

The Inevitability of the Untranslatable: A Cultural Translation of Huang Chunming's "To the Warriors!"*

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Abstract

Recent scholarly discourse recognizes the importance of translation in teaching and research, especially in cross-cultural contexts. Chiefly, this is because translation is not just a simple act of linguistic decoding, but also involves cultural reconstruction and interpretation of the author's intent, tone and focus, be it conscious or not. Indeed, owing to Western post/modern translation theories, the academic trend has shifted from stressing a literal, absolute, and authoritarian version to focusing on the discursively representative, relative, "deferred," or "in between" in a cross-cultural perspective.

In order to tackle the several transformed cultural landscapes in Taiwan, Hanping Chiu (2001) attempts to construct a translation theory by integrating Benjamin's notion of "pure language" into ancient Chinese philosophies, particularly Zen Buddhism, in terms of parallel notions of the liminal state of human languages. I will explore such inevitability of the untranslatable by closely reading Huang Chunming's narrative (1988), an adapted play script (1994) and a poem (2005), all having the title "To the Warriors." While my close reading will show the inevitability of the untranslatable due to the "deferred" nature of languages synchronically and diachronically, my further

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elaboration of the transformed postcolonial cultural mentalities in Taiwan and of Huang's over the decades will manifest them due to similarly "deferred" nature of cultural mentalities. Such inevitability is precisely in accord with Chiu's translation theory. In light of his stress on the liminality of cultural translation, some transcultural significances of the transitional inevitability of the untranslatable will also be suggested.

Keywords: Postmodern translation theories, cultural translation, Chinese literature of Taiwan, Huang Chunming's "To the Warriors"

*"The practice of cultural translation goes on both here and there, at the multiple locations where the limits of cultural translatability do not coincide with the ethical limits of ruthless corporate globalization."*¹

Although seemingly diminished to a minor subject due to market-oriented academic priorities, literature is still considered invaluable to many educators with foresight. In *Translation and Identity*, Michael Cronin reaffirms, "Literature is often a highly effective way of allowing people from different countries to understand the history, way of life and outlook of citizens from other member states."² Therefore, teaching world literatures by no means can be put aside, and it likely involves translating not only foreign languages but also their cultures to non-native students. In general, translation for faithful accuracy has been considered a primary task for teachers, as it is still the case at most public schools. However, as postmodern de-centering theories have gradually held sway worldwide since the late twentieth century, the academic trend of translation and interpretation in higher education has shifted from stressing the historically accurate, truthful, and orthodox versions to the relative, representative, and "deferred" discourses with reference to Jacques Derrida's deconstruction (1972). In other words, not only the Western epistemological structuralism but also the universal linguistic ontology has been radically undermined.

Recently, the concepts of translation and interpretation theories have been expanded to encompass cultural politics of race, gender and class in countering an epidemic of neo-capitalist imperialisms and/or cultural hegemonies under the banner of globalization. Some "proper" national languages and monolithic cultures such as English and Chinese have been compromised to various extents. Quite likely translation is no longer just a linguistic decoding but also a cultural re/construction. Consequently, teaching less commonly taught languages and literatures in postmodern or postcolonial contexts has become crucial, despite the challenging nature of such undertakings. For instance, with reference to Walter Benjamin (1968), Jacques Derrida (1972), Paul de Man (1986), and Homi Bhabha (1988), Simon Gikandi (1994) elaborates the inevitability and dilemmas in teaching African American racial issues in light of postcolonial theories. He suggests some practical pedagogy to deal with sensitive and complex concerns about cultural translation. Similarly, Tu Weiming (杜維明 1996) addresses the *Problematik* of

¹ Tomislav Z. Longinovic, "Fearful Asymmetries: A Manifesto of Cultural Translation," *Borderline Culture: The Politics of Identity in Four Twentieth-Century Slavic Novels* (Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1993) 5.

² Michael Cronin, *Translation and Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) 39.

Taiwan identity politics in the global contexts of recognition politics and proposes a "cultural China" as a solution to the perceived Chinese identity crisis.³ Nevertheless, scholarly translations and/or interpretations of Chinese language, literature, and culture from mainland China, Taiwan, or Chinese diasporic communities worldwide remain debatable to some extent, especially in Taiwan's academic milieu.

In order to tackle a multitude of transformed cultural landscapes on the island, Chiu Hanping (邱漢平) constructs a translation theory by integrating Benjamin's notion of "pure language" into ancient Chinese philosophies, particularly Zen Buddhism, in terms of their parallel notions of the liminal state of human languages and the transitional inevitability of the untranslatable.⁴ This essay will be aimed at exploring such inevitability of the untranslatable by closely reading Huang Chunming's (黃春明) narrative (1988), his play script (1994), and his poem (2005), all having the title "To the Warriors" (戰士, 乾杯!). While my close reading will show the inevitability of the untranslatable due to the "deferred" nature of languages synchronically and diachronically, my further elaboration of the transformed postcolonial cultural mentalities in Taiwan and of Huang's over the decades will manifest them due to similarly "deferred" nature of cultural mentalities. Such inevitability is precisely in accord with Chiu's translation theory. In light of his stress on the liminality of cultural translation, some transcultural significances of the transitional inevitability of the untranslatable will also be suggested.

Huang Chunming's "To the Warriors" and Its Receptions on the Island

Huang Chunming's "To the Warriors!" was originally written as a short story and published in 1988 in one of the popular newspapers, the *China Times* (中國時報). It emerged soon after the lifting of the Martial Law in Taiwan in 1987, a historical landmark signifying a radical transformation from the autocratic cultural politics of the dogmatic Chinese KMT regime. It was reprinted in his prose anthology in 1989.⁵ Later, the author adapted it into a spoken play script

³ Tu Weiming, "Cultural Identity and the Politics of Recognition in Contemporary Taiwan," *The China Quarterly* 148 (Dec. 1996): 1115-40.

⁴ Chiu Hanping, "Constructing a Translation Theory Befitting Taiwan's Cultural Landscape," 《師大學報》(National Taiwan Normal University periodical) 46, 1-2 (2001): 13-30.

⁵ Huang Chunming, 《等待一朵花的名字》(Waiting for the name of a flower) (Taipei: Crown, 1989) 96-115.

with the same title for performance in 1994. In 2005, he further condensed it into a poem available online for Internet viewers.⁶ It is interesting to note that the author has taken his work and progressively compressed it from written narrative to play, then to poem, moving towards an increasingly distilled, pithy form. As such, it is also worth exploring the implication of such transformations over decades in light of the “deferred” nature not only linguistically but also mentally.

Considering the straightforward and realistic language of the famous Nativist writer’s style since the 1960s, teachers of Chinese may think it a suitable and easy text for non-native students to digest. Yet, without any cultural translation of the complex postcolonial issues on the island, they may be puzzled and lost in pondering what the “systemic violence” and “original sin” mentioned in the narrative and their cultural significance referred to. Before getting into any “deep structure” of the cultural translation, we may find it helpful to first explore the meanings of the texts.

Literally speaking, the story is quite simple: a Chinese narrator visited an indigenous Rukai tribe (魯凱族) in a remote mountain area of Southern Taiwan. He heard from the host Xiong (熊 or Bear) that most of the men in his family died in battles with different alien/invading races. On realizing that his Chinese Han ancestors were also involved in what the narrator describes as the “*yuanzui* or original sin” (原罪) and the “*jiegoubao* or systemic violence” (結構暴力) equally imposed on the Indigenous people, he felt ineffably sad so that despite his hunger, he lost his appetite for the supper. Later, although not good at drinking, he accepted the host’s cordial invitation to drink the Indigenous millet wine. After Xiong went to bed, leaving him alone as he so desired, he burst into tears. Before he collapsed, he finished the last few drops in his cup while toasting to the portraits of Xiong’s fallen family members: “To the warriors!” The next morning, after he apologized for his emotional outbreak, he left without seeing anything else in the village.

To most Chinese readers in Taiwan, the implied message of multiculturalism is familiar because it has been embraced as a new public school policy resulting from the educational reform in 1994. Tang Shuzhen (唐淑貞) defines the “systemic violence” as “a situation where people are forced to make sacrifices for the sake of some system or structure with which they feel no sense of identity.”⁷ And most Chinese critics take the original sin literally, referring to the narrator’s

⁶ <http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2005/new/jan/19/life/article-3.htm>

⁷ Tang Shuzhen (唐淑貞), <談黃春明〈戰士，乾杯！〉一文> (Discussing Huang Chunming’s ‘To the Warriors!’), 《中國語文》(Chinese Language) 474 (Dec. 1996): 69. English translation is Terry Russell’s, p. 5.

realization of his Han ancestors' responsibility for the Indigenous family tragedies. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the text has been considered a well written representation dealing with the ambivalent relationship between the Chinese Han and indigenous peoples in postcolonial discourses. Yet, due to the complex cultural ideologies in postcolonial contexts, the notions of the "systemic violence" and "original sin" need more elaboration, especially for non-native students of Chinese.

The English translation "systemic or structural violence" first appears in Terrance Russell's 2008 conference paper entitled "Systemic Violence and Redemption: Huang Chunming's 'To the Warriors!'"⁸ As the text was selected in the national Chinese literature textbook for high school students, Russell also thinks more elaborations on the terms are necessary, considering the greater textual influence once it was canonized with reference to John Guillory's address on literary canon formation.⁹ In 1994, Huang Chunming explained in an interview for his play script "My Name Is Lotus Flower" (1982) about the then still neglected issue of the under-aged indigenous prostitutes:

It means, since our generation on, we no longer look down upon or discriminate against any indigenous peoples. But, we still live in a society culturally constructed by Chinese Han people and enjoy the benefits of the social system. Yet, to the indigenous peoples, such a social system is an invisible violence, depriving them of success, growth and continued survival.

就是說我們這一代開始，已不再輕視或是差別原住民，但是，我們仍舊生活在由漢人組織起來的社會中，享受由這個社會結構所保障的機會，反過來對原住民而言，這樣的社會結構，即是無形的暴力，剝奪了他們不少的生存條件，成長的條件，出頭的條件。¹⁰

In other words, to the author, any exploitation of the underprivileged is considered the systemic violence of the society, be it in terms of race, gender or class.

As for the "original sin," for Caucasian students familiar with Christian religious teachings, they may presume it refers to the sin made by Adam and Eve because they disobeyed God according to the Bible. Later on, the concept may expand to encompass whatever human beings have done against God's words, or their innate sin which can be redeemed only by accepting Jesus Christ as

⁸ Terrance Russell, "Systemic Violence and Redemption: Huang Chunming's 'To the Warriors!'" a paper presented in the International Academic Conference on Huang Chunming's Interdisciplinary Arts, National Chung-cheng University, Chiayi, June 1, 2008.

⁹ John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago & London: U of Chicago P, 1993).

¹⁰ Huang Chunming in an interview by Wei Kefeng (魏可風), <黃春明答客問> (Interview with Huang Chunming), *Unitas* (聯合文學) 118 (August 1994): 84-85. The English translation hereinafter is mine unless specified otherwise.

the son of God and their savior. Russell also points out that the main point in Western cultural contexts is the complete faith in Jesus Christ for redemption rather than accusing any individual for original sin. So, the crucified portrait of Jesus hung on the wall as a spiritual savior may be relevant as most indigenous people had been converted long before the Han settlers brought the Chinese civilization to the island. However, it may not be what the non-Christian narrator meant by the "original sin." As the author said, "I'm not a believer in Christian original sin, but my consciousness of the original sin is derived from the systemic violence of society."¹¹ In other words, the symbolic association of the crucified Jesus juxtaposed with the Indigenous warrior portraits may not lie in the Christian promise of salvation, but as a reminder of the sacrifice of the innocent, be it in terms of Japanese imperial or Chinese national patriotism. This may explain why the Chinese narrator's guilty conscience as part of the sinful crucifiers was so deeply aroused that he felt ashamed to stay any longer in the deprived site of the Indigenous village. At best, the main character offers no salvation to the Indigenous, only his regret about the sacrifice that his people have put them through. Viewed in this way, the transliteration of "yuanzui" or "the original sin of oppression" may be an alternative in order to situate the text in the Taiwanese cultural context.

However, with their anti-Sino-centric impulse, some well educated indigenous critics who became fluent in Chinese may feel that the Chinese author's emotions are superficial. For instance, Isak Afo's short poem "Memory and Redemption" suggests that the "systemic violence" is equivalent to the Chinese "national apparatus" in assimilating the indigenous minorities, partly by force and partly by reconstructing the manipulative and dogmatic master narrative.¹² He calls for the necessity to restore the indigenous histories and cultures from their own voices. In response to this, Russell argues for the author's sincerity with meta-textual references, as Huang Chunming calls for action, not just sympathy and understanding:

They [most Chinese settlers] know nothing about indigenous peoples. Even if they sympathize with indigenous peoples, but without action after their sympathy, it is as good as useless.

他們[指大多數的中國平地人]對原住民是無知的，縱然對原住民是同情的，而這個同情之後，不成為行爲的話，有等於無。¹³

¹¹ Ibid., 85.

¹² Isak Afo (以撒克·阿復), <記憶與救贖—苦難記憶敘事「把共構」的解放意涵(上)> (Memory and redemption—a narrative of bitter memories in the liberating ideas of 'Pakongko,' part one), *Filmism* website 2000. <http://iwebs.url.com.tw/main/html/filmism/74.shtml>.

¹³ Huang Chunming in the interview by Wei Kefeng, 84-85.

In other words, the point is not just the recognitions of the indigenous cultural identities and public displays of their athletic accomplishments for multiculturalism, but a reform of the skewed social system in order to provide greater equality and justice for the underprivileged. Unfortunately, this message has not been clearly conveyed in the guidebooks for the national Chinese literature textbook for young generations to embrace the new multicultural education on the island, in Russell's opinion.

The Irony, Contradiction, and the Untranslatable in the Text

None of the critics so far have mentioned any irony in the contrast between the supposedly sophisticated Chinese guest and the assumingly simple-minded host in the earliest narrative. Nor have previous critics found any contradiction in the narrator's rationalization of the Indigenous grandfather's parable of un-destroyable ants, which itself mirrors and enhances the irony. By reading closely the text in its historical and cultural contexts, we may find that while the irony subtly conveys a challenge to the presumptive binary if not Sino-centric superiority, the contradiction reinforces the irony of the intellectual rationalization. They indicate that in this earliest text, something must have been missing, misconceived, or indeterminate which constitutes the untranslatable.

According to the narrator in this version, the story was inspired by an unexpected trip, when he was invited by the Indigenous host Xiong to visit his tribe at *Kachopangan* in 1973. Originally, the narrator was on his way to take pictures of gifted indigenous marathon runners' villages in Wutai (霧台) for a documentary TV program *Fragrance Island* (芬芳寶島). Considering that the international political policy was just switched into disavowing the official status of Taiwan, the program likely was supposed to portray the Chinese KMT's fruitful reformations of the island since they officially took over in 1949.¹⁴ As the speaking subject was educated in the traditional Chinese culture, the Chinese narrator's assumption that he knew what was going on and his inclination to rationalize whatever he collected from field trips are understandable. Nonetheless, the narrator's seeming superiority is gradually reduced and made questionable, as we read the text more closely.

¹⁴ According to Ye Shitao (葉石濤), the Chinese KMT took over the island on December 25, 1945, yet the reformation started in 1949. See Ye Shitao's 《台灣文學入門》(Introduction to Taiwan literature) (Kaohsiung: Chunhui, 1997) 86.

In the beginning of the trip, the narrator was very energetic as if he were about to find something positively great about the remote village with a Chinese intriguing name *Haocha* (好茶 or Good Tea). Regardless of Xiong's warning of the long trek, he was eager to show his physical agility. After strenuously attempting to catch up, yet still lagging far behind Xiong, he did not have strength even to say anything when Xiong turned his head to check on him as he admitted:

This miserably exhausted look indeed exposed my own boasts earlier. (98)
這種狼狽相，簡直就是戳穿前面自己說過的大話。

On seeing the guest's misery, Xiong slowed his pace and suggested that he readjust the way he walked and breathed to save energy. When they finally arrived at the village in the darkness, the narrator felt disoriented with fear, as he could not see anything but heard barking dogs, although he was told the barking was a gesture of welcome. He could not feel relieved until the freely moving-around host brought him a candle and guided him to the living room to relax. From this contrast of the two characters on the way up to the village, at least the physical superiority of the intellectual has been deftly reduced to a certain extent.

While the host was busying cooking at the kitchen inside, the narrator's attention was drawn to three individually framed portraits with a small one inserted at the corner of the left-end frame hung on the wall. After a close look, he recognized that one of them was Jesus on the cross while the other three look like Japanese, Chinese Communist and KMT nationalist soldiers respectively. Later, the narrator was startled to learn from Xiong that those warriors were all related to his mother and died for different alien/intruding races in less than three decades. Xiong's father was her second husband in Communist uniform, a "gongfei" (共匪 or Communist rascal) as he called him directly without any reservation. Yet, his directness to say out loud the politically sensitive word shocked the narrator, who was raised in an insulated anti-communist atmosphere in which the use of the term would be considered dangerous. This contrast between the two, one who has been living in a politically prudent manner while the other shows little concern for propriety, may also serve to reinforce the carefree image of the host. The author may also be poking fun at the city-dweller's lack of freedom of self-expression and underscoring the weakness and inappropriateness of his politically inculcated fear in the new context of the remote village life.

Moreover, it likely is due to the intellectual prudence of Chinese cultural politics that, while being left alone in the living room, the narrator suddenly felt the warriors hung on the wall seemingly staring at him with hot eyes. No wonder he soon began to go through an emotional trial, tortured by an ineffable guilt

for his ancestors' original sin in that they had imposed "systemic violence" on this Indigenous people, similar to what was done by the Japanese:

I was speechless. I was speechless in front of the crucified Jesus, the Japanese soldier, and the "Communist rascal" as Xiong called him. Suddenly I felt I was on trial. Good heavens! Good heavens! I murmured in my heart as chaotic emotions stirred inside me, provoked by this family, for this minority, and for my ancestors who immigrated to settle in Taiwan, who were all entangled in the constituted systemic violence. (102)
 我楞了。我楞在受難的耶穌像和日本兵還有熊稱他共匪的人像前，我突然覺得我是在受審判。天哪！天哪！我為這個家庭，為這個少數民族，還為我的祖先來開拓台灣，所構成的結構暴力等等雜亂的情緒，在心理喃喃叫天。

Again likely because he grew up in the traditional Chinese Confucian culture, he tried to remain calm without revealing his feelings. Yet, on seeing Xiong enjoy supper without any negative emotions such as hatred, regret or worry, he felt there must be one of them who didn't belong in the room. He immediately assumed it must be Xiong, based on the fact that he was the one who had been in the room all the time and who had been emotionally disturbed by the tragic stories of the portraits on the wall. However, when he reflected that it was Xiong who was related to and living with the portraits all his life, he wondered again how Xiong could be so incredibly detached. More than that, in response to the narrator's further inquiries about his other family members, Xiong simply narrated that while his great grandfather fought the settlers along the coast, his grandfather was a hunter who used to kill mountain pigs and died in a battle against the Japanese intruders. In contrast to the narrator's increasing uneasiness, it seemed almost unthinkable that while saying all of these things, Xiong should remain in his amazingly detached mindset, as if he were talking about someone else's misery. Based on his cultural assumption or intellectual rationality, the narrator's inability to understand the serenity of this simple and direct Indigenous host thus becomes clear. As he was not aware that the problem might lie in his cultural or intellectual presumption, he could not help but keep rationalizing the unthinkable detachment of the supposedly victimized host.

Undoubtedly, Xiong's character of simplicity and directness without any reserved or judgmental emotion is further embodied in his calm and laconic replies to the narrator's sequential inquiries about whether the settlers his great grandfather fought were the Han Chinese:

"That's right. He fought you Han Chinese people in many battles. Pastor Luo said that my grandfather and great grandfather were lucky; they fought for our Rukai tribe."
 "Is Pastor Luo a foreigner?"
 "No. Pastor Luo is one of our Rukai tribe. He said that my grandfather and great grandfather were warriors of Rukai tribe." (106)

『對，和你們漢人打過很多次的仗。羅牧師說，我的祖父和曾祖父他們很幸運，他們都為我們魯凱族自己打過仗。』

『羅牧師是外國人？』

『不是。羅牧師是我們魯凱族的人。他說我的祖父曾祖父他們是我們魯凱族的戰士。』

It is only at this point that the narrator could discern in Xiong some excitement. This excitement subtly reveals that the host may not be necessarily unaware of the narrator's concern. Nor was he completely ignorant of the "systemic violence" done to his family because the pride he expressed for those ancestors who used to fight for their own tribe rather than die for a foreign regime that never included them as equals. Yet before long, Xiong regained his calmness and said in his usually carefree and indiscriminate way:

"If there were pictures of them, and we hung them with the Japanese, Communist bastard and our Chinese nationalist soldier in a line, hey, it would be really an interesting show." (106)

『如果有照片，和日本兵，共匪，還有我們中國國軍掛在一排，嘿，那真熱鬧。』

Startled by Xiong's directness and carelessness again, the narrator finally asked seriously:

"Haven't you thought that they were your family?"

"Yes. Among our mountain folks, many other family members died like that." (107)

『你有沒有想到，他們是你們的一家人啊？』

『是啊，我們山地人，很多都是這樣的。』

The earlier discernable excitement in the host's tone vanished without a trace. Yet, without giving any thought about what Xiong's reply might have implied, the narrator immediately cast out his "ace card":

"For such a situation, aren't you angrily sad?"

"Angrily sad? . . ."

"Making you feel sad and angry at the same time. . . ." (107)

『對這樣的事情，你不悲憤？』

『悲憤？ . . . 』

『讓你覺得又難過又憤怒， . . . 』

At this, the care-free countryman became speechless in his contemplation. So after a while, the intellectual narrator pushed further:

"Don't you feel sad and angry?"

"Towards whom?" (107)

『你不覺得難過和憤怒？』

『向誰憤怒？ . . . 』

Such an unexpected answer immediately made the intellectual speechless and he felt embarrassed on the spot.

Nonetheless, instead of giving his answer to the question, the narrator tries to rationalize Xiong's incredible detachment in terms of his own understanding of the host and his tribal culture. No wonder what follows can be regarded as a perfect example of some untranslatable ambiguity in a parable, crucial to the whole point:

"My grandpa was also a warrior. He said that even we burned up a nest of ants, and then you saw another ant somewhere else, you would know that the ants were not completely burned dead." (107)

『我的外祖父他也是戰士。他說我們燒死一窩螞蟻，然後你又在別的地方看到螞蟻的時候，你就知道剛才那一窩螞蟻，並沒有被燒死。』

For fear that the narrator did not get the point, the laconic host tried to explain more with an effort:

"Would you know if the whole nest of ants were burned dead completely?" (107)

『真的把一窩螞蟻全都燒死了，你知道？』

Xiong's question here actually is quite ambiguous. It can be a direct question for an answer or a rhetorical question, implying nobody would have known, even including his grandpa. He might think any ant that one saw somewhere else not necessarily from the same nest. Such a way of thinking may be as valid as any others since there is no way to prove it anyway. Yet, the narrator nodded to signal he knew. Then, even though Xiong had already made an effort to explain "as if the narrator were unable to understand what he meant" (108), he asked the narrator the same question again with peculiar concern, "you know?" (109) His repetitive question thus indicates the question may not be that simple as the narrator thought.

As if deftly devised for no definite closure, their conversation was suddenly interrupted by Xiong's mother's voice from her bed. They talked in their Indigenous language in a contentious tone to the narrator who knew nothing about what they said. Yet, Xiong just said that his mom thought they were drinking wine and would like to have some as well. Then, he asked the narrator if he would like to try some wine, without any intent to continue their earlier conversation. The narrator did not try to explain how or what he might know in response to Xiong's repeated inquiry. Instead, he suddenly assumed that the grandfather's profound philosophy of the parable would be just too much for Xiong, since he likely regarded him as simple and naive:

In fact, I also wondered if he really can understand the philosophy of the metaphor. (108)

其實我也懷疑，他真的能夠完全明白這個比喻的哲理。

Here, the narrator's assumption of the host as "simple-minded" is evident.

The very irony of the intellectual thinker perhaps lies in his tenacious reasoning to rationalize anything not quite sensible to him and in his constant assumption that he is always correct. It is ironic in that regardless of the fact that Xiong did not say he did not understand what his grandpa's parable meant, but simply asked if the narrator knew the answer, the narrator assumed that Xiong did not know and would not be possibly capable of understanding any philosophical metaphor. In other words, the intellectual narrator still took Xiong's repeated question literally, as if he really had meant to ask for the narrator's answer. Even if Xiong really meant to ask for the answer, the narrator's reaction is also contradictory in that the narrator then was supposed to answer how he would have known that the ants had all burned dead, or what the grandpa meant by the metaphor. Yet, he did not explain at all. Instead, he assumed the metaphor would be just too complicated for the one who asked. In fact, Xiong's repeated question with efforts can also be interpreted in one of two ways. It could mean that he really didn't know and would like to know, or he didn't believe the narrator could really grasp what his grandfather's parable meant, either, so he asked a rhetorical question. Such a rhetorical twist from either party on a contentious issue is not uncommon in our daily life when one runs out of the wits, then the person would just say or think that it's worthless to explain any further as the counter interlocutor would not be able to understand anyway. If it is the case, can we tell who really knows, who doesn't? Such indeterminacy may be precisely due to some misunderstanding or the "deferred" nature of language itself.

Nevertheless, the narrator continued his rationalization of Xiong's indifference to the systemic violence. He even tried to speak for Xiong's tribal culture which he had not had a chance to experience or know about, since he left hastily the next day after he arrived late the previous night! If we read his lengthy rationalization of Xiong's detachment to himself in the text, some ambiguities and contradictions will become more evident. First, the narrator interpreted the phrase "completely burned dead" as signifying the merciless doer's "unreserved attack and will to destroy completely" and felt startled by such a merciless destruction manifested in the grandfather's parable.¹⁵ Then he reflected that historically speaking, it was the Indigenous people who had been attacked as far as he knew. In that case, they could not be the merciless doers, so the narrator rationalized that the metaphor must refer to their "resistance" as he continued his interpretation in this way, "as long as one is left, there will be hope."¹⁶ In other words, he

¹⁵ Huang Chunming 1988: 108.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

viewed the tenacious existence of ants as an allegory of the victim's unconquerable resistance.

However, first of all, there is no mention of any resistance by the ants in the grandfather's parable; there is only passive survival. Second, the existence of ants may simply indicate the resilience of all creatures seeking survival; they may not be the same ants from the burned out nest but ants from somewhere else. Hence, the grandfather's parable may imply that it would be the same for any similarly vulnerable being, such as the Indigenous people, which may be in Xiong's mind when he told his grandpa's story in his attempt to explain to the narrator "with an effort" why he didn't feel sadly angry. To the Indigenous people, the bottom line may be their inclination to view that life goes on regardless. Such an attitude is not the same as fatalism in that the Indigenous people did not live in a self pitying or pessimistic way, but maintained their optimistic and straightforward nature, without any negative or judgmental emotions against the sequential oppressors, be they Japanese or Chinese.

Yet, the narrator arbitrarily concluded that the individual self sacrifice for the collective racial or ethnic consciousness must have been imprinted in the whole tribe:

Such a philosophy of selfless sacrifice is only possible when the racial or national collective consciousness make them care nothing about the individual self, which may be what is in Xiong's understanding or may have already become part of their indigenous culture, as everyone will do it even without understanding it. No wonder Xiong could appear so detached when he talked about those portraits and their unfortunate encounters. (108)

這種沒有個人，只有種族，民族的集體意識，把個人的犧牲視為度外的哲理，不知是熊懂得這個道理，或這個道理已經成為山地人的文化中的文法，每個人不用懂得也會做。難怪熊談起那些人像和他們不幸的遭遇，才顯得那樣地淡然。

This conclusive rationalization is also contradictory in that the narrator assumed the Indigenous people had been sacrificing for the collective consciousness, even for the alien races/intruders, like Xiong's fathers and brother sacrificed their lives for Japanese and Chinese, although he was not sure whether Xiong knew it or it already became part of their culture. In his reasoning, that's why Xiong appeared so indifferent to their deaths. As if not enough, the narrator further assumed that it was not possible for Xiong to understand the narrator's guilty conscience for "the original sin" of the constituted "systemic violence" that his ancestors imposed on the Indigenous people.¹⁷ To the narrator, neither was it

¹⁷ Ibid.

possible for Xiong to understand why he wanted to leave right away the next morning without seeing anything else in the village.

In some sense, it may seem not an insult but a thoughtful consideration that the narrator did not try to "civilize" or "convert" Xiong when he assumed that Xiong was simple-minded and unlikely to understand the Indigenous grandfather's parable and his own complex emotions. Yet, his assumptions of Xiong's incapability to comprehend and his rationalization of the parable from his own viewpoint in the first place already revealed his unchecked mentality of intellectual superiority, if not Sino-centric mentality as accused by some indigenous critics. As is very often in the dichotomy of literary representation between the Chinese Han settlers and the indigenous subjects, the latter is likely presented as the innocent or simple-minded subaltern, such as Xiong, to be protected or to be spoken for in the text. Yet, the amusing contrasts between the two actually portray a sarcastic caricature of the former as the intellectual who always thinks too much to get the point, while the latter as the carefree "simple-minded" who actually enjoys the life regardless, just like the famous Winnie Pooh who represents the one living with the Dao, the way of the nature. As Xiong has mentioned twice that the narrator thought too much and suggested him not to think pointlessly since he was in the remote village, so far away from the city. Here also manifests a recurrent symbolic contrast between the serene one who lives peacefully in nature and the restless one who is preoccupied by all the worries and turmoil of civilization.

Furthermore, to live without being tortured by the past and harboring negative emotions may not actually be "naive and simple," as these character traits are very difficult to master and require a rare spiritual maturity that is not easy to achieve, regardless of whether one is educated or not. To put it another way, being serenely "simple-minded" is not a simple thing to achieve. To some extent, it can be inferred that Xiong's serenity is not the result of earthy indifference or insensitivity; he knows the tragic past of his tribe, but out of a developed knack for a healthy philosophical outlook, he chooses not to react negatively. In other words, the narrator's repeated questions and misunderstandings of Xiong and his grandfather's parable actually indicate something untranslatable due to the "deferred" nature not only of the language itself but also of their different cultural mentalities at the specific point in time. Viewed in this way, such a presentation of the Indigenous host may tell readers more about the Indigenous culture positively than expected, although in an indirect way.

Hence, the ambiguous and contradictory ironies in the text are evident, which should not be overlooked in their symbolic or allegorical implications from a cross-cultural perspective. At least three implications can be inferred from the

ironies. First, the text is not intended to reinforce the superiority of the Chinese intellectual. Second, the text actually favors the Indigenous people, particularly embodied by the host Xiong and his wise grandfather as portrayed. Third, we readers may have to adjust our usually presumed viewpoint from the narrator as the speaking subject to explore the "simple and direct" Xiong as a significant "mirror" to know more about the speaking subject's assumptions and cultural bias. To know more about the Indigenous culture, more studies and interpretations from the Indigenous' perspective would be necessary so as to grasp their cultural worldview.

Quite a few Chinese teachers or critics may not think likewise as they follow the narrator's presumptuous rationalizations. Some may even assume the narrator to be the author, who has been well known for his inclination to speak for the subaltern or marginalized communities, be it in terms of race, gender, or class. Based on the fact that the author is an influential Nativist literary icon and considering his Taiwanese origin, some may also view the text as an anti-colonial or de-colonial allegory. Some pro-independent Taiwanese may further interpret the text, published right after the lifting of the Martial Law, as a political protest against the autocratic rule of the KMT. They may argue that the KMT, the "national apparatus," equally imposed a form of systemic violence not just on the indigenous peoples but also on the Taiwanese, since many of Taiwanese family members were also forced to fight and die for alien/intruding races.

Yet, first of all, to assume that the narrator directly represents the author is problematic, especially when the narrator may not be considered necessarily reliable.¹⁸ Second, whether or not the author can be assumed to be in tune with the "pro-independent Taiwanese subjectivity" is also debatable. Third, the discourses of Taiwan Nativist literature (鄉土文學) remain intrinsically controversial. According to Ye Shitao (葉石濤), there have been three literary movements on the island.¹⁹ The first came out as a distinct reform in 1930 when Huang Shihui (黃石輝) and Guo Qiusheng (郭秋生) advocated writing literature about Taiwan in Taiwanese for the Hoklo folks as the majority. Ye argues that Taiwan Nativist literature then aimed at Taiwan literary autonomy (台灣文學的自主性) although the concept had not been clearly articulated. The movement happened for the second time during the late 1940's, entangled with the debates between the Chinese complex (中國結) and the Taiwanese complex (台灣結). Like a phoenix, the movement came alive for the third time during the 1970's, well known as the so-called Taiwan Nativist literature movement. However, in Ye's

¹⁸ Susan Onega and Jose Angel Garcia Landa, eds., *Narratology: An Introduction* (NY: Longman, 1999).

¹⁹ Ye 1997: 38-47.

analysis, the discourses from either side actually manifested a new Chinese nationalism (新民族主義) although one embodied the proletarian political ideology while the other the quasi-humanitarianism. It's because the latter was tempered by the KMT in an attempt to reconstruct a modernized Chinese traditional culture that highlighted anti-Communist propaganda. Those who advocated for the subjectivity of Taiwan literatures, independent from Chinese literature, actually did not get involved in the movement during the 1970s. It was not until Zhong Zhaozheng (鍾肇政) took over the publication of *Taiwan literature* (台灣文藝) magazine in 1977 that the vision and spirit of *Taiwan New literature* (台灣新文學) became emergent.²⁰ During the 1980s, Chen Fangming (陳芳明) further revived the implicit "Taiwanese consciousness" (台灣意識) in a challenge against Chen Yinzhen's (陳映真) "Chinese consciousness" (中國意識), which catalyzed the pro-independent Taiwanese cultural identity.²¹ In Ye's opinion, Huang Chunming is considered to be one of the new Chinese nationalists rather than one of the Taiwan Nativist novelists.²²

With this historical and cultural background, the formation of Huang Chunming's cultural identity likely has been reshaped by the autocratic KMT reconstruction of the Chinese master narrative through education and the silencing of all dissidents by force on the island. However, he must have also been aware of the sequential literary and cultural discourses, especially those that arose after the lifting of the Martial Law so that his psyche changed as well. As Chen Wanyi (陳萬益) also remarked, the themes of Huang Chunming's narratives have switched from individual concerns to selfless compassion for the marginalized masses.²³ Ou Chongjing (歐崇敬) also contends that Huang Chunming's psyche has been transformed at least three times, from an idealistic speaker for the marginalized country folks to "a Nativist stranger" (本土化的異鄉人) in the alienated or de-familiarized postmodern homeland.²⁴

Taking the transformations of his psyche revealed in his creative writings over the five decades into consideration, we may indeed see that Huang Chunming became less and less interested in getting involved in any ideology, as far as his

²⁰ Ibid., 149.

²¹ See Chen Fangming's article with a pen name, Song Dong-yang (宋冬陽), <現階段台灣文學本土化的問題> (The problems of the current stage of localization of Taiwan literature), 《台灣文藝》 (Taiwan literature) 86 (1984): 10-40.

²² Ye 1997: 155.

²³ Chen Wanyi's (陳萬益) speech on April 9, 2008, at the graduate Institute of Taiwan Literatures in National Chung-cheng University.

²⁴ Ou Chongjing (歐崇敬), <黃春明的原鄉異鄉人> (The outsiders of the homeland in Huang Chunming's novels) 《台灣小說史導論卷一—台北的異鄉人：陳映真、黃春明、白先勇的後現代對話》 (The introductory history of Taiwan novels) (台北：洪葉文化，2007) 116。

political stand of the cultural identity is concerned. Besides, the author himself might also become aware of some limitations of his earliest text actually written in 1973 as it was done during the more restricted KMT cultural milieu. So, he adapted it into a play in 1994, which attempted to include the Indigenous viewpoint after he did more field trips and research on the people. In this play, it is transparent that he took out the intellectual narrator's lengthy assumptive reflection, keeping only the dialogue between the two major characters to demonstrate the amusing contrast as before. He also let the ghosts of Xiong's ancestors talk about their fighting and hunting in their own unique way, such as with more body language to help them convey their feelings. In addition, he even let the silenced Indigenous mother talk and interact with her two husband's ghosts, so that her virtue could be vividly portrayed to the audience. In other words, Huang Chunming's intent to present the play from the Indigenous perspective is obvious.

Moreover, after almost two decades since his trip to the Indigenous tribe, Huang Chunming probably has also become disillusioned with the assumption of Sino-centric superiority and come to see that the mechanism of the systemic violence imposed by any society or regime regardless of the race, class, or gender on any underprivileged subject is likely inevitable. As he said in the interview with Wei Kefeng about his play "My Name Is Lotus Flower":

At the time when I noticed the problem [of the under-aged indigenous prostitutes], I began to realize that although our ancestors' contribution to the development of the island deserved recognition, however they were not that great, worthy of much praise. 當時我有意到這個問題的時候，才真正發現我們祖先來開拓台灣，誠然有些地方可以歌功，但並不那麼神聖得可以頌德。²⁵

In response to Wei's question whether or not Xiong's calm, carefree, and even indifferent reactions still visible in the play revealed the lack of Indigenous self-awareness, he immediately disputed such a superficial interpretation:

When we talk about the self-awareness of oppressed minorities, it will be mistaken without detailed analysis [of its nature] because the self-awareness by nature manifests in various ways, subject to its surrounding environments at the time. . . . In fact, viewed from their own histories of development, any nation or ethnic tribe [such as the Chinese, the Christians, etc. as examples in his lengthy reply which was omitted] more or less has suffered from oppression, some for a long period of time, some only for a while. And while some have come through it, others are still suffering.

要談到被壓迫的少數族群的自覺性的話，不紳刻分析是會被誤解的，因為自覺性本身有很多種面貌的呈現，適敏是來自外在環境的影響. . . 其實全世界無論哪一個民族或族群的發展，從他的整個歷史來看，都可以看到他們

²⁵ Huang Chunming, in Wei Kefeng's interview, 83.

遭受到片段的浩劫和苦難的辛酸史，有的很長，有的短暫，有的已成過去，有的還正陷在水紳火熱之中。²⁶

He further made a comment on the character Xiong in the play:

The Indigenous tribe in Taiwan didn't feel self-pitiful, neither did they whine about "the sadness of being Indigenous people in Taiwan." Xiong in the play certainly is aware of their situation, otherwise he would not mention his grandfather's words, "even we burned up a nest of ants, but when you saw another ant somewhere else, you would know that the ants were not completely burned dead."

台灣的原住民並不自憐，也沒有發出悲鳴：「生為台灣原住民的悲哀這樣的叫聲」。劇中的熊對他們的處境，一定有自覺性的，不然他也不會提起他的外祖父說的話：『我們燒死一窩螞蟥，然後你又在別的地方看到螞蟥的時候，你就知道剛才那一窩螞蟥，並沒有被燒死。』²⁷

From this comment, we can see that even if the textual narrator in the story written six years earlier may be regarded as the implied author, Xiong certainly is not ignorant or incapable of grasping profound philosophy in his grandfather's parable to the author at this point, if not before. In other words, Xiong's "indifference or detachment" actually reveals his optimistic view of life; no matter how destructive or cruel the force imposed on vulnerable and defenseless creatures, such as the ants, the indigenous, or any similar victims, life goes on. Yet the difference between human beings and other sentient beings lies in the conscience of the former and their much greater capacity to learn from mistakes. So despite the dark side of human nature, any system perceived as a human construct in a democratic society nowadays can be technically reformed as long as there are enough conscientious minds to work it out together. This likely is the reason that the author continues to highlight the absurd cruelty of the systemic violence as a lesson not to repeat similar mistakes in the narrative, the play, to the poem.

As many Taiwanese became disappointed or disillusioned by the Taiwanese President Chen Shuibian and his DPP party after they won the election and took over the office from the KMT, Huang Chunming might be one who saw evidence of similar corruption, ethnocentrism, and "systemic violence" continuing to be committed against marginalized minorities, be they indigenous, foreign workers/brides, or the poor. Likely he also realized some alleged nationality or cultural identity could be simply an ideological construction to win over the votes of the same ethnicity, as he never positioned himself into any radical Taiwanese independent movement. To him, the systemic violence will go on as long as there is any violence or injustice done to the underprivileged or the innocent due to the

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

²⁷ Wei Kefeng 86.

corrupt or problematic political/social system without any sincerity to reform. This may explain why Huang further took out the descriptive and narrative parts about the systemic violence completely, but simply framed the ironies and questions in a succinct poem. It implies that the systemic violence may not result from any individual or nation. Whenever there is any oppression or killing, the systemic violence will manifest. The devilish force is not a matter of race, gender, or class but the unchecked mentality of control, greed, exploitation, etc., which is pandemic. Yet, such understanding of the notion or life may not be translatable due to the "deferred" nature of different languages and cultural mentalities not only at the specific point in time but also over time. While my close reading of the texts shows the former, my elaboration of the transformed postcolonial cultural mentalities in Taiwan and in the author's psyche over the decades manifests the latter. In other words, the untranslatable is evitable, which is precisely in accord with Chiu Hanping's theory of translation.

The Inevitability of the Untranslatable

In order to tackle the several transformed cultural landscapes in Taiwan, Chiu Hanping elaborates the inevitability of the untranslatable in his translation theory. With reference to Benjamin (1968), Derrida (1972), Paul de Man (1986), and Bhabha (1994), Chiu first points out that Western postmodern translation theories have recognized the "deferred" nature of any language not only at a specific point in time but also over time. Benjamin contends that in translation, meaning is "in a constant state of flux—until it is able to emerge as pure language from the harmony of all the various modes of intention," even "the original undergoes a change."²⁸ Derrida further claims that not only is meaning "secondary and provincial" but its sign is also interpreted in a "different and deferred" fashion, as in his words: "The sign represents the present in its absence. . . . The sign, in this sense, is "deferred presence."²⁹ According to Selden, *et al.*, "Derrida invents the French term "*différance*" to convey the divided nature of the sign," and in French, the verb "*différer*" means both "to differ" and "to defer;" while to "differ" is a spatial concept," to "defer" is temporal," meaning "signifiers enforce

²⁸ Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1986) 73-74; originally published in Germany in 1955 and the first English translation was published in 1968.

²⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Différance," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, 8-9; originally published in Paris in 1972.

an endless postponement of 'presence.'³⁰ In linguistics, diachronic linguistics which deals with how languages change over time is generally opposed to synchronic linguistics which deals with how languages differ across cultures at a specific point in time.³¹ Hence, the "deferred" nature of languages refers to something ineffable or indeterminate in any linguistic translation due to not only the arbitrary signs of different linguistic systems but also the evolutions of the dominant languages over time. In short, the "deferred" nature of languages exists not only synchronically but also diachronically. Likewise, Chiu believes that any writing is incomplete or open for more possible interpretations due to the ambiguous nature of the language itself. He also asserts that the deconstructionist mindset is similar to the Chinese Zen Buddhist view, particularly with reference to the Sixth Patriarch Huineng, at least in terms of the ineffable or untranslatable nature in language. Hence, any translation even with textual references likely manifests something untranslatable more or less.

Yet, unlike Derrida's and Paul de Man's deconstruction of any fixed universal signified of a given sign and their claim of no theological origin or a "transcendental signified" in the first place,³² Chiu finds Benjamin's notion of the "pure language" more compatible to Huineng's talk of the "Buddha nature."³³ However, Benjamin and Chiu first differ in their views of the fundamental gap between mortal language and the pure, instantaneous and complete language of an idealized God/Buddha. Second, they differ in their perceptions of the gap between the sentient beings and God/Buddha. While the former sees it as a matter of an essential difference between the unobtainable divine and the limited human, the latter sees it as a matter of experiential difference between achievable enlightenment and the tenacious human illusion. Third, to Benjamin, the translator's task is to produce "the echo of the original" or "aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one" (76), as if gluing "fragments of a vessel" together, which must "match one another in smallest details, although they need not be like one another" (78). The original and the translation should be incorporated lovingly and in detail as well so that they can be "recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel" (78). Although no elaboration on the metaphor

³⁰ Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker, eds., *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (London: Prentice Hall, 1997) 171.

³¹ See the Encyclopedia at <http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Diachronic>, accessed on May 17, 2009.

³² Derrida 9; Paul de Man, "Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator,'" *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986) 78.

³³ Chiu 25.

of a vessel is provided, Benjamin seems to believe that the ultimate wholeness exists. After all, his conclusion that "the interlinear version of the Scriptures," in which literalness and freedom are united as "the prototype or ideal of all translation," undoubtedly implies its theological reference. In contrast, Chiu contends that it is to perceive the Buddha and the sentient beings as one by revealing the Buddha nature in translation/interpretation or using language and translation as a tool for such realization. He further compares their difference as a contrast between the "transcendence" and the "immanence" in philosophical terms.³⁴ To him, the translation should aim at a spiritual lifting of the original toward the origin until the Buddha nature manifests. In other words, the untranslatable, despite its inevitability, is not completely incomprehensible to human beings, especially for those who gradually or suddenly come to realize the immanent Buddha nature. Many Buddhas, or at least Shakymuni, his disciple Kasyapa, the Chinese Sixth Patriarch Huineng and perhaps many more unknown human beings, have achieved ineffable enlightenment. Hence, even to the most practical of human minds, at least one thing can be of significance in this transcendent methodology. As long as human beings can keep their minds open enough, they may become more sensitive to the liminal stage of language and the inevitable projections of cultural diversity, even if they are not yet able to act out the divinely unconditional compassion.

Some Transcultural Significances of the Inevitability of the Untranslatable

Viewed in this way, the inevitability of the untranslatable has its constructive significance in light of Chiu's views on the liminality of cultural translation and the human potential for achieving the Buddha nature by cultivation. With reference to Bhabha's notion of "the third space" as "a space of ambivalence or hybridity," an "in-between" or liminal state,³⁵ Chiu stresses the liminality of any translation, especially of cultural translation. He tries to bring forward the re/constructive power relationships of the sequentially transformed cultural landscapes in Taiwan with several examples, such as of the Wu-feng's case, the 2/28 Incident, and President Chen's political policy of a new middle ground. As he contends,

³⁴ Chiu 26.

³⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, ed. *Nation and Narration* (London & New York: Routledge, 1990) 211.

These examples all reveal the "in-between" or liminality of translation. Such translation is neither of the original nor of the translated, neither of the old nor of the target culture. The liminality sets free the translation from any single system, not necessarily bounded to a fixed paradigm of signs, and new combinations may bring about the hope for reforms, subvert the old power relationship, or reverse the existent cultural hierarchy.

這些例子都指向翻譯的中介、門檻位置，既不屬於原文，也不屬於譯文，既不屬於甲文化，也不屬於乙文化，這種門檻的位置，使其得以擺脫單一體系的束縛，不必局限在固定一套組合符號的模式，新的組合可能因而帶來變革的契機，或是顛覆原有的權力關係，或改變現有的文化位階。³⁶

Moreover, Chiu also stresses some crucial points about cultural translation. First, cultural translation occurs in the liminal state between the original and the translated culture. The translated culture simply "aiming at" or approximating the origin will never be precisely the same as the original. In other words, even a cultural translator is performing a translation of his/her gestalt experience/mind, and as such, the totality of the experience/mind cannot be fully represented, which is likely the case in Huang's several attempts for the cultural translation in his original text due to his and Xiong's different cultural mentalities even in the supposedly same culture at the specific point in time. Second, any revised translation over time is a new created approximation to the origin because they are never exactly the same, as evident in Huang's modified versions due to his own transformed cultural mentalities over the decades. Furthermore, any translation from one cultural mentality to another will turn out as a new hybrid culture, no longer the same as either one. If we apply the analogy between synchronic and diachronic linguistics as mentioned to the cultural translation, we may see the similarly "deferred" nature not only of the language itself but also of the cultural mentalities synchronically and diachronically, be the linguistic or cultural signs faithfully represented or strategically presented. In other words, the untranslatable nuances of any language or culture are inevitable due to different times, various contexts, historical experiences, and the "deferred" nature or the not-yet-aware-of liminal cultural mentalities.

Hence, Chiu contends that the task of the translation in Taiwan lies not simply in the exchange of the linguistic messages, but the mental immersion and convergence of diverse cultural paradigms. And hopefully in the end, the deep structure of the inevitably untranslatable state embodying the immanent Buddha nature will be revealed. In practice, Chiu argues for the co-existence of diverse ethnic languages and their entailed cultures.³⁷ As he further claims, "translation

³⁶ Chiu 14.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

shouldn't set its goal merely as an exchange of messages, but should aim instead, for the incommunicable dimensions of language."³⁸ In other words, Chiu's cultural translation theory is more pertinent than Derrida's and De Man's for elaborating on the untranslatable in Huang Chunming's literary works because the writer has never been considered an atheist or materialists in his native Taiwanese context.

These constructive views may also be applicable in political terms. As Bassnett & Trivedi contend:

... translation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer. Moreover, translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in the process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with signification at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems.³⁹

With this, if the selected texts as so interpreted are situated in any remapping of greater China, the significance of the inevitability of the untranslatable may also be valid. In other words, if mainland China is calling the tune in global political arenas for modernist homogenization of the unchallengeable One, it likely will be confronted by other politically constitutive trends, the forces of ethnic and cultural fragmentations in and out of its claimed territories. To the welfare of all, tolerance or even support for literary and cultural diversity is actually a means of harnessing centrifugal energies for the cultural China of supra-geopolitical connectedness in Tu Weiming's vision.⁴⁰ As Michael Cronin remarks, "Politics and literature further interact at the level of imaginative empathy."⁴¹ Otherwise, if different peoples in the mapped territories largely are ignorant of each other's histories and cultures, they're unlikely to remain loyal to the constructed nationality when any fatal crisis breaks out.

Similarly, such significance of the inevitability of the untranslatable in the Taiwanese context also lies in the recognition of the limbo stage as transitional, which is vital to move forward to multiculturalism with a greater awareness of equality and mutual respect, especially in encountering indigenous cultures. As in Huang Chunming's attempt, despite the irony, contradiction, and limited cultural mentality of the narrator in his encounter with the Indigenous Xiong in

³⁸ Ibid. 30.

³⁹ S. Bassnett, & H. Trivedi, "Introduction: Of Colonies, Cannibals, and Vernaculars," *Post-Colonial Translation*, ed. S. Bassnett & H. Trivedi (London: Routledge, 1999) 1-18.

⁴⁰ Tu Weiming 1116.

⁴¹ Michael Cronin, *Translation and Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) 39.

the earliest version, readers' recognition and awareness if aroused will also be significant. Above all, Huang's stress on the importance of action after our awareness of the historical tragedies done to oppressed minorities, especially the indigent peoples, is worth quoting to call for the most desirable action:

It's sad alright, what has been done as a history cannot be undone. We must accept it. The important thing is to remember it as a lesson and not to repeat those mistakes. Otherwise, the irretrievable fact turns into a national or ethnic hatred or a deep sense of grievance, and even self pity and despair, and then the nation or tribe will lose their vision of their future, like a caterpillar, trapped in its own cocoon. But when the time is right, the caterpillar in the cocoon may break out and transform into a butterfly, flying freely and displaying its beauty and life in the world.

是悲哀沒錯，發生過的事情成爲歷史時是無法挽回的，必須承認它是事實。重要的是記取其中的教訓，不然這些無法挽回的事實，成爲一個民族或族群的仇恨，或是怨恨，反過來成爲自憐的話，這個民族或族群將失去視野，沒有前途，就好像毛毛蟲把自己幽禁在自作的繭裡面了。但是繭裡面的蛹，到了一定的時候，會破繭成蝶，在廣大的世界中翱翔飛舞，展現她的美麗和生動。⁴²

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不可譯的必然性： 論黃春明〈戰士，乾杯！〉的文化翻譯

摘要

晚近學術界的評論已意識到翻譯在教學與研究的重要性，尤其是在跨文化的脈絡下。不僅因翻譯並非只是語言的解碼，還因其涉及文化重構和對於作者的企圖、語氣及焦點的詮釋，無論其本人是否自覺。的確，由於西方後／現代的翻譯理論，學術翻譯的趨勢已從原來強調字義、絕對權威的解讀，轉為從跨文化視野的再現、相對和延宕 (deferred) 或中介 (in between) 的論述。

因應島內數度翻轉的文化景觀，邱漢平(2001)聯結班雅明所謂「純語言」(pure language) 的概念與古代中原佛道思想，特別是禪宗對語言的看法，而發展他的翻譯理論，因他們都認為人類語言本身具有「不可譯」的必然性和翻譯的「門檻位置」(liminality)。本文將以細讀、比較黃春明1988年的〈戰士，乾杯！〉、1994年的劇本及2005年的詩詞改編為例，探討是否由於語言及文化思維本就具有類似歷時與共時性的差異及「延宕」，而導致某種「不可譯」的必然性。並經由闡述台灣近幾十年來所歷經後／殖民文化思維轉變及其對作者的影響而改編的劇本和詩詞，來驗證如此的不可譯性正與邱漢平的理論不謀而合。筆者也將討論在全球文化翻譯熱潮下，正視語言、文化過渡時期不可譯的必然性，如何有助於促進跨文化了解的一些淺見。

關鍵字：文化翻譯，班雅明的「純語言」(pure language)，邱漢平的翻譯理論，台灣文學，黃春明，〈戰士，乾杯！〉

