

Joyce Study in China

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I

The appearance of the book form of *Ulysses* in Paris in 1922 caused a great sensation in the Western literary and cultural circle. It is impossible that Chinese students who studied in England and other European countries should not hear something about it. Those who majored in literature or other humanities must be the first ones who were interested in the event. Among those who paid attention to Joyce and his *Ulysses*, poet Xu Zhimo was a good example. Xu went America in 1918, then entered the Cambridge in 1921. He first majored in banking, then turned into literature at Cambridge and began to write modern poetry under the influence of Romanticism. He is surely the one of the earliest Chinese who noticed the publication of *Ulysses* and responded though indirectly but positively to the event. While composing a poem titled "The Twilight of the Western Field at Cambridge," he sang the praise of Joyce's innovation in a short introduction to the poem. He reviewed *Ulysses* in a typical poetic tone: "This book may be a unique one not only this year, but also in a period. Its concluding hundred pages are really

pure prose, smooth and glossy like milk, pure and bright like altar. There are no capital words, and the boring punctuation marks such as ? : () etc are all eliminated. And there is even no passages, only a great clear continuing words are running forward, just like a great bolt of white silk falling, a cataract rushing down, without any traces. It is definitely a brilliant masterpiece."¹⁾ Here Xu was talking about the last chapter of *Ulysses*, which is actually over 40 pages, but was mistaken for some 100. It is still a question whether Xu read or finished reading the book or not. Anyway, his praise is sincerer and his view is keenly insightful.

Meanwhile, a small group of scholars back in China also came to know Joyce and his book. Shen Yanbing (Mao Dun) is the one who is worthwhile mentioning here. As one of the leading Modern Chinese writers and the founders of *Wenxueyanjiuhui* (The Society for Literary Studies) and *Xiaoshuoyuebao* (The Fiction Monthly), Shen started studying literary theory and translating foreign literatures since 1920. Shen introduced Joyce and his *Ulysses* shortly after it appeared in 1922 and published it in *Xiaoshuoyuebao*, the periodical he edited. His introduction read like this: "Recently, the book form of Joyce's *Ulysses* was published, which has received different responses. Joyce is an American new quasi-Dadaist, who first published the book in installments in *Little Review*, a periodical that advocated being over common interests. Then some "common" readers wrote to the editorial board of *Little Review* questioning and even accusing the book while some youngsters sang high praise to it. British youth holds good feelings for him, which probably resulted from Wells' praise of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, a book also done by Joyce and a bit earlier than *Ulysses*. But great critic Arnold Bennett showed dissatisfaction in his recent essay, saying that Joyce broke the traditional novel rules and his broken sentences run against the genre conventions, though a few best passages are amusingly immortal. However, Bennett's review is filled with more accusations and could hardly be regarded as positive review of this masterpiece."²⁾ This introduction is a short piece inserted in an article generally introducing English and American literature at that time. Definitely Shen had no chance to read the novel and was not quite familiar with

Joyce and his works. He mistook Joyce as an American; called him "a quasi-Dadaist." It goes without saying that what he said here is mostly taken from other foreign reviews. We do not know how and where Shen got to know Joyce and his book, but one thing is clear, he has a keen insight for literary innovations and his sympathy is with Joyce and his "masterpiece." This is not only the case for Shen Yanbing, but also for his fellow writers Zheng zhenduo, Zhao Jingshen, Zhao Jiabi, Xu Xiacun, etc. All of these writers show great interest in Modernist literature and had something to say about Joyce.

Down to the next decade, as more Modernist literary works were introduced from West into China, the introduction of James Joyce also increased. In 1934, "Counterparts" was translated into Chinese by Fu Donghua as Fuben and published together with a portrait of Joyce and a cartoon in *Wenxue (Literature)*.³⁾ A group of scholars began to write something about Joyce. Among the short introductions and reviews done by Gao Ming, Yang Changxi, Zhao Jingshen, Zhao Jiabi, Fei Jianzhao and Zhou Libo, etc. the last two stand out prominently.⁴⁾ Fei Jianzhao wrote an short essay on Joyce and published it on *Literature and Art Monthly*, giving a brief introduction to *Dubliners*, *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. Fei tries to be critical, saying that *Ulysses* is an encyclopedic book of modern world, dealing with its all sides, politics, religion, practical and humanism, etc. Although it is inspiring in many ways, it apparently lacks harmony in whole while focusing on parts, and lacks things spiritual while giving priority to things physical. This short piece, though seemingly superficial to some extent, is perhaps one of the best Joyce criticisms that we can find in that period.⁵⁾ Another critical piece titled "James Joyce" was written by the modern Chinese writer Zhou Libo and published on *Shenbao* (Shanghai Daily) in 1935.⁶⁾ This longer essay generally follows ex-Soviet Union's views by calling Joyce a decadent writer. Obviously, Zhou did not read anything by Joyce, and his criticism is wholly subjective and blind.

Following Fu Donghua's translation of "Counterparts," more translation of Joyce appeared on literary periodicals. We read translations of a few poems, "A Painful Case," a few passages from *Ulysses* and even Edmund Wilson's critical

essay in a shortly-lived and less influential magazine *Xiyangwenxue* (*Western Literature*) in 1941.

Generally speaking, during some 30 years from 1919 to 1949, which is widely known as a period of *Modern Chinese Literature*, the introduction and translation of James Joyce in China was still on its initial stage. Neither the translation, nor the review has been carried on to certain extent and a deeper level. The translations and introductions were scattered and small-scaled. Their points of view were partial and superficial. We could not find any striking influence of this great modernist master on any Modern Chinese writers in that period. Why is it like that? We may give the following reasons: first of all, since the Opium War in 1840, feudalist China began to dismantle and the whole nation sank into predicament and great sufferings. Facing the aggression and repression of colonialist and imperialist powers, Chinese people are eager to find a way to rebuild the nation. This emergent task leads to social reform and cultural reform as well. That is why the May Fourth 1919 started a so-called New Cultural Movement, which called reforms in the whole area of culture. Hence, we had *Baihuawen Yundong* (speaking in vernaculars instead of classical Chinese), Revolutions in Poetry, Fiction and Literature as well. Within such a kind of revolutionary atmosphere, writers, scholars would try their utmost to reflect the reality and life. This naturally leads them approaching Realism, but away from Modernism. Later, due to the Japanese invasion, the whole nation needs to be further united in spirit. That is why during the 30 years before 1949, Nationalism in politics and Realism in culture became the main trend and Modernist writers like Joyce inevitably be neglected. Another reason is that even in West modernist trend confronted with strong resistance from the traditional field. As a matter of fact, *Ulysses* had been rebuked rather than accepted within certain span of time. It had not been widely acknowledged until scores later. If it takes some time for Westerners to accept it as a masterpiece, it must logically take longer time for non-Westerners such as Chinese to get to know its value. The last but not least reason might be the influence from ex-Soviet Union where after October Revolution, a so-called Socialist Realism had been dominating the literary field.

Lots of left-wing intellectuals in China had long been sticking to Soviet example in their ideology and cultural production. They had no way but choosing realist principle in their literary and cultural practice. That is why there was very little space for Modernists like Joyce in 20s to 40s China.

Anyway, towards the end of 30s, then down to the 40s, there appeared a change in literary circle after all. Some writers and scholars showed more concern for modernism and Western influence. Periodical named *Modern* was appeared. And a group of poets started writing Modernist poetry, borrowing from T. S. Eliot and imagists. In the circumstances, Joyce was more talked and discussed. Besides what I have said above, one person should be mentioned. That is Xiao Qian. Xiao said that he heard of Joyce and his *Ulysses* as early as 1929 and read it later when he taught at School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London in 1939. Just this encounter with the book made him determined to translate it with his wife later in early 90s and so we have Xiao and Wen's translation of the book later.

II

It is known to everyone that after the founding of the New Republic in 1949, China took a path of self-independent and self-contained policy in her development. In the 50s and 60s, she exclusively shunned anything Western and only followed ex-Soviet example politically, economically and culturally. Therefore, all Modernists including Joyce were swept away into the garbage can. Later the Great Cultural Revolution occurred. All traditional things were eradicated, not to speak of things Western. China became a barren land culturally during that time. There was no change until the end of 70s when China took a reform-and-open policy.

In the 80's, things began to change remarkably and China entered into a so-called New Period in every field. Joyce study came to its second stage. Over 15 years from 1978 to 1993, there have been over 20 essays. The 80s found that *Dubliners*, *Portrait* were translated, some critical papers appeared. The earliest

translation, which were three stories translated by Wang Zhiliang and Zhongbai, were published on *Waiguowenyi (Foreign Literature and Art)*,⁷⁾ This was followed by the translation of other stories from *Dubliners* and parts from Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce*. It is more significant to note that the complete translation of *Portrait* was translated and published even before *Dubliners*. The translator Huang Yushi is an excellent scholar who has a splendid command of both English and Chinese. The translation, though some sentences were not rendered so faithfully, is smooth and elegant in lot of places.⁸⁾ Meanwhile, chapters from *Ulysses* were also translated. In 1982, Professor Jin Di from College of Tianjin Foreign Languages first translated Chapter 2 from *Ulysses* and published it in *Selected Foreign Modernist Works*, and five years later he added translations of Chapters 6, 10 and part of Chapter 18, and published them on the issue No.1 of *World Literature*.⁹⁾ My translation of Chapter 3 from *Ulysses* with a short introduction to James Joyce and his book was published in the book entitled *General Survey of Foreign Modernist Literature* in 1985.¹⁰⁾ The complete translation of *Ulysses* did not come out until early 90s. These translations are far better than that of the first stage in all senses.

Study and preliminary criticism of James Joyce began simultaneously with the translation. Late Professor Wang Zuoliang wrote in an academic prose style a long essay "James Joyce and 'Fearful Beauty,'" describing what he saw and thought during centenary activities of Joyce's birthday held in Dublin.¹¹⁾ This essay, inserted with personal insights and speculative criticism here and there. He thought that Bloom is not a clown but an upright man with a sense of justice. Molly is not a bawdy woman but a person with a sense of beauty and full of sympathy and love. He did not think that Joyce purely describes Modern Man as an anti-hero. The parallel structure Joyce made with Homer's *Odyssey* shows that he had a complicated sense of hero. These viewpoints fostered the budding criticism of James Joyce in China. Four years later, Professor Jin Di wrote an article "A Unique Book in the Western Literature," published in No.1 of *World Literature* 1986, Which completely introduced James Joyce and his works, specifically focusing on *Ulysses*. In terms of the achievement in Joyce scholarship, Jin Din is probably the

first one we have in the past 20 years. He had been studying *Ulysses* since early 80s and still doing it now. Thanks to his effort that we have a better Chinese version of *Ulysses* now.

Another essay written by Zhang Boxiang in the same year gave an overall introduction to the *Portrait*, foregrounding its theme, structure and artistic features.¹²⁾ In the following couple of years, we saw Yao Jinqing's "James Joyce, the Outstanding Representative of the Stream of Consciousness," which tries to analyze Joyce's four fictions from the perspective of Stream of Consciousness in an all round way, Ding Hongying's "Entering the Hall from lingering outside: *Ulysses* in China," which briefly traces the history of Joyce study in China, Ruan Wei's "Talking on Artistic Representation from *Ulysses*," which calmly and persuasively discusses the realist factors implied in the technique of Stream of Consciousness, displaying a sort theoretical depth. Basically, the above-mentioned five essays represent a group of some 30 pieces on Joyce during 80s Chinese literary circle.

In a word, Joyce study and criticism in 80s China just bloomed in budding flowers. It would not blossomed into richer granaries until 1994, the year, which saw first complete Chinese version of *Ulysses*.

III

Joyce study in the 90s China was growing faster and on a larger scale. First we had the complete translation of *Ulysses* in 1994. That year witnessed two Chinese version of the whole book. Yilin press in Nanjing published Xiao Qian and Wen Jieruo's version, then, People's Press of Literature in Beijing printed Jin Di's translation (Vol. 1). A Decade later, Yanshan Press published my version of its 10 Chapters in Selected Works of James Joyce. Forthcoming will be the quacy-Complete Works of James Joyce edited by Hebei Educational Press. A Colleague and me co-edit the project, in which I translate *Ulysses* and one of my Ph.D. student does the translation of *Short Finnegans Wake* (Antoney Powers').

There were six or seven critical books and 100 essays published in the decade. Among the books, we may cite Chen Shu's *Guide to Ulysses*, Yuan Decheng's *James Joyce: the Modern Ulysses* (Sichuan People's Press, 1999), Li Weiping's *Joyce's Aesthetic Ideas and Art of Fiction* (Shanghai Foreign Languages Educational Press, 2000), Jin Di's *Shamrock and Chopsticks*, (City University of Hong Kong Press, 2001, only English Version), Ma Kefei and Li Shaoqiang's *The Nightmare of the Master in Stream of Consciousness: Joyce and his Ulysses* (Epoch Press of Art and Literature, 2001), Wang Yougui's *Essays on Joyce* (The Press of Southwestern Normal University, 2002), Dai Congrong's *The Book of Liberty: A Formal Study of Finnegans Wake* (Shanghai Foreign Languages Educational Press, 2005). Some biographical works of Joyce, such as Costello's *James Joyce* were also appeared.

These books deal with Joyce in different aspects. Some do basic interpretations of Joyce's works; some discuss the relation of Joyce to his works; some analyze Joyce's themes and characters; some concentrate on Joyce's form or technique of Stream of Consciousness; some emphatically talk on certain topics, for instance, modernity, aesthetics, literary influence, etc. Among these books, Ji Di's *Shamrock* and Dai Congrong's *The Book of Liberty* are of more importance. Jin's book is structured in three parts, of which the first one explores the historical and cultural reasons why Joyce and his works had long been neglected and finally accepted in China, the second one introduces how he overcame the obstacles between linguistic and cultural differences in the process of his translating *Ulysses*, and the third one analyzes Bloom's character formation, his relation to Joyce himself, his place in art history and universal anthropological significance. Dai's book is the first monograph, which painstakingly attempts to explore *Finnegans Wake* under unfavorable conditions that no Chinese version of the book has been out. Dai tries to analyze *Wake*'s form from a specific angle of ideology and her analysis is apparently illuminating. These two books represent the academic achievement Chinese scholars have made in Joyce studies up to now. They both, I would say, are good and useful reference books for Chinese Joyce scholars.

Among some 100 critical articles, over 10 should be mentioned here. Li Mengtao's "Joyce's Exile Aesthetics and the Practicing of Self-exile" discusses the reasons why Joyce chose self-exile and concludes that the confinement and repression caused by British colonialism and Roman Catholicism in Ireland, the dominating liberalism and Aesthetic Movement in the end of 19th century Europe, the Modernist trend and Avant-gardism, the influence of Dante and Ibsen altogether spur Joyce embarking on the road of self-exile. His another essay "Joyce's Multimedia Artistic World: An Interpretation of His Aesthetics and Works" talks about non-personification, sublimity and withdrawal of the author based on the analysis of Joyce's works and thinks that Joyce's use of the technique of stream of consciousness, multiple perspective narration and style is to conceal the omnipresence of the author. Besides, Joyce also employs lots of metaphor, irony and myth, and his purpose is to discover the transcending, juxtaposing, multi-valenced world. All this shows certain impact that Flaubert and Ibsen's literary ideal of pure objectivist aesthetic orientation has made on him.¹³⁾ Guo Jun in her "Joyce's Epiphany Aesthetics and Its Employment in *Portrait*"¹⁴⁾ raises what Joyce thinks about epiphany to the category of Aesthetics. She asserts that epiphany is an aesthetic principle Joyce tries to apply since he wrote *Dubliners*, which reflects the influence from the Christian Aesthetics of the Middle Ages, Modern spiritualism, and Abstract Art which was highly philosophized. She discusses what Stephen calls the three stages of the Aesthetic process from Wholeness to Harmony to Radiance, and argues that Joyce's epiphany corresponds to Stephen's Radiance. She says this stage of Radiance or Epiphany enable the aesthetic subject to find universality from particularity, eternity from transience, thus assuring the grasp of aesthetic subject on the aesthetic object and the correspondence of beauty to truth. According to Guo, the employment of epiphany principle in *Portrait* is the starting point that Joyce endeavors to do in all his literary creations. Another Joyce scholar Li Weiping also discusses Joyce's aesthetic thought, advocating that Joyce has a complete aesthetic system, which lays as the foundation for all his works. Li traces the source of Joyce's aesthetic system to Aristotle, Aquinas and Vico. Li expounds that what Joyce

knows about Aristotelian aesthetics forms the original streams of his aesthetic system. Joyce accepts Aristotle's theory of mimesis but thinks that art should imitate *the essence* of Nature and reality. He agrees with Aristotle that drama can be classified into tragedy and comedy, but greatly revises the traditional Western drama aesthetics since Aristotle by arguing that comedy is a more perfect genre than tragedy and Modern man finds more aesthetic satisfaction from the former. Aquinas' aesthetic thoughts have an even stronger influence on Joyce, enlightening his early aesthetic concepts of Harmony and Epiphany, which form the core of his aesthetic system. Vico's theory about historical cycling and aesthetic thoughts emphatically give Joyce food for his later speculations about chaos aesthetics and word revolution, which are definitely embodied in his *Finnegans Wake*.¹⁵⁾

Among the essays, which take a philosophical perspective, two stand out. Zeng Yanbing and Chen Qihong's "Soul Phenomenology in Literature: On *Ulysses*" applies Husserl's phenomenology in reading this novel. They argue that the unique way of soul wandering displayed in *Ulysses* is just the reduction of demystified Modern Man's soul. This essential reflection on literary phenomenology offers us an illuminating perspective.¹⁶⁾ Liu Xiangyu's "*Finnegans Wake* in the Contexts of Philosophy and Science" is another example. The essay discusses the borrowing of Joyce from philosophy and science, arguing that Vico's cyclical theory of history provides a skeleton for Joyce's *Wake*, Bruno's union of the opposites is doubtlessly incorporated into the form and characterization of the book. Freud and Jung's analytical psychology also finds traces in it, quite probably without Joyce's self awareness. Moreover, Liu also asserts that Einstein's theory of relativity, principles of complementarity and uncertainty in quantum mechanics surely illuminate Joyce's mind in his word revolution. Liu's discussion reveals certain relations between literature and philosophy, literature and science, and also shows that this so called book from the heaven is not undecipherable.¹⁷⁾

Some scholars take a perspective from comparative literature or cultural studies. Dai Congrong in her "Joyce and Irish Folk Humor Culture" tries to compare Joyce and Bakhtin in terms of latter's carnival poetics. She analyses humorous factors of

Irish folk culture in Joyce's later writings and points out that Irish folk humor culture changes not only Joyce's value selection, making him turning from early super-human to later super-collectivity, but also his subject, structure and style to a great extent.¹⁸⁾ Wang Yougui in his "Waking for Finnegans: Politics in Linguistic Fragments" tries to read this book from a perspective of postmodern linguistic politics and discloses the author's political subversive significance by breaking language rules and conventions.¹⁹⁾ Guo Jun, as an energetic young Joyce scholar, published three theses in years from 2004 to 2005. In "Nightmare of History and Art of Injury: An Interpretation of Joyce's Fictional Art," she argues that Joyce's fiction has an effect of dual narratives. It bares unutterable emotion, especially the emotion that cannot be expressed in colonial language. Therefore, Joyce's fictional art is a sort of hurt art, which inevitably leads to obscurity, yet this approach is just the right one that Joyce could employ to tell the history of his Ireland. Joyce's four fictions form a masterpiece, which is both an epic and an autobiography, and also a cultural project of de-colonialism. Guo thinks that Joyce's literary innovation marks the maturing process of his critical consciousness as an Irish intellectual. We might say that Guo Jun's theses set an example for a political and historical reading of James Joyce.²⁰⁾

There are certainly studies that focus on the Artistic features of Joyce's works. Li Weiping in his book, *Joyce's Aesthetic Thoughts and Fictional Art* emphatically studies Joyce's art in all his works. He holds that within nearly 40 years' literary life, Joyce experienced in his artistic creation a changing process from realism to modernism, then to postmodernism, of which, *Dubliners* is the product of combination of naturalism and symbolism, marking his determination to say farewell to tradition and take a new path of innovation and experimentation; whereas *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a product in the process he turned from realism to modernism. *Portrait* attempts to employ technique of Stream of Consciousness, showing that a new element in his writing is born. *Ulysses*, which almost employs all new means of Modernist literature, is a great monument of Modernist literature and a touchstone of Novel of Stream of Consciousness as

well. *Finnegans Wake* is the harbinger of postmodernism, from which we witness the turning of modernism, which is self-centered to postmodernism, which is language-centered. Li concludes that Joyce represents the direction of 20th century literary production.²¹⁾ Dai Congrong's study concentrates on the form of Joyce's production. Her three essays "Joyce and Form," "The Book of Liberty: A Formal Study of *Finnegans Wake*" and "On the Roundabout Narration in *Finnegans Wake*" all discuss formal factors in this book. She highly praises Joyce's efforts made on formal innovation and its achievements. She says that Joyce dug into the real nature of words, narration and style while stressing the real nature of subject matter. He gives priority to stylistic experiment of Stream of Consciousness, which displays the original psychological traces of the characters while paying much attention to the material properties of words that are both visual and audile. Dai thinks that Joyce adheres to the modern idea that form is content and content form. His formal experiment does not aim at form itself but the essence of form and its signifying function. Joyce's innovation in form is to realize the unity of form and textual material, gain the harmony of theme with the rhythm of life and time, which uncovers the real mode as how human consciousness and unconsciousness exist. In his early works, Joyce sticks to the modernist narrative principle, which is neutral and indifferent, but in *Wake* he turns to postmodern narration, which makes narration narrator's pleasant utterance.²²⁾ Li Weiping in his book said above also discusses Joyce's verbal autonomy and word revolution while Yuan Decheng talks about Joyce's views on language and dialogic nature. And Wang Yougui explores the body language and repetitions in Joyce's works.²³⁾

Studies on Joyce's narrative art can also be found in Liu Xiangyu's "Unique Fugal Style: On the Music in Chapter 11 of *Ulysses*," Wang Yougui's "Disorderly and Noisy Modern Sound: Joyce's *Ulysses*." Liu discusses "Sirens" Episode in detail in terms of musical allusions and its implications while Wang generally talks about sound effect in the book. Feng Jianming's "The Poetic Feature of *Finnegans Wake*" explores from different perspectives the musical feature in Joyce's fiction, inviting discussion of intertextual and intercultural study of Joyce's works.²⁴⁾ Liu Yan reads

Ulysses in terms of Joseph Frank's argument on spatial form, pointing out that Joyce realizes the aspiration of the creative subject in overcoming time by space, and also achieves a dimension of the control of the narration by spatial sense. This kind of reading also makes a claim on readers that they should read the text from the perspective of spatial form. Liu Yan in another study also discusses the mythical features of *Ulysses* while Yang Jian in an article explores the archetypal features of *Ulysses* from the point of view of archetypal criticism.²⁵⁾ Recently I published two long articles mapping Joyce criticism in Western World.²⁶⁾

In general, we may say that Joyce study in China has achieved a great deal in past decade. It is just since the 90s of the last century that it has gradually developed into a sort of real criticism. However, in comparison with international Joyce studies, it is still local in discourse, narrow in scope and scattered on topics. We have no *systematic* studies on Joyce and his works, no close reading of his *Ulysses* or *Wake*. We have no translation of *Wake*, no specific institution that could devote itself exclusively to Joyce study. We have little exchanges with international Joyce organizations and scholars. We have few courses on Joyce that could be offered to graduates and undergraduates. We have no academic project for studying Joyce. We look forward to seeing changes in years to come.

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Notes

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Abstract

Joyce Study in China

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The study of James Joyce in China might be divided into three stages. The first stage starts from the year when *Ulysses* was published in 1922, while some modern Chinese writers noticed it and introduced it briefly here and there in Chinese periodicals, to the year 1977 when China was ready to be open again to the Western cultures. The second stage is from 1978 to 1993 when the first Chinese version of *Ulysses* would come out soon. The third stage is from 1994, which saw two Chinese versions of *Ulysses* in the same year, to the present. At the first stage, there were only very scattered and shallow introductions. And at the second stage, we gradually studied Joyce and his works in an expanding scope with more translations and critical scholars. At the third stage, our Joyce study comes of age in a sense. But there is still a long way to go, if we are to join the main stream of international Joyce studies.

■ **Key words:** Joyce, *Ulysses*, China, introduction, translation, criticism