

Vincent Y. C. Shih's Translation of
the *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*:
A Note on Literary Translation

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Introduction

In his brief review of Vincent Yu-chung Shih's translation of the *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* 文心雕龍¹. (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, by Liu Hsieh 劉勰), James R. Hightower raised a question which concerns the basis of the translation. That is, who is the potential reader? For whom is the translation intended? He said:

Mr. Shih would have made the task of his reviewer an easier one if he had stated exactly for whom he was writing. In the absence of any such statement he is vulnerable to attack from both sides [the common reader and the professional Sinologist "looking for a guide through a particularly obscure passage"], and indeed it seems to me that one trouble with this translation is that he perhaps never faced this problem squarely.²

This problem is, indeed, essential. The answer to it is, however, very much conditioned by the job of translating itself. It is not to be decided mainly by the translator, as Hightower suggested, but by our common sense. As a matter of fact, most translations are not accompanied by any statement about the intended reader. By nature, a translation from one language into another aims to render a version in the latter language while systematically retaining the original meaning, so that a reader of the latter language may gain access to something that is within his field, or to his taste, or otherwise not readable because it is written in a foreign language. He is of course the intended reader. Take the translation in question as an example: conceivably, an English version of the *Wen-hsin* will best benefit those English readers who are in the field of or are interested in literary criticism and may also like to know something about this ancient and enormously influential book in Chinese literary criticism. Since they do not read

Chinese, they are certainly to learn from the translation a whole set of new things which may otherwise remain difficult for them. An English translation means most to people like them. And they should be the major intended readers.

However, another kind of readers may also find the translation helpful—the Sinologist as Hightower mentioned in his review. His native language is English. He reads Chinese well enough. But he still finds some passages obscure or difficult in such an age-old text in classical Chinese. In this case, a well-rendered English translation is surely more convenient for him than any Chinese collection of annotations. As a matter of fact, anyone (even a Chinese) who knows both modern English and classical Chinese but reads the former somewhat better than the latter will get the same help from the translation. Only that this kind of help should not be the major target of the translation, otherwise it would be a great waste of time and energy on the part of the translator; more detailed notes will suffice the need for a guide through obscure and difficult passages.

An English version of the *Wen-hsin* may interest still a third category of people, namely, those who are oriented to comparative studies. They read both Chinese and English quite well. In reading the translation, they just want to see how well a book on literary criticism born of the Chinese tradition can be located in the Western ideology, and hence to proceed to some comparative work. Admittedly, the translation is rather useful here. In fact, any reader of the translation is more or less inclined to do comparative study. And the process of translating itself involves a lot of comparative work. Nevertheless, this kind of usage is indirect and hence could not be the chief purpose of the translation, either. What is described in the previous paragraph, is only a minor or side use of the translation. The translation, while intended mainly for the first category of reader (the "common reader," as Hightower put it), may satisfy the other two categories as well. But if it is rendered for either of the latter two only, it will certainly fail to serve the common reader and lose its major audience as a consequence for both the latter two kinds of readers read Chinese and may possess a considerable stock of knowledge about the Chinese tradition. A translation aimed for them will no doubt leave out a lot of materials necessary for the common reader's understanding of the translation.

Before the translation of the text of *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*, Prof. Shih presents a 35-page introduction of his own. In it he traces the development of Chinese literary theory down to Liu Hsieh's time. He explains some

peculiarities of the traditional Chinese views of literature. He points out, wherever possible, the parallels between the Chinese and the Western traditions, so as to further elucidate the literary views of the ancient Chinese people. He also examines Liu Hsieh's main ideas in the form of a summary so that the reading of the text would be easier. Besides, not a single Chinese character is found in the 1959 edition (not in the text, nor in the notes where the titles of the Chinese books referred to are simply romanized). The book is exclusively in English. From these facts, one may infer that Mr. Shih must have had the common English reader in his mind when he was writing.

The estimation of Mr. Shih's achievement in translating *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*, therefore, should be based mainly upon how well he has served the common English reader. In defense of his own translation, Prof. Shih once mentioned that he had been told by Prof. Liang Shih-ch'iu 梁實秋 that his translation was very helpful when the latter encountered some obscure passages of the original.³ He continued to quote from Prof. Cheng Ch'ien's 鄭騫 preface to the bilingual edition of the *Wen-hsin* (1970):

Several famous Chinese scholars have said that many difficult sentences and passages of the original *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* become clear and illuminated immediately when read against Mr. Shih's translation . . . And I have the same feeling.

Obviously, all these do not necessarily defend Prof. Shih's translation since they are opinions expressed by some Chinese scholars, not by the intended reader. Moreover, they may have some dangerous implications: what has Prof. Shih done to the original—namely, how has he interpreted it—so that the text becomes “clearer” and the obscurities are “illuminated”?

I. Semantics

Translation, as Huang Hsuan-fan 黃宣範 conceives it, is basically an application of comparative linguistics.⁴ To translate Liu Hsieh's 劉 勰 *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* 文心雕龍 into English is, however, much more than a simple exercise in the comparative linguistics between Chinese and English. *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* was written more than fourteen centuries ago in classical Chinese, which is vastly different from modern Chinese. The great distance in time entails a rather intricate and difficult kind of process, which Roman Jakobson calls “intralingual translation” for a modern translator.⁵ For

Jakobson, translation is interpretation. Intralingual translation is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language," while "interlingual translation" or "translation proper" is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language." A reading of a text is essentially an exercise in intralingual translation since "the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign." A translation from one language into another is therefore an aggregate of some intralingual translation. Such a translation, Jakobson observes, is a "reported speech." The translator must first "recode" a message from the original and then "transmit" it in another language. The copious annotations *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* has invited prove that a modern reading or recoding of this ancient text is really difficult. The semantic part of the present discussion on Prof. Shih's translation of the *Wen-hsien* is based mainly upon the concepts of "cognitive meaning," or the basic reference of a word or expression, and "emotive meaning," or the meaning endowed upon words and expressions by culture and tradition.⁶ The semantic discussion will center on the translation of 1) literary terms and critical idioms, 2) metaphors, and 3) allusions.

1. Literary terms and critical idioms

It happens quite often in Prof. Shih's translation that a literary term has several different renderings. The term *ts'ai* 采 is translated into "literary expression" when juxtaposed with *ch'ing* 情, as in the title of the Chapter of *Ch'ing-ts'ai*. Yet in the opening sentences of the chapter, *ts'ai* becomes "literary decorativeness":

The literary writings of the sages and worthy men are summed up under the phrase *wen-chang*, or literary pattern. What is this, if it is not literary decorativeness? (p. 245)

Here Prof. Shih is flexible in providing various renderings that can suit different contexts. However, an English reader is very liable to miss the emphasis the original puts upon *ts'ai* by repeating the character and by pointing it out right in the beginning. The meaning of *ts'ai* certainly encompasses both "literary expression" and "literary decorativeness," but these two phrases do not necessarily make the reader feel that they have the same referent.

At the same time, "emotion" is not sufficient for the manifold impli-

cations the character *ch'ing* carries. The juxtaposition of, and relationship between, *ch'ing* and *ts'ai* (or *chih* 質 and *wen* 文) is, as demonstrated in the chapter, similar to those between content and form of literature. As a result, *ch'ing* covers all the meanings of such expressions as 情性 "emotions" (p. 43), 志 "sentiments" (p. 43) or "feeling" (p. 49), 性靈 "inner spirits" (p. 245), and even 理 "ideas" (p. 246, p. 248).

On the whole, Prof. Shih treats *wen* 文 as equivalent to "literature" (p. 245, p. 24, p. 247). In some other cases, however, when it means the external form of literature, Prof. Shih renders it variously into "literary expressions" (p. 248), "literary pattern" (p. 246), "literary form(s)" (p. 43, p. 247), and so on. In still other cases, when it refers generally to the outer form of all beings, it becomes the "pattern" (p. 9, p. 10) or the "ornamental pattern" (p. 245). But a real problem looms up when it means all of these at the same time, as in the following:

故立文之道，其理有三：一曰形文，五色是也，二曰聲文，五音是也；三曰情文，五性是也。五色雜而成黼黻，五音比而成韶夏，五情發而爲辭章……

Three main patterns are involved in the creation of literature: the color pattern, made up of the five colors; the sound pattern, made up of the five sounds; and the emotional pattern, made up of the five emotions. It is the mixing of the five basic colors which produces elegant embroidery; it is the harmonizing of the five basic sounds which creates the ancient music, such as the piece "Shao-hsia"; and it is the expression of the five emotions which gives us the essence of literature. . . . (p. 245)

Here, 文, at least the one in the phrase 立文, encompasses all the three shades of meaning mentioned above. Prof. Shih pins it down as signifying "literature" only and hence creates a contradiction: the first sentence claims affirmatively "three main patterns" for the creation of literature; while in the following explanation, only the final 文 turns out to be the "essence of literature."

The cognitive function is the major function at work in understanding a term or name. And in all these cases, the problem clearly lies in the deficiency of the area of cognitive meaning introduced by Prof. Shih's renderings. In the ancient time, each of such terms as *ch'ing*, *ts'ai* and *wen* encompasses a wide area of cognitive meaning. In due course, several new

terms or phrases differentiate from them respectively, each carrying part of their meanings. Hence in a modern language, be it Chinese or English, one finds no terms (or "code-units" in Jakobson's words) compatible with the old terms in the area of cognitive meaning. "Literature" 文學, "Literary expressions" 文作, "literary forms" 文學類型 or "pattern" 紋—none of these modern expressions can match the old name *wen* in the width of meaning and convey its full significance. What Prof. Shih has done in recoding these old terms, as seen from the above examples, is simply choosing one part of the meaning at a time. This may be all right as far as the immediate context is concerned. Yet viewed from a bigger context—a whole passage or chapter, it may cause inconsistency or confusion, or simply insufficiency in meaning.

The difficulty of interlingual translation, as Jakobson points out, lies in the fact that "there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units." Yet at the same time, he finds that "messages may serve as adequate interpretations of alien code-units or messages." And since "all cognitive experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing language," at least the cognitive meaning of anything can be translated. Whenever deficiency is felt, he further suggests, "terminology may be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan-translations, neologisms or semantic shifts, and finally, by circumlocutions." These devices, when applied to interlingual translation, may produce clumsy renderings—as they should be, perhaps, since the definition of our experience invites and requires metalinguistic operations—"recoding interpretation," that is, translation.

Take the *li-wen* 立文 passage quoted above for example: we may simply romanize the character 文 as *wen*. Thus 形文 becomes *hsing-wen* or *wen* of color; 聲文 becomes *sheng-wen* or *wen* of sound, and 情文 becomes *ch'ing-wen* or *wen* of emotions. We should provide in the note a full explanation of the implications the character *wen* may have here. This may appear to be a clumsy circumlocution of the original meaning. However, it transmits almost the complete message and avoids the deadly confusion caused by Prof. Shih's rendering.

We now come to face a set of critical idioms which stubbornly refuse to be transposed into another language. The vocabulary of traditional Chinese literary criticism tends to be the same as that applied to appraise a person. While this tendency has the advantage of being suggestive and hence flexible, it is imprecise and hence loose. Idioms falling into this category have, in fact, undergone semantic changes through ages. The laws

of semantic change are operative at all times and with respect to all languages. According to Mr. Bréal:

Changes of lexical meaning were classified in terms of such notions as broadening, narrowing and metaphorical transfer, on the one hand, and, under the influence of the fast-developing science of psychology, of the acquisition of pejorative or ameliorative associations, on the other.

Therefore, to this day, such critical idioms as *feng-ku* 風骨 *ch'i* 氣, *chi-li* 肌理 continue to invite annotations and commentaries. We cannot even find equivalents in English that carry their cognitive meaning or empirical meaning,⁸ not to mention to convey the whole semantic weight. How, then, is an English reader to relate *feng* with wind, or *ku* with bone? Both language systems, each as a body of knowledge, include such lexemes or expressions, but *feng* and wind, or *ku* and bone, just do not embrace the same spheres of reference in these two distinct systems. It is on this point that the translator encounters the most relentless clash between the world of the text and that of the translated work: he finds nothing but a dark un-bridgeable abyss. Let us dwell a little longer on *feng-ku*, on which Liu Hsieh wrote a whole chapter. The term was originally used to describe one's demeanor and appearance. Shen Yueh 沈約 records in "the Chronicle of Emperor Wu" in the *Sung shu* 宋書武帝志: "He distinguished himself by his *feng-ku*. Though poor, he was filled with ambition." In this context *feng-ku* refers to the overall impression that one's demeanor and physical appearance make on others. This term has also been applied to literary works characterized by masculine beauty and substantiality. Thus:

詩總六義，風冠其首……結言端直，則文骨成焉，意氣駿秀，前文風清焉。

The Book of Poetry contains six elements, and of these *feng*, or wind, stands at the head of the list . . . When expressions are organized on the right principles, literary bone is there; and when the emotion and vitality embodied are swift and free, there we find the purity of the literary wind. (p. 227)

Without the help of circumlocution, how is one going to grasp the opening words of this chapter?

A helpful way to render *feng-ku* more intelligible is, perhaps, first to transliterate the two characters in the text, and then to provide for each the literal (or bare, mere) meaning and moreover, adequate etymological orientation when necessary. For instance, *feng* also means *tz'u* 刺 (to pierce, to satirize). Translation has been compared to a bridge. If there is a bridge, at least some people will not bother to swim across. But when the bridge is not solid enough, one takes the risk of falling from or with the bridge, which may be far more risky than to swim.

Finally, in *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* one finds a set of epithets that are used almost as stereotyped critical idioms in describing different styles and features of writers. Most later Chinese critics continue to employ them in their criticism. Expressions like *tien* 典, *ya* 雅, *jun* 潤, *ch'ing* 清, *li* 麗, *mei* 美, *mi* 靡, *chün* 俊, *chün* 峻, *wan* 婉 all have definite implications. Some may even have sub-divisions under them. For example, under *tien*, there are *tien*, *p'ing-tien* 平典 and *ch'ing-tien* 清典; under *li*, *ch'ing-li* and *hua-li* 華麗; under *mi*, *ch'ing-mi* and *hua-mi*. Their definitions may be tricky, but their uses are nearly fixed. In the introduction to his translation, Prof. Shih does make a mention of the eight styles conceived of by Liu, yet he does not seem to have troubled himself much in this direction. He treats *chün* 俊 vaguely as "truly great" (p. 47), and renders *ch'ing-li* literally into "purity and beauty" (p. 48). His careless treatment brings confusion to the following passage:

……華實異用，惟才所安。故平子得其雅，叔夜含其潤，茂先擬其清，景陽振其麗。兼善則子健仲宣，偏美則太沖公幹。

... Flowers (the ornate or romantic elements) and fruits (the factual or realistic elements) are employed differently in accordance with individual talents. Thus P'ing tzu achieved the grace of the ideal poetry, Shu-yeh its brilliance, Mao-hsien approached its purity, and Ching-yang developed its beauty. Tzu-chien and Chung-hsuan combined in their works all these good qualities; while T'ai-ch'ung and Kung Kan each captured a particular aspect of its beauty. (p. 48, underlining ours)

The phrase "its beauty," appearing twice in this short passage, actually refers to two different things in the original: both 麗 and 美 are translated into "beauty." But from the context, what Ching-yang, like those mentioned before him, developed is only one particular aspect of the ideal poetry,

and so is the case with T'ai-ch'ung and Kung Kan—in contrast to that with Tzu-chien and Chung-hsuan. Therefore, the first “beauty” is simply one part of the general beauty of the ideal poetry, to which the second “beauty” refers. Perhaps a better way to translate these epithets is to first choose for each of them an appropriate and definite rendering, and then give in the notes more detailed descriptions of their particular meanings.

2. Metaphors

The *Wen-hsin* abounds in metaphors, which causes a lot of difficulties for the translator. For metaphor is basically a special kind of expression produced by a special type of thinking. Unlike direct discourse (which describes our daily experience in a direct manner), a metaphor transcends the limits of time and space, and connects two things that are not related at all in real life. A comparative contemplation upon the subject and the metaphorical predicate (the two unrelated things) will establish a new semantic relationship between them and yield new cognitive meaning through them.⁹ In this sense, metaphor may be viewed as a means of cognitive activity. Its meaning, at least the part related to the cognitive function, is translatable. Here is an example of successful rendering:

……明而未融，故發注而後見也。

... Such parables are like the first rays of light before the break of dawn, still enveloped in ambiguity. This is the reason why commentaries are required to make the meaning clear. (p. 277)

Although the metaphor 明而未融 is turned into a simile, its cognitive meaning is transmitted into English. The English sentence is completely understandable. The contemplation upon the possible relationship between the parables and the scene of the breaking dawn generates a meaning similar to that of the Chinese context. Another example of successfully translated metaphors:

按轡文雅之場，環絡藻繪之府……

... coursing through the hunting grounds of literature and looping reins in the palace of rhetoric ... (p. 6)

Here Prof. Shih has done little more than a literal rendering, but the comparison between literature and the metaphorical expressions is almost as subtle and meaningful as that in the original.

Metaphor is, however, not just a vehicle of the cognitive function. It is at the same time a poetical use of the language. Its effects depend

very much upon the grammatical features of the language—syntactic and morphological categories, lexemes, roots, affixes, phonemes, and so on. Meaning yielded in this aspect is generally not translatable. Poetry, Jakobson claims, “by definition is untranslatable.” On the other hand, the metaphorical use of language is deeply rooted in culture and tradition. The connection of two different things may generate beautiful meaning in one culture, but may not necessarily generate in another culture a meaning absolutely the same in both quality and quantity. These kinds of discrepancies in emotive meaning are also difficult to overcome. In the following example,

驅辭逐貌

... harnessing language for their descriptions ... (p. 46)

the metaphorical expression “harnessing” is all right. But the juxtaposition of the two Chinese verbs 驅 and 逐 and the echoing effect produced therefrom are totally lost in the English version. Here is another example:

飾羽尚畫，文繡鞞幌

They try to “decorate the feather” just to be painting and will attempt to embroider even the leather hankerchief bag. (p. 3)

Perhaps Prof. Shih’s literal rendering could be somewhat changed. But the fact remains that the emotive meaning stimulated by such beautiful expressions as 飾羽，文繡 and 鞞幌 is really difficult to translate into English. One last example of this kind:

……吟詠之間，吐納珠玉之聲，眉睫之前，卷舒風雲之色

... he creates the music of pearls and jade between his poetic lines, and he witnesses the rolling of wind and clouds right before his brows and lashes. (p. 216)

Here the translation is literally complete. However, Prof. Shih is forced to sacrifice the beautifully coupled, metaphorical verbs—吐 and 納，卷 and 舒. Besides, an English reader may not be as ready for such expressions as “the music of pearls and jade” and “the rolling of wind and clouds” as a Chinese reader is for 珠玉之聲 and 風雲之色. Is there, then, any good way to handle these untranslatable matters? Perhaps Jakobson’s solution of “creative transposition” can help here. It is feasible in theory, but is understandably difficult in practice. And Prof. Shih has done very little in this respect. A marginal example is:

水性虛而滄漪結……

Water by nature is plastic, allowing the formation of ripples
... (p. 245)

Prof. Shih chooses "plastic," instead of "empty," for the character *hsu* 虛 and gives his reason in the note. We certainly wish that Prof. Shih had shown more of this.¹⁰

3. Allusions

An allusion is to be fully grasped only when one comprehends it in the light of its immediate context and of other contexts it may appear in as well. It was a habit with the Chinese writers to quote others freely and frequently without documentation; this is the case with Liu Hsieh. We can single out numerous passages from the *Wen-hsin* to be simply wholesale duplication. When quotations have gone so long as to be duplication we do not have to worry, for we feel assured of what the author has in mind. But the case of allusions can be tricky. Take, for example, the following line:

子夏監絢素之章，子貢悟琢磨之句。

Tzu-hsia properly comprehended the verse containing the line "Be white in order to be beautiful"; and Tzu-kung, the stanza in which chiseling and polishing are mentioned. (p. 44)

The two examples taken from the *Analects*, about Tzu-hsia and Tzu-kung each being inspired by lines from the *Book of Poetry*, call for more than translation. Shih in his endnotes refers his reader to the corresponding context where the dialogues appear. Let us assume that such references are enough for a competent reader who is adequately equipped with information about both the *Analects* and the *Book of Poetry*. But the same reader, (perhaps less endowed than Tzu-hsia) may not know how to respond to the verse "Be white in order to be beautiful." Since we know that the poet cannot be a white racist, it is perhaps an advocacy for simplicity. If so, simplicity in which aspect, moral conduct or poetics? Originally the verse means to lay the foundation (white) properly before applying colors in painting and make-up.¹¹ Tzu-hsia, inspired by this observation, realized that rituals come after faith and sincerity (*chung-hsin* 忠信) in importance. There are three levels of reference concerning a beauty, painting, and moral conduct respectively, and in each level emphasis is given to proper foundation. Shih's translation twists Tzu-hsia's comprehension, and also the verse,

beyond recognition.

II. Formal

The gap, and hence the discrepancy, between the ornate parallel-prose perfected in the Six Dynasties on the part of the source language and the modern English in the hand of Shih on the part of the target language was fully anticipated even before we started off. Therefore, for the formal aspects of the rendering we should at least consider a major distinction in syntax, namely, parataxis vs. hypotaxis, and, as a result, the lack of corresponding equivalents in modern English for the particles or expletives abounding in the archaic Chinese which have even disappeared from modern Chinese. In the following discussion we will examine how and how well Shih handles these problems. Together with these formal features, we will also comment on an addition of Shih's own—the use of brackets and endnotes.

1. Syntaxis

A serious problem in translating classical Chinese, Achilles Fang speaks on behalf of a non-native speaker of Chinese, is "to obtain syntaxis out of the predominantly paratactical structure of Chinese texts."¹² It is agreed that the absence of prepositions and conjunctions, the lack of syntactic exigencies, create ambiguity or multi-signification. In fact, syntactical differences between Chinese, especially T'ang poetry, and English in this respect have been amply documented.¹³ Translating Liu Hsieh's exuberant parallel-prose is no less challenging than translating T'ang poetry, partly because this particular genre partakes the features of both prose and poetry.

The conventional view has it that understood subjects, conjunctions and connectives indicating cause-and-effect relationship should be supplied in translation to smooth the English syntax. The language used in the *Wen-hsin* is marked with formal prosodic features, such as parallelism and balance like those in couplets. For example, two neighboring sentences with equal number of characters are set in parallel, while two sentences form a unit that balances another unit of similar syntactical structure. In a punctuated modern Chinese text, such an instance often appears in a series of short sentences (or clauses in the sense of English syntaxis) connected by neither conjunctions nor transition words but separated by commas. Hence Achilles Fang asserts that "the so-called punctuation marks (of the past) in Chinese

texts, which any school child of ten can put down, represent nothing much beyond breathing pauses. They are neither grammatical nor logical."¹⁴ On this score, Shih gives no clue as to how he breaks off one pair while combining another. For Example:

人稟七情，應物斯感，感物吟志，莫非自然。

Man is endowed with seven emotions. When stimulated by external objects, these emotions rise in response. In responding to objects one sings to express his sentiments. All this is perfectly spontaneous. (p. 43)

Judging from both semantic and syntactic structures, we find these four lines in Chinese fall into two cause-and-effect units; the first two form one and the last two, with even stronger logical implication, form another. Shih breaks them off into four separate sentences, with the last sentence ("All this is perfectly spontaneous.") referring, misleadingly, to all preceding three sentences. Variety of sentence length is a stylistic strategy, but it should not be used at the expense of logic. The original means something like this:

Man is endowed with seven emotions which rise in response to external objects. It is out of spontaneous feelings that one responds to the external in songs.

Elaboration of grammatical relationships between sentences in the Chinese text gains somewhere but loses elsewhere. It is a matter of choice depending largely on which genre the translator chooses to render into. Broadly speaking, a translator of poetry may feel obliged to keep the word order of his source language, while another of prose would aim at elucidation of and even commentary on the original. It is apparent that Shih's present work is more inclined to the latter, namely, introducing and elucidating Chinese critical theory together with its vocabulary. It is on this ground that one may expect the English translation to take care first of intelligibility and then, if possible, of other stylistic features such as rhyme, couplets. We therefore feel that transition should be more clearly indicated and connection marked out. To obtain syntaxis from the Chinese parataxis is a problem that involves the choice of when to break off sentences and how to join them.

The semantic and syntactical parallelism of Liu Hsieh's couplets, subtle and balanced as they are, inevitably turn out to be paraphrase in the

rendition. Such a deviation seems inevitable: the Chinese is sometimes crisp and sparse enough to lead one to suspect that Chinese is telegraphic and that it is a shorthand for a longhand message.¹⁵ This kind of sacrifice in the process of paraphrasing is seen in the translation of

(1) 婉轉附物，招悵切情。

Realistic in describing objective scenes and deeply moving in depicting inner emotions. (p. 45)

(2) 儷采百字之偶，爭價一句之奇。

Writers vied in weaving couplets which might extend to hundreds of words, or in attempting to achieve the wondrous by a single line. (p. 48)

In both instances, syntactical balance seems to have been preserved with the conjunctions "and" and "or." But semantic parallel is apparently lost, especially in example (1) where the rendition departs from the original; for instance, the English word "realistic" does not bring out the emotive meaning of *wan-chuan* 婉轉. As has been pointed out, Chinese critical idioms often overlap with those applied to describe human beings; they present unsurmountable obstacles.

2. Particles

Particles, or expletives,¹⁶ are a distinctive feature of *wen-yen* 文言 (in contrast to *pai-hua* 白話). In parallel-prose they contribute to euphonism no less than rhymes do. And moreover, they carry the tone. Shih mostly without fail "gets the meaning across," but tonal subtlety is often lost on the way. Again, we would emphasize that it is a matter of choice, since translation inevitably involves selection among possible meanings.

Particles at once give a smooth to *wen-yen* and pose a problem to the translator. They not only affect the tone but possibly carry the whole tenor. One might take a passage to be asserting a negative attitude, while another could read affirmation into the same passage, depending sheerly on how one treats the particles there. In fact, ambivalence or pluri-signification is sometimes deliberately created by the writer. We will now use Fang's categories to reveal how Shih was faced with this difficulty.

The first, functional particles such as pronominal 其, which actually play as a regular part of speech, are not a problem. The second, decorative particles, ubiquitous in parallel-prose and allied genres, do not carry much

semantical weight, but they spice almost any kind of sentence and demand "an aesthetic treatment."¹⁷ Fang compares these particles to the many ways of executing a stroke in calligraphy. Hence, they are rhetorical rather than functional. In the sentence

酬酢以爲賓榮，吐納而成身文。

... it [the old poetry] was pressed into service to glorify diplomatic guests at state function, and to quote it with facility was sought as a personal ornament. (p. 44)

the 以 and 而 can be omitted here without damaging the text, yet they balance each other in that both function like the tarrying for a moment in executing a stroke. They seem to indicate that to glorify diplomatic guests and to beautify one's own demeanor is a process artistic rather than straightforward. In fact, the author is keeping from making himself immediately clear.

The third category, attitudinizing particles, which convey the writer's mood toward the statement to which they are attached, involves the translator's selection most. In the sentence

舒文載實，其在茲乎。

It is here indeed that literary form unfurls itself to communicate reality. (p. 43)

the 乎 is conventionally taken to be doubtful yet affirmative 疑而肯定. In Shih's translation such a suspense is sacrificed; the word "indeed" even twists the tone, turning it into an overly outspoken conclusion. In another example, 乎 is rendered more satisfactorily:

比來而推，則兩漢之作乎！

But if we compare their literary style, they seem to be the productions of the two Han. (p. 45)

Tonal uncertainty is successfully conveyed in the translation where the phrase "seem to be" takes care of the particle 乎. It functions in a way similar to tag endings in English, when the speaker is not quite sure about his statement. Since colloquial usage is not compatible with Liu Hsieh's classical style, attitudinizing particles have to be solved by additional phrases incorporated into the English context.

3. Brackets & Notes

The insertion by brackets and the elucidation by notes, while they slow down the reading process and twist the style, are nevertheless a necessary evil particularly in a translation of the *Wen-hsin*. Brackets and notes indicate the translator's awareness of, to borrow a term from deconstruction, "absence" in his own text (the translated work) and impulse to fill the gap between the original and his own. Our concern therefore is not to abolish them but rather to polish them; to justify some usages while hoping that they may still be used with caution since they are after all additions. We do not expect them to supply ingenious touches from the translator, but they have at least to fulfill a function like that of a crutch.

Shih mostly uses notes to provide basic information and document sources of quotations. We have pointed out that Liu Hsieh quoted and paraphrased his predecessors extensively without bothering to indicate sources. However, Shih, the translator does. Occasionally he uses a note to explain why he departs from literalism, as in the following sentence:

夫水性虛而淪漪結

Water by nature is plastic, allowing the formation of ripples
... (p. 245)

He explains in the note why he renders 虛 into "plastic" instead of "empty." But such interpretive notes are few and far between in the translation. Truly, Shih's work is after all a translation, not a study, of the *Wen-hsin*. Yet, comparing the much smaller number of notes in Shih's edition with that of any modern Chinese text, say Fan Wen-lan's, we can see how the English reader will have to struggle for mere basic comprehension.

On the other hand, unnecessary specification is seen in the next example:

暇豫優歌，遠見春秋；邪徑童謠，近在成世。

'Hsia-yü,' a song of a court jester, appeared long ago during the time of the Ch'un-ch'iu period, and folk song 'Hsieh-ching' was current in recent times. (p. 45)

For this folk song Shih provides an endnote where he does mention the popularity of the song during the time of Emperor Ch'eng 成帝. However, he might just as well incorporate the information in his translation, making statement, for example, like "'Hsieh-ching' was current as late as the time

of Emperor Ch'eng" as the Chinese sentence does. Historical periods "Ch'un-ch'iu" and "Ch'en-shih" balance each other in the text to cover a wider range of time for the existence and popularity of fiveword lines. The extra effort to specify the time in a note does not serve any function except upsetting the sense of balance in the original.

Brackets are another device to compensate for the inadequacy of translation. Shih often uses them to add short information in cases like

仲尼翼其終，而乾坤兩位，獨制文言。

... Confucius completed it by writing the "wings," [One of those Wings], the "Wen-yen" or "words with pattern," was written especially to explain the "Ch'ien" and the "K'un." (p. 10)

He also uses brackets to provide further explanation for overliteral renderings:

華實異用，惟才所安。

Flowers [the ornate or romantic elements] and fruits [the factual or realistic elements] are employed differently in accordance with individual talents. (p. 48)

鏤心鳥跡之中，織辭魚網之上。

... the contents of the mind are inscribed in "the markings of birds" [that is, in writing] and in the literary expressions woven on "fish nets" [that is, paper]. (p. 245)

Lastly, brackets are inserted to bring some implications forward so as to complete the syntactical structure. For instance,

或析文以爲妙，或流靡以自妍。

Some of them delighted in a fastidious use of literary phrases, while others sought to embroider [their literary reputations with] the conventional and trivial. (p. 47)

Yet, more often than not, bracketed information seems to do more harm to the style than it helps the reader. Take the following passage as a case in point:

而辭人遺翰，莫見五言，所以李陵班婕妤，見疑於後代也。

In all these literary remains we find no trace of five-word-line poetry. Therefore scholars of later times cast doubt on the authenticity of [the poems attributed to] Li Ling and Pan, a woman palace-official, during the time of Emperor of Ch'eng. (p. 45)

The bracketed material is hardly a departure from the original. Taking the brackets away will make the sentences run smoothly. On the other hand, Shih is not sticking to his own principles in the same passage quoted above. To be consistent, he should have bracketed the last prepositional phrase, for it does not belong to the original. This addition, without brackets, does further harm in the immediate context. As we know, Pan was Emperor Ch'eng's imperial consort, while Li Ling flourished at an earlier time, during the reign of Emperor Wu 武帝 and his son. Shih's modification of the end of the sentence might give an erroneous impression that they were contemporaries in about Emperor Ch'eng's time. If Shih feels obliged to specify in the present case, it seems that a note is more adequate here.

III. Conclusion

Our examination shows that Mr. Shih's translation takes little care of the formal aspects of the original. Since the *Wen-hsin* is a treatise on critical theory, the ideas are what matters. We therefore think the precise rendition (or definition, description) ranging from a semantic unit to a critical term should be given first attention. When (literal) translation does not work, transliteration seems to be the only alternative. We have to compromise on this point, though Romanization as a kind of neologism is sure to meet hostility when it appears in an English text. Where else can we otherwise find a nutcracker to crack those unyielding native terms?

Since Romanization itself makes no sense, other devices will have to come to aid. Viewed in this connection, the introduction of brackets and notes is a necessary evil. Whenever a Chinese term finds no equivalent in English, circumlocutions are hoped to transpose the semantic field of the given term.

The above solution is absolutely not the only choice. Shih in his Introduction to the bilingual edition unwittingly suggests quite a different way out. There he uses lots of "loan-words," by which we mean the application

of traditional Anglo-American critical idioms in the Chinese literary history. For instance, the term "classicism" is applied to Liu Hsieh, "naturalistic" to Hsuntzu, and "idealism" to Mencius. Fortunately, this practice has not been carried forward to the text. Each critical term has a wide range of meanings accumulated in the long history of the language plus a still wider range of allusive meanings derived from their use in a literary tradition. Therefore transposition of such terms could be most misleading. Take "idealism" for example. It has too wide a range of meanings. As a philological term, it reminds us of the Platonic world of ideas, of Kant's ultimate teleological purpose, i.e., the absolute, and of the theory concerned with the subjective side of human faculty. When applied to Mencius, one wonders to which of these categories his thoughts belong?

Neologism is often flatly rejected for being alien to the genius of one's native language. But in the case of introducing literary criticism it is still better than borrowings, because a new-coined term calls attention to itself and can be taken cautiously. It may at first meet hostility, but it forces the reader to follow its track and thereby takes on new meanings. Borrowings of the familiar terms in the native language risk the obliteration of the distinctive meaning of the original concept in the source language.¹⁸

Judging from the way Shih treats the *Wen-hsin*, he apparently aims at getting the ideas across while not altering the original. As a result, numerous instances of literalism in the translation somehow suggest an opposite solution: to save the labor lavished upon literalism, and to make an English Liu Hsieh out of the Chinese Liu Hsieh. Many translators have rendered the original in a way as to make a new text of their own. Such a rewriting can sometimes be very fruitful, though it yields quite a different product. As we have suggested in I. 2. Metaphors, creative transposition is a possible tool, only that it seems to work better with creative writing when a certain effect is replaced by another in a second language. Successful examples are found in the transposition of puns, as instanced by the modern renderings of Yüan drama. However, practically, creative transposition is scarcely fit for the present genre under discussion.

The problem involving translating such an ideologically-oriented treatise as the *Wen-hsin* seems to be an endless one. What Mr. Shih has achieved in his herculean task enables us to explore other possibilities of translation of its kind. Remarks on the impossibilities of translation are much of a cliché now. What ultimately concerns us is the purpose and the reader that this translated work is directed to. We assume that translation is not so much conditioned

by theory as by the kind of audience the work is addressed to. "Like the *God Hermes*," as Richard Palmer puts it, "the translator mediated between one world and another."¹⁹ The present paper thus evaluates the possibilities of transposition between the classical Chinese literary theory and the common English reader mediated through not only languages but also history.

Primary sources:

1. *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*, trans. Vincent Y. C. Shih. Columbia Univ. Press, 1959. The present discussion is based upon the bilingual edition (Taipei: Taiwan Chung-hua shu-chu, 台灣中華書局, 1977).
2. *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*, ed. Fan Wen-lan 范文瀾. Rpt., Ming-lun ch'u-pan she 明倫出版社, 1971.

Notes:

1. Vincent Y. C. Shih, trans. *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1959). Page references appearing in this discussion are to the bilingual edition (Taipei: Taiwan Chung-hua shu-chu 台灣中華書局 1970).
2. Hightower's review appeared in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 22 (1959), 280-88.
3. Shih, *Erh-tu ho-hsieh chi ch'i-t'a* 二度和諧及其他 (Taipei: Lien-ching ch'u-pan kung-ssu, 1976), p. 206.
4. Huang Hsuan-fan 黃宣範, *Chung-ying fan-yi: li-lun yu shih-chien* 中英翻譯：理論與實踐 (Taipei: Wen-ho ch'u-pan she 文鶴出版社, 1973), p. 1.
5. Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," *On Translation*, ed., Reuben Brower (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 232-39. Other references to Jakobson in the following notes are to the same article.
6. Cf. Huang Hsuan-fan, "Fan-yi te yu-yen chi-ch'u" 翻譯語言的基礎, *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* 中外文學, 2:10 (March 1974), 62-78. See also John Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), vol. 1, p. 175.
7. Lyons, vol. 2, p. 620.
8. Willard V. Quine, "Meaning and Translation," *The Craft and Context of Translation*, ed. William Arrowsmith & Roger Shattuck (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1961), p. 68.
9. Huang Hsuan-fan, *Yu-yen-hsueh yen-chiu lun-tsung* 語文學研究論叢 (Taipei: Li-ming wen-hua kung-ssu 黎明文化公司 1974), pp. 41-54.
10. Some good examples are found in recent English translation of classical Chinese drama. For instance, the following passage from Cyril Birch's translation of Tang Xianzu's 湯顯祖 *The Peony Pavillion* 牡丹亭 (Bloomington, 1980), p. 25:

〔丰〕……「關關雉鳩」，雉鳩是個鳥，關關鳥聲也。

〔貼〕……怎樣聲兒？

〔丰〕此鳥性喜幽靜，在河之洲。

〔貼〕是了，不是昨日是前日，不是今年是去年，俺衙門關著個斑鳩兒。被小姐放去，一去去在何知州家。

Chen: . . . "Guanguan cry the ospreys": the osprey is a bird; "guanguan," that is to say, its cry.

Fragrance: What sort of cry is that? . . .

Chen: This bird being a lover of quiet, it is on an island in the river.

Fragrance: Quite right. Either yesterday or the day before, this year or last year some time, an osprey got trapped in the young mistress' room and she set it free and I said to myself, if I try to catch it again, I land in the river. . .

11. The verse is quoted in "Pa-i p'ien" 八佾篇：子夏問曰「『巧笑倩兮，美目盼兮，素以爲絢兮』何謂也？」子曰「繪事後素。」曰「禮後乎？」子曰「起予者商也，始可與言詩已矣。」
12. Achilles Fang, "Some Reflections on the Difficulty of Translation," in *Studies in Chinese Thought*, ed. Arthur F. Wright (Chicago & London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 279.
13. Cf. Kao Yu-kung 高友工 and Mei Tsu-lin 梅祖麟, "Syntax and Noun Imagery in T'ang Poetry," rpt. in *Chinese Literature in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Wai-lim Yip 葉維廉 (Univ. of San Diego, 1979), pp. 52-94; Wai-lim Yip, "Translating Chinese Poetry, the Convergence of Languages and Poetics—A Radical Introduction," in his *Chinese Poetry: Major Modes and Genres* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1976), pp. 1-41; William Tay 鄭樹森, "The Substantive Level: Revisited: Concreteness and Nature Imagery in T'ang Poetry," in *New Asia Academic Bulletin* (Hong Kong: New Asia College, 1978), I. 127-49.
14. Fang, p. 279.
15. This notion has been remarked upon by Wai-lim Yip in *Chinese Poetry*, pp. 8-9.
16. In Achilles Fang's opinion, particles categorized by some grammarians as "expletives" may actually turn out to belong to one of the three categories in his scheme. See Fang, p. 277.
17. Ibid.
18. The dilemma between borrowings and neologism has been extensively treated by Arthur F. Wright in "The Chinese Language and Foreign Ideas," in *Studies in Chinese Thoughts*, p. 287.
19. Richard E. Palmer, *Heremenuitics* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1969), p. 27.

