

# **Translation and Literary Politics: Baudelaire in the New Literature Movement, 1921-1925<sup>1</sup>**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper studies the translations of Charles Baudelaire in China between 1921 and 1925. It uses the translated poems of Baudelaire as an axis to foreground the crucial role the poet played in writing part of the history of Modern Chinese Literature in question. It reexamines the literary activities that involved the codification of the New Literature envisaged by the literary revolutionists and how this new poetics competed with others for dominance. Baudelaire's two collections of poems, *Les fleurs du mal* and *Le Spleen de Paris*, which differ drastically in their form and diction while sharing the dubious label of Decadence, were particularly sensitive to the conflicting literary discourses in China which focused mainly on the vernacular problem, the viability of traditional versification, and the function of literature in society. Different poems were appropriated by different translators and literary institutions to play the literary politics of inclusion and exclusion. The phenomenon of Baudelaire fighting against himself not only reveals the irony of literary fortune, but also lays bare the manipulative nature of translation which targets on specific agendas.

## **KEY WORDS**

Translation studies  
Modern Chinese Literature  
Baudelaire, Charles  
Literary politics

Descriptive translation studies  
New Literature Movement  
Poems in Prose



Translation, the rewriting of a text in a different language and a different context, is a goal-oriented project that serves particular purposes and addresses specific problems in the target culture. What follows is a study of the translations of Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) in China between 1921 and 1925. Special attention will be paid to the institutional manipulation that informed certain translation projects to the effect that Baudelaire was appropriated by literary patronages taking various forms, ranging from the person to literary groups to literary journals, to play the literary politics of inclusion and exclusion. His poems were reworked in different hands to serve alternative poetics that competed for dominance in May Fourth China; as it were, Baudelaire fought against himself on a foreign battlefield—an exciting history which will be chronicled in no time.

Hu Shih's 胡適 1917 "first manifesto" of the New Literature Movement envisages a new poetics which necessitates a break with the form and subject matter of the traditional Chinese Literature.<sup>2</sup> Two years later he assumed a more resolute position that a literary revolution has to be attained through the "liberation of language and form" (Hu 1919: 295). He argues that as a result of formal constraints, the spirit could not develop freely and the subject matter, though good, could not be expressed adequately. Therefore, to cultivate new spirit and explore new subject matter, one could not but break the bonds of form (Hu 1919: 295). Implicit in this pronouncement is the codification of a new poetics through language and form and the subject matter that befit the "modern" sensibility, anticipating a poetry written in unrhymed *pai-hua* 白話, addressing the immediate concerns of the people, such as the shaking off of the bondage of

everything that signifies the presence of Confucian ideals and traditional morality and ethics, and the advocating of freedom and individualism—the “new spirit” that informed his discourse of literary revolution.

It was quite a coincidence that in the same year Baudelaire made his first appearance in China when Chou Tso-jen 周作人 acknowledged his indebtedness to his poems in prose in the preface to his first poetic work “Hsiao-he” 小河 (Rivulet) published in *Hsin Ch'ing-nien* 新青年 (New Youth), which was hailed by Hu Shih as the “first masterpiece of new poetry”:

有人問我這詩是什麼體，連自己也回答不出。法國波特來爾 (Baudelaire) 提倡起來的散文詩，略略相像，不過他是用散文格式，現在卻一行一行的分寫了。內容大致仿那歐洲的俗歌；俗歌本來最要押韻，現在卻無韻。或者算不得詩，也未可知；但這是沒有什麼關係。(Chou 1919a: 91)

Someone asked me what the genre of this poem is. Even I myself don't know the answer. It slightly resembles the poem in prose advocated by Baudelaire in France. But he wrote in prose, and I write in separate lines. The content in general imitates that of the European folk songs. Folk songs should have end-rhymes, but this does not rhyme. It is doubtful whether it is still a poem, but that doesn't matter.

This preface is a further codification of the poetics envisaged by Hu Shih. The genre “poem in prose” is highlighted as a revolutionary new genre, as a challenge to the out-dated poetic system. The repeated reference to the form of his poem signals Chou's urge to create a new form for Chinese poetry: a piece of prose work written in separated lines or unrhymed *pai-hua* poetry.

But samples of Baudelaire's poem in prose appeared only after the establishment of the Society for Literary Research in December 4, 1920, with the revamped *Hsiao-shuo yüeh-pao* 小說月報 (Short

Story Magazine), *Wen-hsüeh hsün-k'an* 文學旬刊 (Literature ten-daily), the supplement of *Shih-shih hsün-pao* 時事新報 (New times) in Shanghai, *Ch'en-pao fu-k'an* 晨報副刊 (Morning post supplement) in Peking and later *Yü-ssu* 語絲 (Thread of talk) as its literary organs. Between November 1921 and April 1922, Chou Tso-jen translated altogether eight poems from *Le Spleen de Paris*, a collection of poems in prose, including "L'Étranger," "Le Chien et le flacon," "Un hémisphère dans une chevelure," "Enivrez-vous," "Les Fenêtres," "Le Port," "Les Yeux des pauvres," and "Les Bienfaits de la lune." After Chou Tso-jen's first attempts, there appeared from 1923 to 1925 other translations, most of which were different versions of those Chou had translated before. Yü P'ing-po 俞平伯 translated two poems in 1923. One is "Enivrez-vous" and the other is "Anywhere Out of the World." Some other translations were done by neither poets nor theorists. For instance, Su Chao-lung 蘇兆龍 translated "Les Bienfaits de la lune," and "Laquelle est la vraie?" Chang Ting-huang 張定璜 translated "Le Miroir," "Laquelle est la vraie?" "Les Fenêtres," "Les Bienfaits de la lune," "Le Chien et le flacon," Chiao Chü-yin 焦菊隱 translated "Laquelle est la vraie?" and Wang Wei-k'e 王維克 translated "La Chambre double."

From this brief survey of the choice of Baudelaire's poems in prose for translation, it is obvious that Chou Tso-jen's translations made up a large portion of the repertoire. The high degree of overlapping in the selection might appropriately reflect their shared literary taste among members of the the Society for Literary Research.

Compared to *Le Spleen de Paris*, *Les Fleurs du mal* was not so welcomed by translators. Liu Yen-ling 劉延陵 translated "Correspondances" in his 1922 article on French symbolism and free verse. At the end of 1924, Hsü Chih-mo 徐志摩 translated "Une charogne" in *Yü-ssu*, followed by two "corrective" translations of the same poem published in *Wen-hsüeh hsün-k'an*. In late 1925, *Hsüeh-heng* 學衡 (Critical review), the die-hard opponent to literary revolution, published Li Ssu-chuen's 李思純 *Hsien-ho chi* 仙河集

(*Le Seine*), a collection of translated poems written by French poets spanning from the 14th Century to the 19th Century, including ten poems from Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

Leaving aside for the moment the fact that Li Ssu-chuen, who adopted the antagonistic attitude of the Critical Review Group toward the New Literature Movement and "Decadent" literature, had misrepresented Baudelaire, we can say that in terms of quantity the translation of Baudelaire done by the literary revolutionists formed an integrated system with the Society for Literary Research and its literary organs serving as patronages. These patronages nurtured young writers and facilitated the publication of their translations and creative works. But most importantly, these patronages codified and canonized a new poetics for the practitioners of New Literature by engaging in all sorts of literary praxis and controversies. These activities played the politics of inclusion and exclusion, resulting in the suppression of alternative poetics—a fascinating phenomenon which can be unfolded through a closer look at the repertoire of the translated poems and the translation behavior implicit in each translation project.

The choice of the genre poem in prose was an obvious gesture on the part of the literary revolutionists to canonize a revolutionary mode of expression. Chou Tso-jen's reference to Baudelaire's poems in prose in his preface to his poem was to create a parallel and thus a justification of the unrhymed *pai-hua* vernacular. And interestingly, the twelve poems in prose favored by the translators, which occupy slightly more than one-fifth of the total of *Le Spleen de Paris*, are the shortest ones in the collection and, with the exception of "Le Chien et le flacon" and "Les Yeux des pauvres," can be categorized as "lyrical poems," as opposed to the rest, which may be more appropriately read as "essays" and "short stories." The preference for the "lyrical" in the genre of prose poem "violated" the traditional Chinese criterion of "lyricism." It highlighted the disposability of form and the quintessence of the lyrical.

Thematically, the chosen poems fall into several categories that reflect the reality as the May Fourth intellectuals saw it. Several

themes are observable in the twelve poems published. The theme of the "outcast," for instance, is the most prominent one. The enigmatic outsider in "L'Étranger," without family, friends and homeland, seeks refuge in the contemplation of clouds. The speaker in "Le Port," having lost all curiosity and ambition, sees the port as a "séjour charmant pour une âme fatiguée des luttes de la vie." "Les Bienfaits de la lune," though obviously dwelling on the idea of the *poète maudit*, may share the theme of the outcast. Another observable theme is the theme of "elsewhere," as in "Un hémisphère dans une chevelure," where the speaker finds consolation in his lover's hair; in "Enivrez-vous," where the speaker makes it an imperative to escape from the burden of time into the world of drunkenness; in "Anywhere out of the World," where the melancholic soul prefers anywhere out of the world, and in "La Chambre double," where the world of imagination is preferred to the world of reality. "Les Fenêtres" depicts the universal image of the poor, while "Le Chien et le flacon" is a direct criticism of the vulgar mass. These themes reflected, or obliquely criticized, the reality in May Fourth China. Hence it is eminently appropriate to say that Baudelaire's Poems in prose answered the demands of the new poetics and explained the relevance of what the literary revolutionists were after.

Chou Tso-jen was one of the translators who had such a clear agenda in his translation project.<sup>3</sup> And he was the only translator who offered his readers introductory comments to guarantee the desired illocutionary effects:

波特來耳 (Ch. Baudelaire 1821-1867) 於一八五七年發表詩集「惡之華」，在近代文學史上造成一個新時代，他用同時的高蹈派的精練的形式，寫他幻滅的靈魂的真實經驗，這便足以代表現代人的心情。他於詩中充滿了一切他自己的性格的陰影，哲學的苦味，和絕望的沉痛。他的幻景是黑而可怖的，他的著作的大部分頗不適合於少年與蒙昧者的誦讀，但是明智的讀者卻能從這詩裏得到真正希有的力量，他又有「散文小詩」一卷五十章，原名「巴黎之憂鬱」，也是同類的精湛文字，現代

散文詩的流行實在可以說是他的影響。(Chou 1921: 2) Baudelaire published *Les Fleurs du mal* in 1857, opening a new era in the history of modern literature. He uses the refined forms of the Parnassian school to write on the real experience of his disillusioned soul, an experience aptly represents the mood of modern man. He fills his poetry with the dark side of his character, the bitterness of his philosophy, and the grief of his despair. His vision is dark and horrible and a large part of his poems is quite unsuitable for the young and the ignorant. But the initiates can gain from his poetry the really uncommon power. He also has a volume of fifty "Petits Poèmes en Prose," originally entitled *Le Spleen de Paris*, which is of the same kind of exquisite language. The vogue of poem in prose in our time can be regarded as the result of his influence.

Chou salvages Baudelaire from the otherwise "decadent" attacks based on the dark side of his personality and his despair and argues for his being a "realist," who depicts the experience of his "disillusioned soul," which is universalized as the mood of modern (Chinese) men.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, this distinct way of imagining the world is known only by the "initiates" 明智的讀者. The title *Le Spleen de Paris* is dropped and 散文小詩 (Petits Poèmes en Prose) is used instead to signal the "poeticity" of the selected pieces, and to pre-set the readers' expectation of their "lyricism."

Chou's translation of Baudelaire's poems in prose introduces a new possibility in poetic expression, just as he did in introducing Japanese Haiku. This intention is clearly revealed in his translation behavior which aims to foreignize the translated text, producing a distance between the foreign and domestic models, reminding the reader that the text is a translation. Besides giving introductory comments (which we have noted above) and explanatory notes in cases of allusions and proper names, he, though translating second hand from the Modern Library Edition and Max Bruns' German

intermediaries, strictly adheres to the lexical and morphosyntactical structure of the “source” languages, resulting in the Europeanization of Chinese. This is a sentence from “Les Yeux des pauvres”:

Not only was I touched by this family of eyes, but I felt rather ashamed of our glasses and decanters, so much too much for our thirst. (Smith 45)

我不但被這眼的家族所感動，我還覺的慚愧了，對於我的許多的酒杯和酒瓶，多於我們的渴。(Chou 1921: 3)

Another extreme case of foreignization is the translation of “Enivrez-vous” from German:

Man muß nur immer trunken sein: das ist es. Das ist das A und O der Weisheit; das ist die einzige Frage hier im leben. (Bruns 226)

人要永遠醉：就是這個。這是智慧的A與O；這是人生唯一的問題。(Chou 1922: 2)

It is now difficult to fathom how deeply were ordinary Chinese readers acquainted with Greek. But the metaphorical use of “A” and “O” in the source text really demands the reader’s minimum knowledge of Greek alphabets “alpha” and “omega.” But the fact that Chou chose to follow the German text rather than the English text in the Modern Library Edition betrays his intention to challenge the reader with a relatively more “foreign” text. This tendency to foreignize is seen again when he reprinted the translated poems in *T’uo-lo chi* 陀螺集 (The top), published in 1925, he changed the title of “L’Étranger” from “游子”，an image associated with clouds, a commonplace association in traditional Chinese poetry, to “外方人，” a more exotic image and closer to the meaning in the original.

But each translator of Baudelaire may have his own agenda in the translation project. Chao Chü-yin’s 焦菊隱 version of “Laquelle

est la vraie?" suggests an even more pessimistic world in which the real "Bénédicta" is indistinguishable from the false one:

J'ai connu une certaine Bénédicta, qui remplissait l'atmosphère d'idéal, et dont les yeux répandaient le désir de la grandeur, de la beauté, de la gloire et de tout ce qui fait croire à l'immortalité. (342)

我認識一個祝福者，她將世界與空氣都充滿了空幻，人們從她的眼學會了希望看大，美麗，榮光，以及一切我們所視為不義的事。(4)

"Immortalité" misrecognized as "immoralité" (不義的事), Chao rewrites the image of a Bénédicta diametrically opposed to that in the original. She fills the air not with "ideal" but "空幻." Her eyes now inspire people with the desire to "see" everything that smacks of "immorality," a rendering that blots the otherwise blissful qualities of "grandeur," "beauté," and "gloire." As a result, the structural opposition of the "true" and the "false" in the poem is blurred, and what is left is a world of evil.

Similarly, despite the juxtaposition of the real and the ideal in "La Chambre double," the translator Wang Wei-k'e 王維克 would opt for the ideal, urging the reader to appreciate the hedonistic pleasure of imagination rather than the miserable reality:

此篇前段描寫一種想像的樂境，幻想的樂感，那裏是歡樂的永久，但是好夢難久留。現實的苦惱來了，可怕的時間一秒一秒地來酷待我們了！這就是薄代來而所描寫的二重室，他那現實生活的苦況我們容易了解，那幻想的生活我們應當靜心體驗出來。(5-6)

The first part of this poem depicts an imaginary paradise and an imaginary delightful sensation, in which there is eternal pleasure. But a good dream doesn't last long and there comes the distress of reality. Terrible Time comes to

torture us seconds after seconds! This is Baudelaire's "La Chambre double." It is easy to understand his miseries of real life, but we should calmly experience the imaginary life of his.

The same concern may also be seen in Yü P'ing-po's translation of "Enivrez-vous" and "Anywhere out of the world" in one installment, which intensifies thematically the search for an existence beyond reality.

Or we may see in Liu Yen-ling's use of Baudelaire in offering an alternative mode of literary expression, which is shown in his translation and interpretation of the first quatrain of "Correspondances"

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers  
Laisser parfois sortir de confuses paroles;  
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers. (11)

自然界是一個廟宇  
其中活的柱子們  
有時放出混亂的話語；  
人經過象徵之林而逝去，  
象徵們用稔熟的眼光看他。(Liu, 10-11)

Immediately after the translation, he added:

詩中『活的柱子』指人，大意是說自然界有許多東西是靈底最好象徵，極宜於用以抒寫內心底情調；人不知用他們而用『混亂的話句』，但他們卻有意和人相親呢。(Liu, 11)

The "vivants piliers" in the poem refer to man. It means that many things in nature are the best symbols of the soul. They are very suitable for the depiction of one's mood. Man does not use them, but resorts to "confuses paroles."

Actually they [things in nature] are willing to come close to man.

In the original, the adverb “y” refers to “la nature,” enabling the reader to identify the “forêts de symboles” as the “vivants piliers,” which are located in nature/temple. Liu’s translation leaves out the “y,” breaking the semantic thread of the quatrain, putting the “vivants piliers” and the “forêts de symboles” into antithetical positions. This understanding of the quatrain is made more conspicuous when he passes value judgment on the “confuses paroles” released by the “vivants piliers”—men, as seen in the personification of the “piliers” as “柱子們.” According to Liu, men should give up confused languages and begin to express through symbols. Here symbols were not regarded as constituents of synaesthetic world the symbolists aspired to, but a medium of representation, which is contradictory not only to the poem itself, but to the overall theory of correspondence.

These different agendas behind various translation projects were patronized by the Society for Literary Research to the extent that they worked within the parameters of the poetics which are compatible to the basic assumption of the institution. Yet, the relevance of Baudelaire seemed to depend more on the poetics implied in the translation than the patronizing institution. And Hsü Chih-mo’s translation of “Une charogne” was a case that went too far to establish an alternative poetics that exceeded the limit of tolerance of the literary revolutionists, even though the translation was published in *Yü-ssu*, a journal that boasted of its advocating of “liberal thinking, independent judgment, and beautiful life” 自由思想，獨立判斷，和美的生活 (1).

The problem with Hsü is not his romanticization of the symbolist theme of the poem in which Baudelaire analyzes the strangely vital aspects of a dead body. The dead body in the poem is depicted as a locus for the theater of movement: buzzing flies hover over it, and larvae ooze from it. But the most critical lines which lay bare the Baudelairean aesthetics of death and decay that decay as a form of multiplication, the enrichment of nature, rather than a form of

disintegration and annihilation, were transformed by Hsü Chih-mo into the typical romantic theme of “the return to nature”:

Le soleil rayonnait sur cette pourriture,  
Comme afin de la cuire à point  
Et de rendre au centuple à la grande Nature  
Tout ce qu'ensemble elle avait joint. (31)

火熱的陽光照臨著這腐潰，  
化驗似的蒸發，煎煮，消毀，  
解化著原來組成整體的成分  
重向自然返歸。(6)<sup>5</sup>

Nor is it the problem of the neglect of Baudelaire's aesthetics of memory rooted in the idea of “painting through memory,” the very important idea that informs his art criticism and, indeed, all artistic creation, verbal art not excluded. In the eighth stanza of the poem, Baudelaire inserts, somewhat awkwardly, an “ars poetica” to propose that “memory” initiates the creative process. But Hsü rewrites it according to the theory of representation, putting emphasis on art to restore memory, the end product of artistic creation:

Les formes s'effaçaient et n'étaient plus qu'un rêve,  
Une ébauche lente à venir  
Sur la toile oubliée, et que l'artiste achève  
Seulement par le souvenir. (32)

眼前的萬像遲早不免消翳，  
夢幻似的，只糊的輪廓存遺，  
有時在美術師的腕底，不期的，  
掩映著搖遠的回憶。(7)

In fact Hsü's translation of “Une charogne” deserves our close attention because it represents a case of a would-be alternative poetics being muffled by the force of a literary institution. The translated

“Une charogne” is a poetological rewriting of Baudelaire by Hsü’s belief that “Poetry is Music,” which is eloquently defended in his preface to the translation:

我自己更是一個鄉下人！他的原詩我只能誦而不能懂；但真音樂原只要你聽：水邊的蟲叫，樑間的燕語，山壑裏的水響，松林裏的濤聲——都只要你有耳朵聽，你真能聽時，這「聽」便是「懂」。那蟲叫，那燕語，那水響，那濤聲，都是有意義的……所以詩的真妙處不在他的字義裏，卻在他的不可捉摸的音節裏……我直認我是一個甘脆的Mystic。為什麼不？我深信宇宙底質，人生的底質，一切有形的事物與無形的思想的底質——只是音樂，絕妙的音樂。天上的星，水裏泅的乳白鴿，樹林裏冒的煙，朋友的信，戰場上的炮，坎堆裏的鬼燐，巷口那隻石獅子，我昨夜的夢……無一不是音樂做成的，無一不是音樂……你聽不著就該怨你自己的耳輪太笨，或是皮粗，別怨我。(6, my emphasis)

I myself is but a country boy! I can recite, but not understand, his poem in the original. But true music is only for you to listen: insects chirping by the water, swallows twittering by the beams, water falling down the valley, water flowing among the pine trees—all require your ears to listen. If you can really listen, this “listening” is “understanding.” The chirping of insects, the twittering of swallows, the water beating against the valley, and the water flowing in the stream are all meaningful. . . . Therefore the ingeniousness of poetry does not lie in its meaning but its unpredictable rhythm. . . . I confess I am a downright mystic. Why not? I deeply believe that the essence of the universe, the essence of life, the essence of matters and of thoughts is nothing but music, ingenious music. The stars in the sky, the doves swimming in the water, the smoke emerging from the forest, the letter from a friend, the cannon in the battlefield, the will-o’-the-wisp in the graveyard, the stone lion right outside the alley, my

dream last night—none is not made of music, none is but music . . . If you can't hear it, you should blame the stupidity of your ear, or the thickness of your skin, but don't blame me.

This quotation contains the major idea of Hsü's "poetics" and his sarcasm (in the last sentence) which ignited the attacks from Lu Hsün and Liu Fu 劉復, after which Hsü virtually disappeared from *Yü-ssu*. One of the problems of Hsü's pronouncement is that, being able to recite but unable to understand French (and therefore the source text), he cannot convince the readers of the receptor culture that they can "understand" 懂 anything through "listening" 聽 to the translated sound. And if we believe what a later translator of the same poem pointed out that Hsü's is a re-translation from an English intermediary, we may argue that Hsü was translating a "music" other than the music of "Une charogne." This is what we are going to show. And we may take the first two lines of the first stanza quoted above as the point of departure.

In the original, "soleil" does not have the attribute "火熱的." "Comme afin de la cuire à point" cannot find any resemblance, lexically and rhythmically, in "化驗似的蒸發, 煎煮, 消毀." But it is easy to discern a basic rhythmic pattern in these two translated lines, though they differ grammatically: "火熱的陽光" and "化驗似的蒸發." Also in the second line, the adverb "化驗似的" takes charge of three verbs, "蒸發," "煎煮," and "消毀," creating a series of two-syllable sound. If these two lines work poetically, rhythmic "repetition" plays the role. In fact this pattern recurs everywhere in the target text. Some instances of this pattern are not supported by the source text, such as "蕩婦似的放肆," "沾惡腥的黏味," "沒忌憚的淫穢," "微粲的俯看著," "報仇似的凶猛," "無厭的飛蟲倉皇的爭奪," "醜惡的屍體," "眼前的萬像," "惡腥的傳染," "遙遠的回憶," "我願望的明星! 照我的光明," "越趨的蟲蠕." If we compare this pattern to the pattern that underlies the two catalogues of objects, natural or otherwise, in his preface to the translation quoted above, we may come to the conclusion that Hsü is actually transcribing his own

“music” into the target text. And this music has nothing to do with the “music” of the original or the intermediary. The music we have in the target text is the music of his prose. And Hsü’s argument for “poetry is music” is only an idiosyncratic proposition which is unwarranted by Baudelaire’s source text. If we pursue this observation still further, we may discern in the target text a variant to the pattern mentioned. It is created by attaching the durative aspect “著” to the verb, such as “洩漏著穢氣,” “照臨著這腐潰,” “俯看著這變態,” “醞釀著細蛆.” Also the repetition of sounds of equal syllable length, like the series starting with “那蟲叫” in the preface, is another device to make music, such as “化驗似的蒸發, 煎煮, 消毀,” (which we mentioned earlier), “那空氣裏卻滿是穢息, 難堪,” “那蛆群潮瀾的起, 落,” “這般的純潔, 溫柔!” The insertion of “蔓叫” in “橫躺在亂石與蔓艸裏” may also be regarded as one of this kind.

In fact what annoyed his readers is not so much the translation as the preface to it. “Poetry is music” is a formulation more of the result of youthful indiscretion than literary praxis—his translation still tries to mean verbally. Lu Hsün’s parody of Hsü’s “poetics,” a passage of sound without sense, is the best retort.<sup>6</sup> Liu Fu’s sarcasm in his analysis of “Mr. Hsü’s ears” has also hit on Hsü’s “cult of mysticism” (as he himself admits) that presupposes a privileged class of readers (7)—a taboo of the advocates of New Literature. Hsü’s transgression has tested the institutional limits of a literary journal.

In 1922, a new and well-organized conservative force in the literary system emerged with the formation of the “Critical Review School” 學衡派 to counter the current of the new literary movement. The major exponents of this school, Mei Kuang-ti 梅光迪, Wu Mi 吳宓, and Hu Hsien-su 胡先驕, were returned students of Irving Babbitt, who founded and led the school of literary criticism that became known as American Humanism or the New Humanism. Babbitt championed the restraint and moderation of Aristotle and Greek Classicism, the virtues he also discovered in Confucius and Buddha. From the Greeks, Babbitt took the notion that man has two selves, one the “natural” self of impulse and desire, the other the “human” self that embodies the power to control the other self. To

become "human," man must restrain everything excessive in his "natural" self. Man must control his animal nature, bending his emotions and imagination to reason in order to fulfill his human self. Babbitt extended this basic dichotomy to literary art, which he also divided into opposites. The "inner form" of art, the content, he associated with the human self; the "outer form," technique, he categorized with the natural self. The "soul" of literature, for Babbitt, was its inner form, while the "outer" form was less important. Babbitt regarded the inner form of art as a kind of constance, embodying moral and spiritual values that transcend time. Thus the support of the older values in judging literature, resulting in his unrestrained hostility toward Romanticism and its offshoots.

The returned students of Babbitt applied these values in their debates with the literary revolutionists. Contrary to the literary revolutionists, who sought for models in the West, they believed that new literature should be "born out of" 脫胎 the old literature and urged for the return to the Chinese classics for models. They complained that the literary revolutionists, in importing foreign models, "kept the glittering casket and gave back the pearls to the seller" 買櫝還珠, and as a result of the lack of judgment, they even threw away their Chinese pearls (Hu, Hsien-su 2). To push their argument, they adopted the strategy of de-mystifying the "newness" of the new literature. For instance, Mei Kuang-ti regarded the new literature as the "spittle" of the Decadent Movement, the French *vers libres*, and the American Imagism (129). In a variation of the same theme, Wu Mi argued that the new *pai-hua* poetry was the imitation of the American Free Verse, which was itself the imitation of the Symbolist poetry back in France thirty or forty years ago, adding that Free Verse was only practiced by the unlearned and obscure poets, not being recognized as poetry by scholars (Wu 5).

Their abusive comments on the New Literature Movement culminate in Wu Mi's and Ch'en Hsün-tz'u's 陳訓慈 translation of Charles Hall Grandgent's article "Nor Yet the New," which might have inspired in them the tactics in dealing with the literary revolutionists and, most important of all, might have been the source

of their information regarding the genealogical relation between French Symbolism and American Imagism, *vers libres* and Free Verse (8). To defend his love for the classics, Grandgent denigrates any literary work (except those of the Victorian period) that was produced after the French Revolution, when people crazed for everything that was new, when revolutionists became heroes (4). He suggests that the revolters might revolt against anything just for the sake of revolting. Then he speculates on what might become of life if propriety, a Victorian virtue that by then became the scorn of the revolters, should be discarded, no longer a principle of behavior:

Now, if propriety should die, there could be no impropriety, inasmuch as the continuance of the latter is wholly contingent on the presence of the former. And if there were no impropriety, they could no longer be improper, and *life would have lost its savor*. Nothing is so disheartening to a shocker as to find the "shockee" impervious to a shock. (8, my emphasis)

To illustrate this last statement, he quotes as an exemplar the legend of Baudelaire being treated with nonchalance when he wanted to stun the people with his hair dyed green:

One day, having failed in all other efforts to startle, he dyed his hair green. A friend opportunely called, and the poet eagerly watched for a manifestation of horror. Not a sign: the caller chatted unconcernedly about the weather and the races, apparently unconscious of anything unusual. At last the poet could contain himself no longer. "don't you see it?" he shouted. "See what?" "My hair!" "Well, what about your hair?" "Can't you see it's green?" shrieked Baudelaire. "Yes," drawled the other, with a yawn, "everybody's wearing green hair this season." (8)

Doubtlessly, Grandgent has no sympathy for Baudelaire the shocker,

but the legend used within the context of the article does no more than to prove that the “new” is contingent to the “old” and that the shocker, finding life has “lost its savor,” would be “disheartened” when people became “impervious” to the “newness” of green hair. More important, Grandgent takes literally the fact that “everybody’s wearing green hair this season,” and regarded the response of Baudelaire’s friend as spontaneous. But in the hands of his translators, the same “story” was interpreted as the pre-meditated “way” to “respond” to the shockers. The following sentences, transposed to the end of the legend, serving as the conclusion of the section, were supposed to be the translation of “Nothing is so disheartening to a shocker as to find the ‘shockee’ impervious to a shock”:

語云。見怪不怪。其怪自敗。今之以新異駭人者。應之  
 只有一法。曰。視若平常。無為所駭而已矣。(Wu 7, my  
 emphasis)

As the saying goes, “If one remains calm upon seeing strange things, the strangeness will do no harm.” Nowadays, to respond to those who shock people with novelties and strangeness, there is only one way. That is, regard them as commonplace, and not to be shocked.

The shift of emphasis to the shockee as a vigilante betrayed the translators’ hostility to the New Literature Movement and their intention to level out the efforts of the literary revolutionists through re-educating their readers, all too clearly expressed in their introduction to the translated article:

惟以吾中國之人。近數年來。震眩於西學。舍本以求。而趨新之風遂熾。論人論事。不問是非。但責新舊……乃盲從偽新者。靡然成風。陷於一偏。不辨實事之利害短長。但以虛詞相號召。名義相矜誇。苟稍與論是非。即以頑舊斥之。長此不圖改善。將見人性日漓……而吾國人讀此譯文者。亦可以反省而沈思也。(Wu 2)

But in recent years we Chinese are stunned into confusion

by Western learning and in pursuit of it they forsake their principles. As a result, there is a vogue for novelties. When they talk of a person or an event, they don't distinguish clearly between right and wrong, but ask whether it is old or new. . . . Therefore they blindly follow those who pretend to be new. When this tendency spreads and becomes the fashion of our time, people get mired in biases, unable to tell the advantages and disadvantages of any issue. They just flatter each other with empty words and flashy terms. When people slightly comment on this situation, they would be scolded as stubborn and old-fashioned. If this situation is not corrected, human nature will become mean. . . . Our countrymen who read this translated article may be able to start reflecting.

Underlying the exhortative tone of this statement is the institutional opposition to the idea of New Literature. This opposition even became the "translation poetics" of Li Ssu-chuen's rendering of French poetry spanning from the 14th century to the early twentieth century, collected in his *Hsien-ho chi* and published in the November issue of *Hsüeh-heng* in 1925. The preface to the collection has explicitated his concerns:

至近年新派譯者眾多。騰諸報紙。然皆行以無韻之白話體。逐字逐句直譯。而意思誨昧不清。其事無異傳鈔。雖多何足貴。(1)

In recent years, there are many new-fashioned translators, whose work fill out the newspapers. But they translate word for word with pai-hua, unrhymed, and leave the meaning obscure. Such practice means no more than copying. Though in quantities, these translations are not worthy to be cherished.

Following our argument that the literary revolutionists codify the new poetics through translating foreign models, Li's statement is an attack

of the poetics that informs the translations he criticizes.<sup>7</sup> The alternative model that he stresses in his translation project is the model of “ku-shih” 古詩, a popular verse form in the Han Dynasty. His anthology amounts to a gesture of voicing his preference for formal beauty in traditional Chinese poetry and denouncing the revolutionized poetic form and language. In fact, Li was practicing a kind of ethnocentric violence by using a pre-existence model, here the form of “ku-shih,” to rewrite the source text. So his translation of French poetry becomes a major factor of conservatism. For him, translation, by which new ideas, items, characteristics can be introduced into a literature, becomes a means to preserve traditional taste. Now we will concentrate on how Li rewrites Baudelaire, the poet who has been labeled as “decadent” by members of the Critical Review Group.

His choice of poems from *Les Fleurs du mal* signals a contrast in aesthetic norm with that of the literary revolutionists. And Baudelaire is doomed to fight a battle against himself in a war between alternative poetics. To rehabilitate the legitimacy of traditional form in poetic creation, Baudelaire’s Alexandrine and octosyllabic lines are pressed into five or seven word/syllable lines. But following the antagonistic attitude of *Hsüeh-heng* toward “decadent” literature, Li holds a negative view of Baudelaire, which is fully expressed in his introduction to Baudelaire’s poems:

崇拜醜厲。歌頌罪惡。描寫獸性。刻畫汗臭。使人讀之。  
若感麻醉。若中狂疾。(48)

[His poems] adore ugliness, eulogize crimes, describe beastly passions, and depict offensive odors. After reading them, one feels intoxicated, like people going mad.

This reading of *Les Fleurs* is to a large extent the guideline for his selection, and is materialized in the brief statement attached to each poem to point out its theme: “思世界之慘厲也” for “La Fontaine de sang”; “兇人心理之解剖也” for “Le Vin de l’assassin”; “思愛情之詐偽惡毒也” for “Causerie”; “思墮落而為世所侮辱之一女也” for

“A une mendiante rousse”; “示暮夜為罪惡之淵藪也” for “Le Crépuscule du soir.” But to acquire thematic uniformity, he has to rewrite some of the themes. “Les Hiboux,” a didactic poem preaching mental immobilism and stagnation as the only relief humanity can find, becomes “罪人之象徵也.” “Le Revenant,” a typical Baudelairean love poem which features sadism and horror, becomes “罪惡之象徵也.” Similarly, “Une charogne” is not about “哀死去之愛情也,” because the speaker of the poem celebrates his power of memory to retain “la forme et l’essence divine” of his decomposed love.

We may pursue this problem of fidelity to the source text by looking into his actual translation of, say, the last three stanzas of “Une charogne”:

—Et pourtant vous serez semblable à cette ordure,  
 À cette horrible infection,  
 Étoile de mes yeux, soleil de ma nature,  
 Vous, mon ange et ma passion!

Oui! telle vous serez, ô la reine des grâces,  
 Après les derniers sacrements,  
 Quand vous irez, sous l’herbe et les floraisons grasses,  
 Moisir parmi les ossements.

Alors, ô ma beauté! dites à la vermine  
 Qui vous mangera de baisers,  
 Que j’ai gardé la forme et l’essence divine  
 De mes amours décomposés! (32)

佳人麗若仙。終當如彼污。嗚呼懷中寶。嗚呼眼中珠。  
 汝麗如女王。最後一息時。玉骨亦霉腐。花草覆離離。  
 萬蟲方食汝。如接吻不停。情愛任分離。留此殘軀形。  
 (50-51)

In the first of the quoted stanzas, to preserve the outward form of the target model, a rigorous straitjacket is imposed on the target text of a limit of 20 words/syllables. More importantly, for each segment of 5 words/syllables, there must be a meaning unit, resulting in either verbosity, like the comparison “麗若仙” unwarranted by the source text, or laconicism, like the word “污” for both “ordure” and “horrible infection,” and the “étoile,” “soleil,” “ange” and “passion” all become “懷中寶” and “眼中珠,” stock diction in traditional poetry for anything precious. Since the two exclamations “嗚呼懷中寶” and “嗚呼眼中珠” have become grammatically independent, the beginning half line of the following stanza “Oui! telle vous serez,” referring to the rottenness in the previous stanza, seems out of place, and the structure of comparison that links the two stanza is destroyed. The new subject in the second stanza now needs four more words as a stopgap, therefore we have another comparison “麗如女王.” The last stanza is specially tailored to match the theme as is understood by the translator. But this understanding is based on words “gleaned” from the last two lines, without considering the logic of the syntax: “amours décomposés” for “情愛任分離” and “gardé la forme” for “留此殘軀形.”

This creative imagination based on gleaned words from the source text is obvious in the tercets of “Les Hiboux”:

Leur attitude au sage enseigne  
 Qu'il faut en ce monde qu'il craigne  
 Le tumulte et le mouvement;

L'homme ivre d'une ombre qui passe  
 Porte toujours le châtement  
 D'avoir voulu changer de place. (67)

群鳥居世間。潛伏日夢夢。其智能自警。所懼囂與動。  
 凶人負罪惡。幽匿多畏驚。易地如鳥鳥。趨暗避光明。  
 (49)

The translation of the first tercet is based on the prepositional phrase “en ce monde” (居世間) and three words “craigne” (懼), “tumulte” (囂), and “mouvement” (動) whereas the translation of the second tercet is based on “porte” (負) “ombre” (幽) and “changer de place” (易地). Evidently, in the translation, Li is “personally” suspicious of the owls, they being a kind of nocturnal birds of prey (潛伏日夢夢). The title of the poem “Les Hiboux” is translated as “鴟梟,” metaphorically meaning “vicious villains.”<sup>8</sup> Hence, “l’homme” and “les hiboux” are group under the same category. Consequently, “l’homme” in the translation becomes “凶人” who needs to find a shadowy place like the owls, matching the theme of the poem as seen by Li.

The rigidity of the Chinese model fails to live up to Li’s concern for “fidelity.” And the situation is worsened by Li’s “creative imagination.” Li’s noble project not only deconstructs his own theorizing, but also should have earned an embarrassing “*tu quoque*” from the literary revolutionists, for he has produced something “obscure” (意思晦味不清), not worthy to be cherished though in quantities (雖多何足貴), under the patronage of *Hsüeh-heng* 學衡 (Critical Review). But much to our concern here is: if there is no praxis whatsoever after legitimizing one’s position, what remains is only the perpetual confrontation of literary ideologies. Baudelaire is translated not for being better understood, but just for the sole purpose of proving a position.

By using the translated poems of Baudelaire as an axis, this paper has tried to foreground the crucial role the poet played in writing part of the history of Modern Chinese Literature in question. It reexamines the literary activities that involved the codification of the New Literature envisaged by the literary revolutionists and how this new poetics competed with others for dominance. Baudelaire’s two collections of poems, *Les fleurs du mal* and *Le Spleen de Paris*, which differ drastically in their form and diction while sharing the dubious label of Decadence, were particularly sensitive to the conflicting literary discourses in China which focused mainly on the vernacular problem, the viability of traditional versification, and the

function of literature in society. The phenomenon of Baudelaire fighting against himself not only reveals the irony of literary fortune, but also lays bare the manipulative nature of translation which targets on specific agendas.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This paper employs the Wade-Giles system for the transliteration of Chinese terms and names of people and places. All citations from Baudelaire's poems in the original are based on Volume 1 of *Baudelaire: Oeuvres complètes, texte établi, présenté et annoté par Claude Pichois* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975). Only page references will be given in the text. But in cases of citations of Baudelaire's poems from sources other than the original, translators' names and page references will be given in the text. All other translations from the Chinese are my own.

<sup>2</sup> As Hu himself suggested, principles 1, 2, and 4 of his famous "eight-dont's-ism" are related to content, while the rest relate to the language and form of a literary work (Hu 1917: 33).

<sup>3</sup> For instance, underlying Chou Tso-jen's and Lu Hsün's efforts in introducing the "literature of the oppressed people," which came to fruition in their anthology of translated short stories *Yü-wai hsiao-shuo-chi* 域外小說集 (A collection of foreign short stories), was the urge for a serious literature that could heighten people's awareness of reality.

<sup>4</sup> He made a similar emphasis in another introduction to his translation of Baudelaire:

波特來耳的散文詩，去年在本刊上登過六首，現在又從舊稿裡錄出兩首發表，雖然經過翻譯，損失了原來的許多香味，但是現代人的憂鬱的情調還可以明白的看出。現在中國新文學漸漸興盛，我希望第一要修養深廣的文學趣味，同時能夠了解陀思妥也夫斯奇的愛之福音與波特來耳的現代的憂鬱；因此我們的介紹波特來耳或者不是無意義的事情。(Chou 1922: 3)

Six of Baudelaire's poems in prose were published in this supplement last year. Now I am going to publish two more, which I had translated some time ago. Although lots of the fragrance of the original have been lost through translation, the melancholic mood of modern man can still be clearly observed. Now that Chinese new literature is flowering, I hope that we should first cultivate a deep and broad interest in literature, and be able to understand both Dostoevsky's gospel of love and Baudelaire's modern melancholia. Therefore our introduction of Baudelaire is perhaps not a meaningless matter.

<sup>5</sup> Since various parts of Hsü's translated poem will be cited in the following discussion, it is desirable to cite the whole poem here:

### 死屍

我愛，記得那一天好天氣，  
你我在路旁見著的那東西；  
橫躺在亂石與蔓草裏，有  
一具潰爛的屍體。

牠直開著腿，蕩婦似的放肆(Comme une femme lubrique)  
洩漏著穢氣，沾惡腥的黏味，  
牠那癱潰的胸腹也無有遮蓋，  
沒忌憚的淫穢。

火熱的陽光照臨著這腐潰，  
化驗似的蒸發，煎煮，消毀，  
解化著原來組成整體的成分  
重向自然返歸。

青天微紫的俯看著這變態，  
彷彿是眷注一莖向陽的朝卉；  
那空氣裏卻滿是穢息，難堪，

多虧你不曾昏醉。

大群的蠅蚋在爛肉間喧鬧，  
醞釀著細蛆，黑水似的洶湧，  
他們吞噬著生命的遺蛻，  
阿，報仇似的凶猛。

那蛆群潮瀾的起，落，  
無鑿的飛蟲倉皇的爭奪  
轉像是無形中有生命的吹息，  
巨萬的微生物滋育。

醜惡的屍體。從這繁生的世界，  
彷彿有風與水似的異樂縱瀉。  
又像是在風車旋動的和音中，  
穀衣急雨似的四射。

眼前的萬像遲早不免消翳，  
夢幻似的，只糊的輪廓存遺，  
有時在美術師的腕底，不期的，  
掩映著搖遠的回憶。

在那磐石的後背躲著一隻野狗，  
她那火赤的眼睛向著你我守候，  
她也撕下了一塊爛肉，憤憤的，  
等我們過後來享受。

就是我愛你，也不免一般的腐朽，  
這樣惡腥的傳染，誰能忍受——  
你，我願望的明星！照我的光明！  
這般的純潔，溫柔！

是呀，便你也難免，豔麗的后！  
等到那最後的祈禱為你誦咒，  
這美妙的丰姿也不免到泥草裏，

與陳死人共朽。

因此，我愛呀，吩咐那越趨的蟲蠕，  
 他來親吻你的生命，吞噬你的體膚，  
 說我的心永葆著你的妙影，  
 即使你的肉化群蛆！

<sup>6</sup> In his “Yin-yüeh?” 音樂？ (Music?), Lu Hsün created an utterable passage of (untranslatable) nonsense like this:

「……慈悲而殘忍的金蒼蠅，展開馥郁的安琪兒的黃翅，唵，頡利，彌縛諦彌諦，從荊芥蘿蔔玳瑁的彤海裏起來。Brrr tatata tahi pai 無終始的金剛石天堂的驕嬾鬼茱叟，蘸著半分之二的北斗的藍血，將翠綠的懺悔寫在腐爛的鸚哥伯伯的狗肺上！你不懂麼；咄！吁，我將死矣！婀娜漣漪的天狼的香而穢惡的光明的利鏃，射中了塌鼻阿牛的妖豔光滑蓬鬆而冰冷的禿頭，一匹黯黯懼愉的瘦螳螂飛去了。哈，我不死矣！無終……」 (4)

<sup>7</sup> Since the concern of this paper is the products, not the theories, of translation, we will not go into detail Li's theory of translation implied in the preface. In fact if the kind of “mot-à-mot” translation mentioned in the preface can be called “literal” translation or 直譯 in Chinese, it can never find its opposite in the same preface except a vague statement alluding to a “better” method, which may serve as a kind of directive:

蓋吾輩雖不能得最良之方法譯之。而可以較良之方法譯之。所謂較良之方法者。即譯者須求所以兩全兼顧。一方面不能拋棄原義。而縱筆自作漢詩。一方面復不能拘牽默守。以拙劣的方法行之。如法語所謂之逐字譯 (mot-à-mot)使原文割裂。不成句讀。故矯此兩失。實為譯詩者之應有責任。(5)

Although we don't have the best method of translation, we can use the better one. The so-called better method is one

in which the translator should attain two objectives. On the one hand, he should not forsake the original meaning to create a Chinese poem. On the other hand, he should not stick to old rules and use a clumsy method, such as the *mot-à-mot* in French, tearing the original into pieces that defy understanding. Translators have the responsibility to correct these two shortcomings.

There is nothing productive about this statement. On the one hand, under no circumstance can, or will, a translator, not even the worst translator, acknowledge to have ignored the “original meaning” in the source text. On the other hand, it fails to arbitrate between the revolutionists and traditionalist in the “foreignization or domestication” debate that took place in the first controversy in the history of modern Chinese literature, the famous “*shuang-huang* letter” 雙簧信 written by Liu Fu 劉復 and Ch’ien Hsüan-t’ung 錢玄同. Simply put, the literary revolutionists advocate the strategy of foreignization—to drive the target language toward the source language, whereas the traditionalists advocate the strategy of domestication—to capture the source text with target language and literary models, so that reader will forget about reading foreign things. In the following analysis, I will go further to show how Li’s translation behavior ironically betrays his traditionalist strategy of domestication.

<sup>8</sup> “鷓鴣” is defined as “鷓為猛禽，傳說鷓食母。古人以為皆惡鳥。喻奸邪惡人。……一說鷓鴣即貓頭鷹。” See the entry “鷓鴣” in *Tz’u-yüan* 辭源 (Dictionary of the origins of phrases) (Peking: The Commercial Press, 1995) 1922.

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