pourrait pas être” (“something that an entirely bad creature could not be”) (*RTP I*, 161–162; *PT I*, 164–165). In Proust's example, as H. Freud continues:

Mlle Vinteuil can only reach an erotic climax by transgressing the impediment of the social conventions that are so restrictive to her. She is a straitlaced girl who is able to experience pleasure and lust only when she furtively succumbs to sadistic excesses. [...] the proclivity for sadistic phantasies originates in its opposite: an oversensitivity that prevents excitement. (2013, 99)

Instead of establishing a clinical diagnosis, Proust repeatedly highlights the theatricalized expression of human intimacy while considerably deflating the abnormality of sadist acts by comparing the scenario to commonplace “théâtres du boulevard” (“popular theatre”) with “l'esthétique du mélodrame” (“aesthetics of melodrama”) (*RTP I*, 161; *PT* 164).

In early translations, i.e. *FT* (1991) and *ES* (1992), it is the Chinese word *shi-nüe-kuang* (施虐狂) that is consistently used. It can refer to both the concept of sadism and the person who practices it. *Shi-nüe-kuang*, literally meaning “abuse craze”, sounds far too colloquial, judgmental, and emotional to be an accurate conceptual term for sadism or sadist, but it has largely remained in use today and can still be frequently found in many contemporary retranslations of, for example, Freud's or Ellis's works, in predominantly clinical contexts.⁸ The character *kuang* clearly denotes a form of mental disorder or pathological disease, which will be subject to modification when the word and the concept of “sadism” are gradually transposed from medical to sociological and literary frameworks in the 1990s. Y. Li in *The Subculture of Sadomasochism* (1998a, 174) clarifies that the Freudian premise of sadomasochism being pathological is rather outdated, especially in comparison with Foucault's pioneering view, according to which sadomasochism is an “un-pathological” form of pleasure and no pleasure is abnormal.⁹ The pathological elements in sadomasochism formulated by some of the early- and mid-twentieth-century Western sexologists find distinct echoes in Chinese sexological works coming out in the 1980s. Probably due to the still relatively rigorous sexual morality of the time,¹⁰ some of the newly trained Chinese sexologists' writings demonstrate a prejudicially crude and morally simplistic understanding of “sexual perversions” like sadomasochism, rhetorically inviting moral condemnation. One of the most popular books, *Xing shehuixue* [Sexual Sociology] by Dalin Liu (1988), despite the author's formal acknowledgement of Ellis's (1933) work,¹¹ defines *shi-nüe-kuang* and *shou-nüe-kuang* (for masochism) as the urge to “reach sexual satisfaction through violence committed between the two sexes”, and the example he cites is Hitler who is said to be “both a sadist and a masochist” because he “sometimes maltreated his lovers very cruelly and sometimes asked them to flagellate him soundly” (83, my

translation), further highlighting the monstrous qualities associated with sadomasochism. By the end of the 1980s, sex psychology clinics had appeared in the PRC, offering help to “patients” suffering from “sexual perversions” such as “exhibitionism”, “voyeurism” and “transvestism” (Y. Li 2014, under “性生活” [Sex Life]).

In the context of the Montjouvain passage, “abuse craze” would sound too strong to most Chinese readers to describe the act of spitting on M. Vinteuil’s portrait. However, both *FT* and *ES* explicitly refer to Proust’s “sadisme” as a “mental illness” (from *ES*: 施虐狂的病例 [the clinical case of abuse craze]) and “sadiste” as a “patient” or “sufferer” (from *FT*: 施虐狂患者 [the patient of abuse craze]) (*RTP I*, 161; *FT*, 120; *ES*, 79), which is, of course, a significant addition to the source text. Spitting on one’s deceased father’s portrait while still in mourning may be severely condemned for going against the fundamental Confucian teaching of filial piety, which is deeply rooted in traditional as well as contemporary Chinese thought, but it is highly unlikely that an ordinary Chinese reader – or indeed any reader – would automatically connect this particular act to mental illness. The translators’ decision to deliberately pathologize the concept of sadism is most likely to have been affected by contemporaneous popular medical opinions in China, or at least the clinical use of the term in Chinese. Therefore, there seems to be a re-application of dominant medical discourses on sexuality from Proust’s era to the translation of Proust’s work in the Chinese context, even though these were not necessarily in line with Proust’s own conception.

In the sadomasochistic passage from the end of the novel, often considered to mirror structurally the Montjouvain passage, where the narrator witnesses Charlus being chained and whipped in a male brothel, the word “sadique” appears again and it is translated (by different translators) as *xing-nüe-dai-kuang-(zhe)* (性虐待狂[者]) ([the person of] sexual abuse craze). Although my literal English translation of the term seems to have only added the adjective “sexual” to the previous term used in the Montjouvain passage, the corresponding Chinese characters are actually quite different in terms of specificity. Whereas the previous term *shi-nüe-kuang* (abuse craze) clearly indicates the active role of the agent and may not be specifically related to sex, *xing-nüe-dai-kuang* (sexual abuse craze) is explicitly sexual but rather vague about the roles of the abuser and the abused. In fact, when the word “sadique” reappears in other volumes of *À la recherche* (with different translators), it almost always has a slightly different wording in Chinese. Given the number of translators involved in *FT*, such terminological inconsistencies are somewhat expected. More significantly, it suggests that there is a lack of a coherent “theory” or common acknowledgement of sadism or masochism in Chinese up to today. But this lack of a uniform lexical and epistemic approach to Proust’s sexual discourses and other Western as well as indigenous literary and sociological works also means that the translators could potentially enjoy a special “freedom to cite and appropriate certain materials rather than others”, in the process of which “we witness the possibility of cross-cultural understanding and coalition” (Sang 2003, 101), as will be shown below for Xu’s and Zhou’s new translations. Whereas an English or German translator is able to systematically translate “sadique” as “sadist” or “Sadist(in)” due to their common etymology, a Chinese translator finds no equivalent of the term and has to translate it according to the context. The words “sadism” and “masochism”, which respectively derive from two literary figures, Sade and Sacher-Masoch, are not translated etymologically or phonetically.¹² The closest Chinese “conceptual equivalents” are *shi-nüe(-zhe)* (sexual abuse[r]),

施虐[者]) and *shou-nüe(-zhe)* (the sexually abused, 受虐[者]). Unlike in the West where sadism and masochism could be seen first as *literary* phenomena which are then developed as medical and pathological discourses through Krafft-Ebing, and perhaps even more influentially through Freud and Ellis, their Chinese translation recognizes only the latter development. Charlus in the passage is called “un sadique” (*RTP IV*, 403) but is actually the abused, i.e. more of a masochist, which seems to contradict our current usual understanding of the term, hence the vague Chinese variation, i.e. *xing-nüe-dai-kuang* instead of *shi-nüe-kuang* (which unequivocally refers to the active agent).

At any rate, the translators of the two new translations of *À la recherche*, Xu and Zhou, have both tried to modify the Chinese rendition of “sadism”, and crucially, both translations remove the decidedly negative reference to sadism as a pathological disease that features in earlier translations. Accordingly, Xu changes the pathologically-inflected character *kuang* (狂) to *yin* (淫), so *shi-nüe-kuang* (abuse craze) becomes *shi-nüe-yin* (literally “abuse excess”). This term is more literary as the character *yin* carries multiple meanings: 1) excessive; 2) wanton; and 3) illicit sexual relations. This choice of word seems to be able to capture at once different aspects of Mlle Vinteuil’s relationship with her girlfriend, and indeed, most other lesbian relationships portrayed in the novel. The language of pathological condition is thus transferred to that of sexual desire. However, the rather negative value judgment is still evident.

Zhou’s terminological proposal, *nüe-lian-pi* (虐恋癖), also comes out of careful research. *Nüe-lian*, literally “abusive love”, is currently one of the most commonly accepted Chinese terms for “sodomasochism”.¹³ The word is accorded privilege due to its relatively positive connotation, i.e. “love” is less judgmental than “craze” or “excess/wantonness/illicitness”. More importantly, as Y. Li points out: “the word has a specific implication: this [sodomasochistic] tendency is relevant to human love behaviour, much more than to abuse or being abused” (1998a, 1, my translation).¹⁴ The term was already coined and consistently employed by Pan ([1946] 1987) in his translation of Ellis’s *Psychology of Sex* (1933). Accordingly, “sadism” is rendered as *shi-nüe-lian* (execution of abusive love) and “masochism” as *shou-nüe-lian* (reception of abusive love). But the term *nüe-lian* for “sodomasochism” was recovered and popularized only in the 1990s, strongly advocated by pioneering sociologists such as Y. Li. Perhaps in an attempt to make *shi-nüe-lian* and *shou-nüe-lian* sound more objectively descriptive, Li changes the *lian* (love) in these two terms into *qingxiang* (tendency), and *nüe-lian* is also frequently extended to *nüe-lian-qingxiang*.

Informed by Y. Li’s sociological works, Zhou further modifies these terms and opts for a more literary and morphologically concise synonym for *qingxiang*, i.e. *pi* (癖). In modern Chinese, *pi* is predominantly used to mean “addiction”, “hobby”, or “natural inclination”.¹⁵ Both the etymology and the concept of *pi* have a very rich history in classical Chinese culture. For one thing, the character does have a rather pathological origin, as implied by the character component “疒” (ne) meaning “illness”. In classical Chinese, 癖 is frequently interchangeable with its homonym 痞 referring to a kind of lump in the abdomen which may cause serious indigestion in Chinese medicine. For another, the “sense of pathological blockage” has also subsequently been extended to mean “obsession or addiction”, as Judith Zeitlin (1993, 62–63) explains, “something that sticks in the gut and cannot be evacuated, hence becoming habitual”. As Zeitlin duly observes, the concept of *pi*, or what she chooses to translate as “obsession” (but free from the technical

psychiatric sense), was “mated with connoisseurship and collecting” from the late Tang, and reached its height in the Ming dynasty, during which “obsession had become a *sine qua non*, something the gentlemen could not afford to do without” (69), and “the objects of obsessions became increasingly standardized as indexes of certain virtues and personalities” (71). In the sixteenth-century *Pidian xiaoshi* (癖癡小史) [Brief History of Obsession and Lunacy] by Shu Hua, homosexuality is actually listed as one of the “highly conventionalized obsessions” along with “books, painting, epigraphy, calligraphy, or rocks; a particular musical instrument, plant, animal, or game; tea or wine; cleanliness” (71). In modern Chinese, *pi* is utilized in a variety of character combinations to signify human proclivities for certain specific things or activities. It is a near equivalent of the suffix “-philia”, which, depending on the word combination and its context, can be negative, positive, or non-judgementally descriptive. In this respect, the intrinsic semantic ambiguity of *pi* seems to suitably capture Chinese social attitudes to sadomasochism. This use of *pi* in the context of sadomasochism seems to have gained further currency in philosophical and literary discourses.¹⁶

Translating homosexuality

Earlier translations expose a distinct lack of Chinese terminological variety for homosexual (ity). In the vast majority of cases, *tongxinglian*, literally “same-sex love”, designating both the concept and the person, is consistently applied throughout, regardless of the local terminological variations in the source text. The word was one of the many “medical neologisms” – such as *yichang* (abnormality) and *biantai* (perversion) – propagated by Chinese intellectuals in the Republican period in their translation and introduction of contemporary Western “modern science” (Sang 2003, 24). It has nowadays become the standard and arguably the least ambiguous Chinese translation of “homosexual(ity)”. “Inversion (sexuelle)” is rendered as *xingyü daocuo* (性欲倒錯 or 性欲倒置) (literally, “sexual desire reversal”), and, cutting out “sexual desire” in the Chinese expression, it is also understood as a Proustian aesthetic concept (Tu 1999, 114–115).¹⁷ However, “invert” as the person is indiscriminately translated as *tongxinglian* (same-sex love [person]) rather than *xingyü daocuo zhe* (性欲倒錯者) (sexually inverted person), which happens to be *the* term endorsed by Proust. According to Étienne Brunet’s *Le Vocabulaire de Proust* (qtd. in Fladenmuller 2015, 83), the word “invert(e,s)” appears forty-two times in *À la recherche*, whereas such words as “homosexualité”, “homosexuel(s)”, and “lesbiennes” altogether appear only twenty-five times. *Tongxinglian* sometimes also covers “sodomie” as in the phrase, “incriminer la sodomie” (“incriminate sodomy”) (*RTP III*, 33; *FT II*, 1142; *PT IV*, 35).

The dominant Chinese scholarly view on homosexuality in the 1980s (and well into the 1990s) was, to cite one sexologist’s comment, that homosexuality is “a psychological illness [...] an abnormal behaviour that should be punished” (B. Zhang 1994, 17).¹⁸ Some translators of *FT* seem to have been strongly influenced by such dominant views and choose to explicitly pathologize Proust’s description of homosexual characters in the novel. In *Sodome et Gomorrhe II*, at one of the Verdurins’ dinners where Charlus’s “lady-like” femininity is discussed, the gradual feminine “transformation” of Charlus’s body is translated as *biantai* (perversion), and the “origine spirituelle” (spiritual origin) of this transformation is translated as *jingshen de binggen* (psychopathological root) (*RTP III*, 300; *FT II*,

1340). As expected, Xu in his new translation of the volume replaces these pathological expressions with more neutral ones (*XT IV*, 326).

In both old and new translations, we also occasionally discover examples of Chinese appropriation of Proust's homosexual vocabulary. For instance, Proust's "homme-femme" ("man-woman") is rendered as *yin-yang-ren* (yin-yang person, 阴阳人) (*RTP III*, 23; *FT II*, 1136; *XT*, 3; *PT IV*, 25), a term which evidently derives from traditional Chinese cosmology, notably found in Daoism. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that *yin-yang*, which refers to two primordial, mutually complementing, and generative forces, is by no means a discourse specifically on/of sexuality *per se*, although it is often reductively applied to gender and sexuality studies in modern and contemporary China and becomes at times indistinguishable from Western biological, medical, and sociological discourses. The concept of *yin-yang*, which can be traced back to one of the oldest classic Chinese texts, *Yijing* or the *Book of Changes* (around the first millennium BCE), encompasses a much wider cosmological vision than merely sexual acts. Another related example is the Chinese translation of "viril(ité)" ("virile" or "virility") as "yang-gang" (阳刚) – "yang" as in "yin-yang" and "gang" meaning "hard" as opposed to "rou" ("soft") in "yin-rou" (阴柔). The character *qi* (气) ("air"), signalling the primordial energy and active principle forming all things in classical Chinese thought, is often used to complement *yang-gang* (as *yanggang zhi qi*) to form a more elaborate translation for "viril", which further indigenizes Proust's homosexual vocabulary.¹⁹

Moreover, the translators of *FT* extend their terminological application of *yin-yang* to the translation of the adjective "androgyné" ("androgynous") which appears only twice in Proust's novel (*RTP III*, 313, 370; *FT II*, 1349, 1391). What is even more interesting is that the translators feel the need to add supplementary qualifiers in their rendition of "androgyné", which point to the modern Chinese bio-scientific categorization of sex and sexuality (imported from the West in the early twentieth century). Thus, "Vénus androgyné" is translated as *yinyang Weinasi liangxing zhuanbian* (yin-yang Venus capable of changing between the two sexes) (*RTP III*, 313; *FT II*, 1349); the "androgyné" race is *yinyang erxing(zi)* (yin-yang with two sexes) (*RTP III*, 370; *FT II*, 1391).²⁰ Most English- and French-Chinese dictionaries do list the two entries, *yin-yang-ren* and *liang-xing-ren* (two-sex person), side by side, for the translation of "androgyné" (as a noun referring to the person). The juxtaposition between traditional Chinese and Western-imported contemporary Chinese bio-scientific terms in this example reflects, in fact, the translators' lingering epistemic uncertainty over Proust's sexual discourses more generally in the 1980s. However, Xu in his new translation chooses to stick with a decidedly bio-medical designation *liangxing jixing* (two-sex abnormality, 两性畸形) for "androgyné". Not only does the term sound incongruous in the mythological and metaphorical context of its appearance, its usage also intriguingly goes against Xu's otherwise largely de-pathologizing (re)translation of *À la recherche*.

We could perhaps further advance the observation on the tentative employment of *yin-yang* discourse in the Chinese translation of Proust's sexual vocabulary. In the context of sex and sexuality, *yin* refers predominantly to women and *yang* to men. But as Charlotte Furth (1988, 3) stresses:

There was nothing fixed and immutable about male and female as aspects of yin and yang. [...] They are interdependent, mutually reinforcing and capable of turning into their

opposites. This natural philosophy would seem to lend itself to a broad and tolerant view of variation in sexual behavior and gender roles.

Chou (2000, 18) further clarifies: “yin and yang are not ontologically binary, as what they produce are not generic women and men, but persons in specific relations such as mother and father, husband and wife, brother and sister, emperor and favorite”. In other words, *yin* and *yang* are fundamentally relativistic and conceptually distinguished from Western biological determinism, through which gender differences are naturalized and, quite literally, embodied.

Proust in *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* may have demonstrated a keen interest in appropriating contemporary bio-scientific vocabulary to “naturalize” homosexuality, but this naturalization is also profoundly metaphorical. As Marcel Muller (1971, 472) remarks: “êtres composites, Charlus et Jupien sont les produits d’une biologie métaphorique qui est à la vie ce qu’est à l’art la vision d’un Elstir” (“as composite beings, Charlus and Jupien are the products of a metaphorical biology which is to life what Elstir’s vision is to art”). Far from essentializing gender identities, the conceptual richness of “Proustian *inversion*” lies precisely in its ability to “[blur] the boundaries of male and female, [it] encompasses bisexuality, male homosexuality and lesbianism” (Eells 2002, 24). In this light, the *yin-yang* discourse tentatively articulated in the Chinese translation constitutes a refreshing cross-cultural prism through which the linguistic and philosophical locus of the target text can potentially reaffirm, reshape and reconfigure the source text, encouraging more lateral thinking about it.

It is worth pointing out that there is, indeed, a long list of classical Chinese words and expressions that describe the phenomenon of same-sex eroticism, but they are mostly metaphors or contain explicit references to specific classical tales and anecdotes and have almost never been formulated in a rigorous conceptual or analytical language, which would have been required to accommodate Proust’s text.²¹

Compared to the early translations, the new translations of *À la recherche* demonstrate an epistemic effort for a more varied and theoretically informed expression of homosexuality in Chinese.²² The most obvious evidence is Xu’s aforementioned extensive postscript to his translation of *Sodome et Gomorrhe*. Informed by Eells’s and Compagnon’s critical works, Xu synthetically explains a wide range of issues concerning homosexuality in Proust’s œuvre: the biblical background of Sodom and Gomorrah; the expression “la race maudite” (“the cursed race”) that Proust employs to link homosexuals’ conditions to those of Jews; Proust’s appreciation of Balzac’s designation of homosexuals as “tante” (“auntie”, translated as *guma* 姑妈 in Chinese); the botanic sexual metaphors; the codified and secret language circulated among homosexual characters such as Charlus; the mythological origin of androgyne and hermaphrodite (described in Plato’s *The Symposium*); and finally the theoretical observation on Proust’s conceptual discrimination between “homosexuality” (*tongxinglian*) and “inversion” (*xingyu daocuo*) – which has led the translator to make systemic terminological change with respect to *FT*. Xu (*XT IV*, 747) additionally acknowledges his consultation of certain Chinese sexological works as well as the Chinese translation of the works that Proust himself had consulted while composing the novel, such as Maurice Maeterlinck’s *L’Intelligence des fleurs* (1907), Jules Michelet’s *La Mer* (1861) and Titus Lucretius Carus’s *De rerum natura*.

The other translator, Kexi Zhou, was one of the three collaborators who translated *La Prisonnière* for *FT*, and he then translated the same volume independently. We are thus able to gain a very concrete and specific perspective on the evolving Chinese homosexual discourse by examining how this translator's intellectual development over a decade has shaped his perception of a similar text.

Two most striking examples are found in the passage where guests at the Verdurins' are openly discussing homosexuality. First, the Latin chant which Brichot recites to please Charlus contains the line, "*Sumus enim Sodomitae*" ("Because we are Sodomites") (*RTP III*, 807; *FT III*, 1719; *PT V*, 280). In *FT*, the word "Sodomitae" is directly translated as *jijian* (鸡奸), a rather pejorative term for a homosexual act. It literally means "chicken lewdness", referring to "the belief that domesticated fowls commonly engage in same-sex acts" (Chou 2000, 23). Although most dictionaries consider *jijian* to be the standard translation of "sodomy", the image of lewd chicken seems quite incompatible with the biblical reference to Sodom. There is no Chinese word that can express the biblical city of sin *and* the homosexual act at the same time. Proper nouns such as "Sodom" and "Gomorrhah" can be rendered phonetically as *suo-duo-mu* (索多姆) and *ge-mo-er* (戈摩尔), but these nouns have not developed any sexual sense in Chinese. A person of "suo-duo-mu" is literally understood as an inhabitant of this biblical place, without any sexual overtone: one simply cannot use "inhabitant of Sodom" to mean "homosexual" in Chinese. When translating the word "Sodomite", the Chinese translator has to choose either a *literal* rendition of the term, which is biblical but not "homosexual", or an *explicit* rendition of the term, which is "homosexual" but not biblical. The context of the chant clearly refers to the burning of Sodom, "*Sumus enim Sodomitae / Igne tantum perituri*" ("Because we are Sodomites / And must perish by fire") (*RTP III*, 807; *FT III*, 1719; *PT V*, 280).²³ In the new translation, Zhou replaces *jijian* with a contemporary Chinese slang word *jilao* (基佬), a term of Cantonese origin which has gained huge popularity in recent years, especially with the new meaning and use of *ji* in contemporary Chinese to indicate homoeroticism among men. This second *ji* corresponds to a different Chinese character and bears no relation to "chicken". Interestingly, due to the relative novelty of the Chinese term, the translator feels obliged to explain what *jilao* means in the footnotes: "[contemporary Chinese] slang for male homosexual, which comes from the pronunciation of the English word 'gay', see Yinhe Li's *The Subculture of Homosexuality*" (*ZT V*, 314). Additionally, "lao" is a slightly pejorative word for "man", so *jilao* is really the equivalent of "gay man". In this case, the translator explicitly makes recourse to an indigenous sociological source and applies contemporary new knowledge of gender and sexuality to the translation of *À la recherche*, ascribing – perhaps unintentionally – a new "gay" identity to the text in its Chinese context. However, translating "Sodomitae" as "gay man" still does not settle the issue of the biblical reference. This fundamental cultural and theological dissociation of homosexuality from resonances of "sin" and "divine punishment" that it holds in the biblical tradition will always cause problems when we translate Proust's homosexual discourse into Chinese.²⁴

The second example, which is found two pages later, confirms once again Proust's view of "homosexuality" (as distinguished from "inversion") as a German conception, as Charlus remarks: "mais j'avoue que ce qui a encore le plus changé, c'est ce que les Allemands appellent l'homosexualité" ("But I will admit that the thing that has changed

most of all is what the Germans call homosexuality”) (*RTP III*, 810; *PT V*, 282). Rather surprisingly, Zhou renders “homosexualité” as *deguobing* (德国病) (German disease) in italics and provides the following footnote:

二十世纪初，德国同性恋人数众多，一说柏林当时有二万名男妓。因此法国人称同性恋为“德国病”。此处原文，直译应为“德国人所说的同性恋”。但因原文中前后多处，各以不同的词来指同性恋，为避免行文过于费解，译文稍作了变通。(ZT V, 317)

[At the beginning of the twentieth century, Germany had a great number of homosexuals [*tongxinglian*]; one source states there were twenty thousand male prostitutes in Berlin. Therefore, the French called homosexuality the “German disease”. The original text here should be more literally translated as “what the Germans call homosexuality”. But because different words for homosexual are used before and after the passage, in order to avoid making the text too difficult to understand, the translated text has made some changes.]

What the translator forgets to mention is that this piece of information is also adapted from his anecdotal reading of Y. Li’s work ([1998] 2009, 15). Zhou clearly feels uncomfortable about repetitively using the same word *tongxinglian* for Proust’s “different words for homosexual” and makes a scholarly attempt to adopt a new term with justification from a Chinese source text, which reinforces – but also medicalizes – Proust’s view of “homosexuality” as a German phenomenon. However, what needs to be further clarified is that Proust himself does not hesitate to employ the analogy of physician and patient to depict many of his characters’ considerations of homosexuality. But, as Eve Sedgwick (2008, 225) acutely points out, the figure of physician under the medical discursive system appears only “metaphorically” in this context rather than being there to assume pathological jurisdiction over the homosexual characters in the novel, because “since the late nineteenth century it was by medicine that the work of taxonomy, etiology, diagnosis, *certification* of the phenomenon of sexual inversion was most credibly accomplished” and “even the vestibular attendance of the medical consultant ratifies a startling, irreversible expropriation” (original emphasis). In fact, it was the very existence of medical and popular “expertise” that allowed *anyone* to articulate the issue of homosexuality whilst being “momentarily insulated from the edginess of ‘It takes one to know one’” (225). In fact, when Paul Morand brought Proust a book from Hirschfeld’s Institute of Sexology in Berlin in 1921, Proust was reportedly dismayed by this medical approach to homosexuality: “c’est épouvantable. [...] Toute la poésie de la damnation disparaît. Le vice est devenu une science exacte!” [“it’s appalling. [...] All of the poetry of damnation disappears. Vice has become an exact science!”] (Morand 1954, 54).

Zhou’s reading of Y. Li’s work on homosexuality is worthy of further attention as it plays a crucial role in the evolution of the Chinese homosexual discourse reflected across Zhou’s translations. Li is known to be sympathetic to issues of gay rights and gender equality. In *The Subculture of Homosexuality*, Li notably dedicates her last chapter to the right and appropriate ways one should treat the phenomenon of homosexuality in China. In fact, after homosexuality was removed from the official list of mental illnesses in China in 2001, Li has vowed to propose the same-sex marriage act to the National People’s Congress almost annually since 2003. Li’s influence may well be one of the main reasons why Zhou has made a clear attempt to tone down a number of negative references to homosexuality in Proust’s text and to *de-pathologize* its representation. The word “vice” is most frequently associated with homosexual acts in *À la recherche*. In

early translations as well as Xu's, "vice" is consistently translated as *exi* ("evil habit", 恶习) or *chou'e* ("ugly evil", 丑恶) (*FT I*, 121; *FT II*, 1720; *ES*, 80; *XT IV*, 17), which clearly expresses a firm moral condemnation.²⁵ Notwithstanding this perception of homosexuality as something inherently evil as *FS* and *ES* imply, Zhou consistently changes all the "vices" of homosexuality into *pi-xi* (癖习). *Pi*, as explained earlier, means "proclivity", and *xi* "habit". In many ways, this is not necessarily a deliberate softening of tone purely based on Zhou's "learned sympathy" towards homosexuality, i.e. the cultural change brought about by, for instance, Li's works. Proust's narrator himself states on several occasions that the word "vice" is only used for the sake of convenience, "le vice (on parle ainsi pour la commodité du langage)" ("vice [I put it thus for the sake of linguistic convenience]"); and he questions the validity of this conventional designation of homosexual acts, "leur vice, ou ce que l'on nomme improprement ainsi" ("their vice, or what is improperly so called") (*RTP III*, 15, 19; *PT IV*, 17, 21).

Rather different from the Chinese context, Proust's English translators seem to have been well aware of his subtle homosexual vocabulary since the beginning. Scott Moncrieff, who carried out the first – but incomplete – English translation of *À la recherche* (1922–1930), is said to champion the adroit use of homosexual slang in English. As Terence Kilmartin who "revised" Scott Moncrieff's translation in 1981 points out, Scott Moncrieff's rendition of Proust's expression "ce 'chichi' voulu" (*RTP III*, 717) as "this deliberate 'camping'" (*MT II*, 619) to describe Charlus's affected habit of homosexual chatter may well be the "earliest appearance of this word in print, preceding the lexicographer Eric Partridge's tentative date of 1935 by six years" (Kilmartin 1981, 144). This expression is subsequently changed to "this purposely 'camp' manner" (*PT V*, 195) by Carol Clark for *In Search of Lost Time*. In fact, Scott Moncrieff seems to have grasped the subtlety of Proust's homosexual discourse better than Clark in this case. For example, for Proust's "invertis qui s'interpellent en s'appelant 'ma chère'", is rendered directly by Clark as "homosexuals [...] [who] call out to each other – 'darling!'" (*PT V*, 194), whereas Scott Moncrieff translates it as "inverts who refer to one another as 'she'" (*MT II*, 619). By highlighting the feminine gender in the appellation (i.e. "she" for "ma chère"), Scott Moncrieff's version clearly suggests the man-woman theory behind Proust's preference for "invert" to "homosexual" as discussed earlier in this article.²⁶ In contrast, *FT* almost completely misses Proust's homosexual slang, very vaguely translating "ce 'chichi' voulu" as *niuni zuotai* (忸怩作态) (*FT III*, 1651), a rather literary expression meaning "to behave cooly" or "to be affectedly shy". In his new translation of the same volume, Zhou, while keeping *niuni zuotai* somewhere else in the passage, finally adds the expression *zhe guzi niangniangqiang* (这股子娘娘腔), literally "this blast of effeminate tune" (*ZT V*, 213). In contemporary Chinese, the word *niangniang qiang* strongly implies the idea of homosexuality. Although not translating the same passage, Xu's footnotes and postscript to *Sodome et Gomorrhe* also inform the reader of his gender-sensitized translation. For instance, the translator specifically stresses homosexual characters' tendency to change the gender of the adjectives they use and their preference for feminine nouns in the novel, such as Charlus's ostensibly grammatical insistence on "la petite personne" ("His/Her Highness") and "Son Altesse" ("the young person") (*XT IV*, 714; *RTP III*, 12).

In sum, this evolution of the Chinese sexual discourse from the early to new translations of *À la recherche* reflects not only an enhanced understanding of Proust's work, but more significantly, it signals an *epistemic* shift in the way contemporary Chinese society

perceives gender and sexuality from the 1980s to now. For one thing, as we have seen in the discussions of prefaces and postscript, attention to the theme of homosexuality and to Proust's sexual vocabulary is strongly encouraged by authoritative Western Proust scholars such as Milly, Compagnon, and Eells-Ogée. For another, translations and introductions of Western sexological texts, which largely overdetermine the development of modern and contemporary Chinese sexual discourses, evidently find their literary reincarnations in the translations of Proust's text. The different translation strategies adopted by Xu and Zhou and their recourse to Western and Chinese epistemic resources, respectively should be best regarded as mutually complementary.

However, despite the strong implication of the "improved" new Chinese translations of Proust's sexual discourses, the empirical findings outlined in this article do not primarily aim to provide a general affirmation of the well-known Retranslation Hypothesis in translation studies, i.e. the assumption that "reiterative (and therefore progressively accomplished) force of retranslation will bring about a recovery of the source text and its specificities, be they linguistic or cultural" (Deane-Cox 2014, 4). Not only is my critical angle very specific, but my more important emphasis is on the increasingly varied Chinese expressions and differential (e.g. paratextual, extratextual, and intertextual) strategies employed to accommodate, (re)interpret, and (re)translate Proust's sexual discourses, which mark a sociological evolution in mainland China. As the two new translations are still works in progress, any evaluation of their general translation qualities compared to *FT* would be premature. But perhaps contrary to our expectations of a retranslation, the Chinese Proust scholar Tu has already spotted technical mistranslations in the available volumes of the new translations, which do not exist in *FT* (2010, 146). In fact, the continuous re-editions of *FT*, which should serve as "a good index of public demand" (Pym 1998, 83), show that this collaborative work still wields considerable authority. It has never been Xu's or Zhou's ultimate goal to challenge the extant translation. Their respective individual translations may be "motivated by no more than the retranslator's personal appreciation and understanding of the foreign text, regardless of transindividual factors" (Venuti 2004, 30). And this discursive evolution regarding sadomasochism and homosexuality across the Chinese translations of *À la recherche* has just demonstrated the (re)translators' changed "appreciation and understanding" of the sexological aspect of Proust's work.

To better conceptualize discourses of sadomasochism and homosexuality in certain French texts, Douglas Saylor in his study strongly advocates the term "sadomasochistic homotextuality". The concept of "homotextuality", more precisely, suggests "the way in which homosexuality is interwoven in a text". And "it is not", Saylor continues, "the transference of an actual sociological phenomenon into the literary plane. Rather, it is the creation of a discourse, as all written discussions of sexuality invent, rather than mimic actual realities" (1993, 2–3). The Latin suffix 'textus' further points out the problematics of language in literary representations of "deviant sexuality". In his chapter on Proust, Saylor convincingly argues:

Homosexuality itself is unnameable, natural yet secretive, and has a peculiar relationship with language. The "vice" of homosexuals is not their sexuality, but the perversion of language. [...] the only real perversion is linguistic. [...] Special languages, lies and distinct signs: these are the elements of homotextuality within the text. It is not the actions of the characters which are important, rather, it is the re-rendering of words. (101)

Such homotextuality *in translation*, however, requires a shift of critical focus. It is no longer so much about the textual fabrication and, indeed, complication (especially given the instability of Proust's manuscript and narrative technique), around the unnameability and secrecy of homosexuality. In my analysis, I have demonstrated the Chinese translators' evolving reliance on dominant social and cultural discourses as well as their personal epistemic efforts to describe and understand homosexuality and other "sexual perversions", and to illuminate the sexual secrecy by ways of paratexts and intertexts, and by supplementing and even overcompensating the source text. In a way, the translators are effectively undoing what homosexual characters in the novel are trying to do; the former are textually outing the latter.

Nevertheless, "the perversion of language" doggedly persists in the Chinese translations of *À la recherche*. But in this case, it is the Chinese socio-historical conditioning of ironclad clinical opinions from the 1980s that has linguistically "perverted" Proust's sexual discourses in translation. It must be noted that although, in theory, both the judicial system and the psychiatric establishment have officially relinquished their regulatory power over homosexuality in mainland China since the end of the 1990s (Sang 2003, 169), pathologically inflected discourses on homosexuality and other "sexual perversions" are still widespread in clinical circles, and even in the sphere of higher education.²⁷ In this light, Xu's and Zhou's decision to move away from medical discourses and to resort to, and actively participate in, alternative, sociological and literary discourses on/of sexuality in their respective translations signals a *de facto* political stance, indirectly challenging pathological views of sadomasochism and homosexuality. Their palpable epistemic exertion has brought the active agency of the translator to the forefront, as they are seen to "use language as cultural intervention, as part of an effort to alter expressions of domination, whether at the level of concepts, of syntax or of terminology" (Simon 1996, 9). In a way, this engaging translation process is not fundamentally different from Proust's own linguistic appropriation and conceptual refashioning of the dominant sexological theories of his time. If "linguistic perversion" essentially defines Saylor's "sadomasochistic homotextuality", this concept in Proust's Chinese translations must then be further characterized by the translators' "rendering of words" to de-pathologize perversion.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise stated, Proust quotations in the French original are taken from the new Pléiade edition of *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1987–1989), 4 vols, abbreviated as *RTP I-IV* in the in-text citations. Similarly, the *Full Translation* (H. Li et al. 2008), 3 vols, will be abbreviated as *FT I-III*, Shen's ([1992] 2012) *Essential Selection* as *ES*, the individual translations by Xu (2005–2014) and Zhou (2012) as *XT* and *ZT* respectively (specific volumes will be mentioned in the context). Finally, where possible, the corresponding Proust quotations in English are from the new Penguin translation, 6 vols (Davis et al. 2002), abbreviated as *PT I-VI*. For comparative purposes, Scott Moncrieff's first English translation, *Remembrance of Things Past* (Scott Moncrieff and Hudson 2006) in the Wordsworth Classics edition, 2 vols, will be abbreviated as *MT I-II*. All translations are listed in the References under the translators' names.
2. In many ways, my critical approach is similar to Siobhan Brownlie's (2006) take on the five British (re)translations of Zola's *Nana*, where the comparison of the treatment of sensual material is used to map changing ideologies in British society since Victorian times.

3. Among these, Freud's and Ellis's writings have arguably had the longest-lasting impact on contemporary Chinese sexual discourses until today. I will therefore mainly cite the Chinese translation of these two authors' works while making links to the evolving sexual vocabulary used by Proust's Chinese translators.
4. The Chinese translation of Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité* first appeared in 1988, followed by *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* in 1990. But they proved to be intellectually inaccessible for the Chinese public then.
5. Major works of reference include van Gulik (1961), Xiong (1984), and Hinsch (1992).
6. All translations are by the author unless otherwise indicated.
7. Philippe, Prince of Eulenburg-Hertefeld, was accused of homosexual conduct which possibly involved the emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II himself. This scandal is often considered to have provoked the first major public discussion of homosexuality in Germany (Schmid 2004, 363–364).
8. Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) and *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916–17) and Ellis's *Psychology of Sex* (1933) are among the most frequently retranslated sexological works. For Freud, see Gao (1985), Lin (1986), L. Zhou (2014), Liao (2015), Y. Xu (2015); for Ellis, see Pan ([1946] 1987), Chen et al. (2011), and Jia (2015). *Shi-nüe-kuang* is consistently used in all these translations except for Pan's and Jia's. Some translators such as Lin (1986, 36) frequently replace *kuang* with an even more explicitly pathological term *zheng* (症), meaning "disease" or "illness".
9. Ellis (1933, 113, 147), too, considers sadomasochism to be a "sexual deviation" and advocates "the scientific and medical approach" to "sexual anomalies, and if necessary to treat them, but not to condemn them".
10. For a detailed discussion of the ambient ideological currents in the 1980s, based on official discourses on sexuality in the PRC, see "性行为规范的变迁" in Y. Li (2014).
11. Ellis ([1933] 1954, 112–113) specifically rejects the word "perversion" (*xing biantai*) as unsuitable (hence his suggestion of "sexual deviation") to designate "sexual activities entirely and by preference outside the range in which procreation is possible". Ellis's most celebrated Chinese translator, Guangdan Pan (1987, 182), is also explicit about Ellis's advocacy of the term, which he translates as *xing de qibian* ("sexual divergence and change"). Pan's translation was originally published in 1946 and was reprinted many times in the 1980s. In fact, it continues to be reprinted today, especially due to the epistemic values manifested in Pan's notes that prompted the revaluation and reinvention of traditional Chinese scholarship on sexuality (Guo 2016, 48). In this light, Liu appears to have deliberately chosen to clinically pathologize and morally condemn non-procreative sexual activities.
12. Some translators and sociologists do explain the etymologies of "sadism" and "masochism" and have attempted to translate them phonetically but only in passing. Pan (1987) and Jia (2015) employ *sa-de xianxiang* ("Sade phenomenon") and *ma-suo-ke xianxiang* ("Masoch phenomenon"); Chen et al. (2011) even coin the terms *sa-de-kuang* ("Sade craze") and *ma-suo-ke kuang* ("Masoch craze"). These phonetic renditions have never gained popularity even within professional circles. Incidentally, Sade's and Sacher-Masoch's works still remain largely untranslated in Chinese today.
13. Both *nüelian* and the acronym SM have gained huge popularity in China thanks to sensationalistic Internet media, but they are generally used to describe the kind of mental – rather than physical – sadomasochism frequently found in Chinese and Korean TV drama series.
14. 表达一层特殊含义: 这种倾向与人类的恋爱行为有关, 而不仅仅是施虐和受虐的活动
15. In order to mark the literary register of *pi* for the purpose of comparison with *qingxiang* (tendency), I have chosen to translate it as "proclivity".
16. For an example, see Yongxiong Mai's (2013, 69–70) recent discussion of Deleuze's essay on masochism.
17. For a recent book-length study of Proustian inversion as a literary aesthetic, see Fladenmuller (2015).
18. For an extensive list of similar pathological remarks on homosexuality made by mainland Chinese sexologists and psychiatrists in the 1980s and 1990s, see Chou (2000, 111–113).

19. Main homosexual characters such as Charlus and Saint-Loup in *À la recherche* are portrayed as victims of the “ideal of virility”. See *RTP IV*, 323–325; *FT III*, 2041–2043 for Proust’s explicit discussion of homosexuality and virilism.
20. For a short discussion of the emergence of the new bio-scientific meaning of *xing* (originally meaning “nature” or “human nature”) for “sex” or “sexuality” in the early twentieth century, see Sang (2003, 103). A more extensive exploration of this semantic transformation can be found in Rocha (2010).
21. For example, *fen/yu tao* 分/余桃 (“split peach”), *duan xiu* 断袖 (“cut sleeve”), *long yang* 龙阳 (proper name of a ruler), *qi xiongdi* 契兄弟 (“contract brothers”) for (different kinds of) male homosexuals; words for female homosexuals are fewer, but far from non-existent: *jinlan* 金兰 and *zishu nü* 自梳女 (“self-combing girl”) are two examples. For a fascinating account of these terms and their contexts, see Chou (2000, 26–42) and Li (2009, 9–20).
22. At this stage, it is technically impossible to gain a global view of the evolving discourse on homosexuality across translations because both new translations are still work in progress. The following observations are based on the (re)translated volumes of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (by Xu) and *La Prisonnière* (by Zhou).
23. This verse in *FT* is rather forcedly translated as 就为我们是鸡奸, / 要毁只有被火毁.
24. The sizeable Christian community in China has great diversity but does not share a common discourse on homosexuality, a subject that has rarely topped the priority list of their theological teaching. Christian discourses have seldom been explicitly used to condemn homosexuality in China.
25. Xu does elucidate the ambiguity of Proust’s use of the word “vice” in his postscript (*XT IV*, 736).
26. Conversely, as Eells (2002, 190) remarks, Proust himself often “appropriates English words, encoding them with meaning and placing them almost systematically in a context relating to homosexuality”. See also Hayes (1995). The kind of interpenetration between English and French with regards to homosexual characters’ codified language in Proust’s novel poses further challenges for Chinese translators.
27. The legal action recently taken by a lesbian student from Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, demanding the removal and correction of the pathological reference to homosexuality in one of the national psychology textbooks, has again sparked off public debates and attracted international media attention. See Stephen McDonnell’s report for BBC News, 12 September 2016: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-37335802>.

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