

DOCTORAL THESIS

A polysystemic study of the translations of modernist fiction in Literary current monthly magazine (1956-1959)

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**A Polysystemic Study of the Translations of Modernist Fiction
in *Literary Current Monthly Magazine* (1956-1959)**

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for the degree of

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Principal supervisor: Professor Martha P. Y. Cheung

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Abstract

On 18 March 1956, Ma Lang (馬朗, penname of Ma Boliang 馬博良) launched in Hong Kong the literary journal '文藝新潮' (*Literary Current Monthly Magazine*, 1956-1959) as a vehicle for publishing both creative work of Chinese writers and translations of modernist literature. The translations of modernist fiction published in *Literary Current Monthly Magazine* constituted the first systematic attempt in Hong Kong to introduce Chinese readers to modernist fiction from foreign literatures. The pioneering efforts of the editor and translators of *Literary Current Monthly Magazine*, however, have never been the subject of a scholarly investigation. The translations of modernist fiction published in *Literary Current Monthly Magazine* have been accorded scant, if any, attention by the existing books on the history of Hong Kong literature. This thesis represents the first sustained investigation into the translations of modernist fiction published in *Literary Current Monthly Magazine*. This thesis will focus on the active role that these translations played in the history of Hong Kong literature, and, in doing so, calls attention to the inadequate account of these translations in the study of Hong Kong literature.

This thesis draws on Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory and Gideon Toury's norms-based approach to translation studies, in order to construct a theoretical framework that allows translation to come into view as a practice that interacts with the literary and ideological trends of a culture.

A number of translations in *Literary Current Monthly Magazine* will be discussed under the headings 'Translations of Existentialist Fiction', 'Translations of Psychological Fiction' and 'Translations of Fantastic Fiction'. Prefaces, translator's notes and statements about translation will be examined, and translations will be mapped onto their source texts, in order to study the norms adopted by these translations.

Norms adopted by the translations of modernist fiction published in *Literary Current Monthly Magazine* will be considered in the context of contemporary translations and fictional writing in Hong Kong literature, in order to shed light on the new elements introduced into Hong Kong literature by these translations.

It will be argued that the translations of modernist fiction published in *Literary Current Monthly Magazine* not only served to legitimise the modernist trend in fiction writing emerging in Hong Kong in the early 1960s, but also set a trend for literary translation in Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s.

By studying the norms of the translations of modernist fiction published in *Literary Current Monthly Magazine* within a framework provided by polysystem theory, this thesis contributes to an understanding of the active role that these

translations played in introducing new elements into Hong Kong literature, and in suggesting directions for subsequent literary translation and fictional writing in Hong Kong literature.

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