

Translation as Interpretation: A Pedagogical View

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I

The present paper is an extension of my earlier article entitled "To Disillusion or to Disenchant?: The Use of Translation as Interpretation"¹ in which I used David Hawkes' translation of *Shih-t'ou chi* (石頭記) as *locus classicus* to demonstrate the function of translation as a critical antenna to heighten our perception of the original text. My present essay, however, will reverse my former approach by citing examples that will show how our appreciation of a given text can be compromised either by the expurgation of a line or by the translator's failure to annotate a key term.

I would like to identify my approach in this paper with a statement by André Lefevere: "The study of translation can, or should, I believe, play a major part in the study of three aspects of literature: (i) the evolution and interpretation of literatures, (ii) poetics and (iii) teaching."² As a teacher of Chinese literature in English translation for nearly two decades, my interest in translation is unavoidably pedagogical. This being the case, I would like to be forgiven to enter a short autobiographical note to show how someone in my position is constantly at the mercy of the translators. I began my teaching career as Instructor of Chinese at Miami University (Oxford, Ohio) in 1964. In terms of the availability of textbooks, it was the time of *The Jade Mountain* (1929) and *The White Pony* (1947) for poetry, and either *The Dragon King's Daughter* (1954) or *The Courtesan's Jewel Box* (1957) for fiction. In the words of Eugene Eoyang, it was the time of "contingent" translation.³

For poetry, I adopted *The White Pony* not only because its coverage is more comprehensive, but because I found that Witter Bynner occasionally "Pounded"⁴ the Chinese original without Pound's essential genius. So we read Chinese poetry through the mediation of Robert Payne and his Chinese collaborators. After dutifully giving an English version of Li Po's "*Yu-chieh yuan*" (玉階怨), or "Grief for the Jade Stairs" in the translation, Payne

loses no time to explain: "The translation, of course, is hopelessly inadequate, but we can at least follow the general movement of the poem."⁵ There is nothing unusual in Payne's apology. In fact, almost all translators of classical Chinese poetry are fated to become apologists, although some may not be as explicit as Payne. If the instructor happens to be a bilingual who reads the translation without losing sight of the source language, he too would feel impelled to put in a word of two in the translator's behalf: "Chinese poetry just can't be satisfactorily translated. Really, I wish you people can read this poem in the original one of these days!"

If the teacher of Chinese poetry is so "hopelessly" handicapped by the genius of the language, is it the same with teaching fiction in translation? After all, fiction is prose, be it *wen-yen* or *pai-hua*. Presumably, the problems which a translator of fiction most often encounters are either textual or exegetical, unlike the kind of *embarras de choix* in poetry that no rigor of scholarship can hope to resolve.⁶ It would seem, then, that teaching Chinese fiction in translation is a relatively easy task, so long as fiction is understood in an old-fashioned way as "storytelling," and so long as the translated text on hand is untampered. For, while explication can be performed on a single paragraph of a novel, as Ian Watt does with Henry James' *The Ambassadors*,⁷ the explicator must have the whole book at his disposal for cross-references. In other words, Watt would not be in a position to validate his argument if the edition he consults happens to be a truncated one. No interpretation is viable unless arrived at contextually. In this sense, it can be argued that even a "lewd" passage in an otherwise unobjectionable story deserves no less attention than a homily on chastity in the same narrative.⁸

I think we are now prepared for some specific examples. As a native speaker of Chinese, it has been my habit to prepare for courses in translation by first reading the original work and base my opinion on it accordingly. One of my favorite stories in *The Dragon King's Daughter* is "Wu-shuang the Peerless" ("Wu-shuang chuan" 無雙傳). Though the title features Wu-shuang as the heroine, her role at best remains nominal in the story. Nor can her cousin Wang Hsien-k'o be regarded as a hero worthy of the name. The real hero both as a principal character and as a heroic one is Officer Ku (Ku Sheng) who, in the words of the translators, is "a champion of the oppressed, miraculously brings her [Wu-shuang] to Wang so that the two lovers can marry."⁹ The deeds performed by Ku in Wang's behalf offers a dramatic illustration of the Chinese concept of *pao* (報) in Lien-sheng Yang's definition.¹⁰ For one year, Wang showers Ku with all kinds of

expensive gifts and accedes to his every request without breathing a word about the purpose for his largeness. In the scheme of Chinese knight-errant fiction, such relationship entails reciprocation on the part of the receiver. So when Wang finally confides to Ku that he needs his help to rescue his cousin, the officer goes about his job with the same dedication and valor that typify Yu Jang and Ching K'o, his spiritual ancestors. To ensure that no one alive can testify against Wang and Su-shuang after the latter is safely delivered from the palace, Ku kills more than ten people who have been instrumental to his rescue work. He even cuts his own throat to cement his good faith.

The question whether Ku is a "good" or "bad" example of Chinese knight-errantry necessitates consideration of his ethical code respectively from a historicist and a presentist point of view.¹¹ Since our present interest is in translation rather than in moral evaluation, we must take Ku's behaviour as a given fact of traditional Chinese culture: that a man is just as ready to die for one who appreciates him as a woman is willing to make herself pretty for one who loves her. While to lesser mortals Wang's largesse might constitute an imposition, a man of Ku's temperament weights things differently. It would seem that after succumbing to Wang's lavish treatment for over a year, the meaning of Ku's simplified to one overriding concern: how to repay his benefactor. So long as this end can be met, a man in his position couldn't care less what means he is forced to take. It is in this light that the violence he commits on himself and others are "justified": it articulates his sense of moral priority as well as his concept of honor, however narrow it would seem to us today.

Unfortunately all my findings culled from the original text are voided in the translation. All the key sentences that would have given my argument textual support are deleted. We remember, for instance, that after Ku has carried Wu-shuang to Wang's house, this incident immediately takes place:

"I would like to borrow Sai-hung [Wang's old servant] to dig a pit for me behind the house," said Ku to Hsien-k'o. When the pit was sufficiently deep, he drew his sword and severed Sai-hung's head, which tumbled into the pit. Hsien-k'o was terrified.

"Don't be alarmed," said Ku,¹²

Since the above evidence is blotted out. Sai-hung may still be in the employ of Wang as far as the reader of the Yangs' translation is concerned. Next we see Ku reporting to Hsien-k'o all the details of his rescue. But the

following lines are missing in the *Dragon* version:

“The messenger from the Mao Mountain and the litter bearers were all put to death outside the city. For you, I’ll also cut my throat . . .” Saying this Ku raised his sword, and before Hsien-k’o could restrain him his head tumbled to the ground. Hsien-k’o covered the bodies of Ku and Sai-hung and buried them.¹³

The “Foreword” to *Dragon* gives no explanation for the bowdlerization, but in view of the fact that a similar surgical operation is performed on “The Man with the Curly Beard” (Ch’iu-jan-k’o chuan” 虬髯客傳), one can conjecture that such editorial expurgation is dictated by the desire to protect China’s image as a civilization. In the original, the Curly-bearded fellow offers Li Ching a human heart and liver to go with the wine. In the translation, however, he and his friend have to content themselves with a simpler diet: pure mutton. Feeding on human heart and liver, even though they belong to our hero’s hated enemy, is cannibalism, just as Officer Ku’s killing innocent people is a willful act of barbarism. In the case of Officer Ku, moreover, it is also expedient not to expose him as a butcher, otherwise how can his mission as understood by the translators be reconciled? He is supposed to be “a champion of the oppressed,” isn’t he? Literary interpretation, anyway, is strictly a personal undertaking, whereas saving China’s “face” is a national enterprise. From a historical point of view, such concerns are misguided. As C. T. Hsia points out in a recent paper, “humanitarianism did not become a secular religion even in Western democracies until quite recent time.”¹⁴

II

We have seen how a “doctored” translation can hamper and distort our perception of a story. Officer Ku in the original is one who views his suicide for a “worthy” cause as weighty as Mount T’ai, whereas in the translation he appears to be merely an ingenious and resourceful person. Now a question presents itself: Can a full-length and competent translation give us the same kind of reading experience as the original work? The answer can perhaps be sought by examining some of the stories in Pai Hsien-yung’s *Taipei Jen* (台北人) in English translation, which is titled *Wandering in the*

Waking from a Dream.¹⁵ This collection is chosen for the following reasons. First, for competence: all the fourteen stories are translated or recast by the author with the assistance of Patia Yasin, a native speaker of English. The translations are further polished by George Kao, an veteran translator and a professional editor. I know of no other work of translation in modern Chinese literature that manifests such a conscientious strive for perfection. Second, for the richness of Pai's language and the exuberance of his imagery: apart from Eileen Chang, no other modern Chinese Writer of Fiction whose craft becomes a joy for the explicative critic.¹⁶ My judgment of course is tenable only if his language is scrutinized in the original. One who reads his work in translation may arrive at a completely different opinion. Burton Raffel, for one, has these harsh words to say about this volume in his short review in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* dated March 14, 1983:

Written in essentially plotless style, the stories catalog, often in great detail, the lives of the defeated Chiang Kai-shek's followers, military and civilian alike, after they took refuge in Taiwan As literature, alas, virtually all these stories are deeply unsatisfactory, at least in this translation. George Kao (whose function as editor seems to have been devoted largely to making everything as pedantic and dull as possible) refers to Mr. Pai's "brilliantly allusive language," but almost nothing brilliant survives in the wooden, stiff prose of this book, and the allusiveness is footnoted to within an inch of its life.

Since the editor of the *Journal* uses only one sentence to introduce Mr. Raffel as someone teaching at the University of Denver, we have no idea whether he reads Chinese or not. If he does, he should not have confronted "a translation with the same blithe trust" as a non-speaker of Chinese would.¹⁷ On the basis of his defensive posture ("at least in this translation"), it is apparent that even if he reads the language, he has not bothered to consult the original: for it is his "blithe trust" that has blinded him to the "brilliantly allusive language." Allusiveness could become elusiveness in a translation unless it is "footnoted to within an inch of its life."

Actually, contrary to Mr. Raffel's belief, I for one feel that the translation of *Taipei jen* is under-annotated. Though *Taipei jen* is no *Hsi-yu chi* with its arcana of Buddhist-Taoist terminology and allusions, some of Pai's narrative details are peculiar enough to warrant the kind of hermeneutic attention that Anthony C. Yu lavishes on his four-volume translation of

The Journey to the West.¹⁸ Let's take the first title in *Taipei jen*: "The Eternal 'Snow Beauty' ("Yung-yüan ti Yin Hsüeh-yen" 永遠的尹雪艷). First of all, I must confess my disappointment that Hsüeh-yen has been unbecomingly dubbed "Snow Beauty." True, Hsüeh-yen is literally Snow Beauty, so is Pao-yü literally Precious Jade in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*.¹⁹ But to explain the meaning of Hsüeh-yen in a note is one thing; to refer to her bluntly as Snow Beauty is another. Snow Beauty rhymes seditiously to my ears with Snow White, which is unfortunate, because this Taipei woman whose horoscope is dominated by an evil curse, personifies the Angel of Death. If her name is transliterated and properly annotated, it is possible for some critic to see the *su-pai ch'i-p'ao* (素白旗袍) she wears not only a "cicada-wing gauze long gown slit at the side" but a mourning dress as well: mourning for the ending of a political era rather than for any individual. This sense of loss seeps through the pages of *Taipei jen*.

Indeed, not only her person is compared to a "late-blooming pear tree" ("*wan-k'ai ti yu-li-hua*" 晚開的玉梨花), it is even more significantly that all summer her living room is suffused with the sweet, rich fragrance of tuberose (*wan-hsiang yü* 晚香玉). A fastidious stylist, Pai Hsien-yung seldom employs a word without weighing its connotative value in the context. Thus, though "tuberose" is a botanic equivalent for "*wan-hsiang yü*," the implication it carries is lost to the reader unless it is annotated. Yin Hsüeh-yen could have decorated her living room with tulips, or roses for that matter, but she wouldn't have anything else for the whole summer but *wan-hsiang yü*. The word that would radiate the reader's perception of the story is *wan*, which is literally "lateness." It is the kind of lateness that would lead one to read this narrative as a wry commentary on Li Shang-yin's poem, "Lo-yu yüan" (樂遊原), which reads in James J.Y. Liu's translation:

Lo-yu Heights

Toward evening I feel disconsolate;
So I drive my carriage up the ancient heights.
The setting sun has infinite beauty—
Only, the time is approaching nightfall!²⁰

That Yin Hsüeh-yen "never seems to age" ("*tsung yeh pu-lao*" 總也不老) is only a metaphoric conceit. Her time, like that of Mr. Wu who likens himself to "a dragon in the shallows, a prisoner on the sandy shore" (p. 5), is approaching nightfall. In point of fact, to the extent that most of the

memorable characters in *Taipei jen* are "the last aristocrats of an *ancien régime*—the generals without soldiers, ministers without portfolios, Helens without Troys,"²¹ the whole era to which Yin Hsüeh-yen and her cronies belong is approaching nightfall.

Wan-hsiang yü, therefore, means a different thing to the reader of the original than "tuberose" is to the Western reader. "Tuberose" thus deserves a note to restore its proper meaning to the context of the story. Without such help, tuberose is just a kind of plant "native to Mexico, cultivated for its fragrant white flowers" to those readers who care enough to look up its meaning in the dictionary.

III

In his lecture on Dostoevski, Vladimir Nabokov flays the novelist for his indifference to objective details: "If you examine closely any of his works, say *The Brothers Karamazov*, you will note that the natural background and all things relevant to the perception of the senses hardly exist. What landscape there is a landscape of ideas, a moral landscape. The weather does not exist in his world, so it does not matter how people dress. Dostoevski characterizes his people through situation, through ethical matters, their psychological reactions, their inside ripples."²² Nabokov would have been delighted to note the wealth of specific details in Pai's stories that are relevant to our perception of the senses, including of course the weather, the natural background, the kind of dresses people wear. Not only that: Pai is also particular about the kind of food his characters eat. While the dried aubergine Grannie Liu is treated to at Jungkuofu reflects on the uncommon style of living in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*,²³ the dish of *ma-p'o tou-fu* (麻婆豆腐) Chu Ch'ing prepares for her *shih-niang* at the end of "A Touch of Green" ("I-pa ch'ing" 一把青) is spiced with a dash of bitterness and resignation. *Ma-p'o*, of course, is Dame Pockmark, so one might literally render this dish as Dame Pockmark's beancurd; or, as it appears in the translation, "hot pepper beancurd." But in view of Chu Ch'ing's present state of mind, the aroma floating from this delicacy has more "anesthetic" (*ma*) in it than the smell of hot pepper. She has lost her air force pilot lovers one after another in crashes. In order to preserve her sanity, she has to "numb" (*ma*) her natural feelings. Unlike Dostoevski, it is through this kind of deceptively inconsequential details that Pai Hsien-yung defines the "inside ripples" of his characters' mind.

Another example where the "inside ripples" is confided to us through circumstantial specifics can be found in the following paragraph from the title story "Wandering in the Garden" ("Yu-yüan ching-meng" 遊園驚夢):

Madame Ch'ien followed Liu the aide-de-camp around a little grove of coir palms—suddenly the two-story Tou mansion loomed up before her. The entire house, upstairs and down, was ablaze with lights, as if on fire. A wide flight of stone steps led up to a huge curved terrace. Along the stone balustrade stood big pots of *cassia* in a neatly spaced row—there were more than ten of them, all grown chest-high. As Madame Ch'ien stepped onto the terrace, a wave of strong fragrance *enveloped* her (p. 147; my italics).

Madame Ch'ien (nee Nan T'ien-yü), the widow of General Ch'ien P'eng-chih, lives alone in southern Taiwan in reduced circumstances. She is invited by Madame Tou (nee Kuei Chih-hsiang, "Fragrant Cassia"), a good friend since their Nanking days, to a party in Taipei. In mainland China when General Ch'ien was alive, Kuei Chih-hsiang was still a concubine to Tou Jui-sheng, then a mere Deputy Minister! Now Tou Jui-sheng is a high-ranking general and Kuei Chih-hsiang has finally risen to be the official Madame Tou. In this respect, "Wandering" is a tale of reversed fortunes. For, in the old days when Madame Ch'ien was offered the seat of honor at banquets nine times out of ten, Kuei wasn't even allowed to host a banquet in her own right. In fact, it was Nan T'ien-yü herself who gave her a party for her birthday.

The original sentence for "a wave of strong fragrance enveloped her" is "*i-chen kuei-hua ti nung-hsiang pien ch'in-hsi kuo-lai-liao* 一陣桂花的濃香便侵襲過來了。" "*Ch'in-hsi*," which is either "invade" or "attack," couldn't have been better chosen for this occasion. Nan T'ien-yü, the Madame Ch'ien of erstwhile grandeur, now feels humbled by the imposing eminence of her friend. The sensation of the fragrance is epiphanic: cassia becomes Cassia at this very instance. The translation could have more effectively reflected the poignancy of this recognition if "*ch'in-hsi*" were taken to mean "overwhelm" rather than "envelope."

IV

In an article entitled "Knowledge, Purpose, and Intuition: Three

Dimensions in the Evaluation of Translation," H. Steplen Straight gives a "table" outlining the required knowledge for a translator. It covers five broad categories: Ecology (climate, terrain, etc.); Material Culture, Technology (household objects: such as gourds, Pepsi, etc; means of transportation: oxcarts, jumbo jets, etc.); Social Organization (classes, sex roles, etc.); Mythic Patterns (cosmology, taboos, supernatural notions, etc.); and Linguistic Structure.²⁴

If these were the only categories of knowledge required of a translator, then it is clear that the team of collaborators that gives us *Wandering in the Garden* is an uncommonly qualified one. And yet, as we have seen, the bilingual author is not necessarily a good judge of the meaning of his own work when it has to be expressed through the medium of a second language, even though his knowledge of it is good enough to do the translating himself. Pai Hsien-yung the translator betrays Pai Hsien-yung the author when the former settles "ch'in-hsi" for "envelope." And when Pai Exchanges *wan-hsiang yü* for tuberose, it is like — I am referring to Straight's table — transliterating Pepsi as *pai-shih ko-lo* (百事可樂) without attending to the possible implications in American mass media culture. The advertisement "Come Alive!/You're in the Pepsi Generation" bestows on the bottle a mystique and glamour that goes beyond its function as a thirst quencher. Similarly, to render *ma-po tou-fu* as "hot pepper beancurd" is faithful to its culinary "meaning"; to call it Dame Pockmark's beancurb with an interpretative note is to explicate the "significance" of this term relative to the psyche of the cook. "Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sequence of sign; it is what the signs represent. Significance, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning, and a person, or a conception, or indeed everything imaginable."²⁵

It appears that knowledge, experience, skill and linguistic competence alone would not make an "ideal translator." Since translation is *ipso facto* interpretation, it commands one to examine the source text critically, conceptually and contextually so that the surface meaning of a given term would not be allowed to overshadow its possible larger significance. I submit one more example from *Taipei jen*. The title of the story "Tung yeh" (冬夜) is translated forthrightly as "Winter Night" by Pai and his collaborators, which is as correct as it could be as far as its dictionary meaning is concerned. However, if one reads the text close enough, one would feel that though what takes place in the narrative is indeed limited to the events of one evening, the atmosphere which the author intends to depict is one lingering mood of

winterly impressions on the part of the protagonist – Professor Yü Ch'in-lei, presumably an expert on Byron but now passing his evenings in Taipei by consuming one *kung-fu* novel after another. In this context, “Tung yeh” is not one particular winter night but a mind conditioned by the “winter nights” of reality. The decision on whether to represent “tung yeh” in singular or plural number demands a critical judgment at once elucidative and interpretative. Thus to call the story “Winter Nights” is to assert the significance of the title over its meaning.

In attaching so much weight to the mere incident of a footnote, in stating my preference of “overwhelm” over “envelope,” and in arguing that the protagonist in “Tung yeh” is experiencing the chill of not one winter evening but the depression of a series of winter nights – I may stand being accused of flirting with the mechanics of triviality. Worse still, I may even be taken to task for advocating the kind of translation which would interfere with the reader’s imagination and deprive him of the pleasure and freedom of seeing things for himself. This certainly would be the case if Pai Hsien-yung were writing lyric poetry whose language is occasionally enriched by “spots of indeterminacy.” But rich and supple as the prose of *Taipei jen* is, it has no parallel to Wang Wei’s line: *jih se leng ch’ing sung* (sun color chill green pine 日色冷青松). While the words can be reproduced in English verbatim, its syntax forces a critical choice on the translator. For, as James J. Y. Liu put it, it can be construed as “sun’s color chills green pines,” or “sun’s color chills among green pines,” or “sun’s color is chilled by green pines.” Apparently Wang Wei “is not concerned with the question which object is chilled by which, but with presenting a single experience that fuses the impressions of pale sunlight, chilliness, and green pines.”²⁶

Fortunately the translators of *Taipei jen* don’t have to grapple with this syntactic problem. Pai’s language is “difficult” only by virtue of its symbolism and allusiveness. Since it is generally assumed that most readers of a translated work are not able to handle the text in the original, they will not be in a position to tell the difference between the meaning of a word and its attendant significance unless the translator provides them with all relevant basic information. But of course I am speaking from the standpoint of a pedagogue ever anxious to illumine through notes and background information the “arcane” and the “esoteric” aspects of Chinese culture to my students. As a pedagogue, I feel that not only the pun on the homonym between “kuei” (桂 cassia) and “kuei” (貴 eminence) in “Wandering” needs pointing out, but the very idea of a *fu-kuan* (副官) as exemplified by

Ch'in I-fang in "State Funeral" ("Kuo-tsang" 國葬) deserves an explanation. Fu-kuan is of course aide-de-camp, except that the Chinese counterpart often extends his service to the superior's family in the capacity of a selfless servant. The devotion and officiousness of Ch'in I-fang recalls the examples of "The Red Thread Maid" ("Hung-hsien" 紅綫), or "The K'un-lun Slave" ("K'un-lun lu" 崑崙奴) in T'ang *ch'üan-ch'i* and "Old Servant Hsü" ("Hsu lao-p'u i-fen cheng-chia" 徐老僕義憤成家) in *hua-pen*.²⁷ In other words, one can go so far as to argue that a Chinese aide-de-camp is both a military officer and at times a domestic assistant. The one who takes Madame Ch'ien's calling card in "Wandering" and ushers her to the Tou mansion is Liu *fu-kuan*. After the death of Madame Li, it is Ch'in I-fang, General Li Hao-jan's aide-de-camp, who often gets up in the middle of the night to put a blanket on his superior. Unless this truly time-honored traditional relationship is explained to the reader, it would be difficult for him to appreciate the degree of grief Ch'in feels for the death of the four-star general. At the funeral, when the Master of Ceremonies intones "First bow!" he ignores the appropriate ritual and "threw his staff to the floor, struggled down on his knees, prostrating himself and struck his forehead against the ground several times He pulled out his handkerchief, blowing his nose and wiping away his tears" (p. 190).

V

The translations cited throughout this paper fall into two categories: (1) the truncated texts, as represented by "Wu-shuang the Peerless" and "The Man with the Curly Beard"; (2) the complete and author-translated stories in *Taipei jen*. That a tampered work falsifies interpretation is self-evident, but when a translation is the author's own handiwork and still fails to enlighten us on the intricacies of his own writing, we are tempted to ask ourselves: is a "co-eval" translation possible to such an extent that it can rival with the original?²⁸ Much as I admire David Hawkes's translation of *The Story of the Stone*, and much as I have benefited from his work an occasional insight that would have eluded me in the original text, it would be dishonest of me if I would argue that I have derived as much pleasure in reading his translation as I have from the real *Shih-t'ou chi*. His rendering of "Hao-liao k'o" (好了歌) as "Won-Done Song" is a sheer stroke of genius, yet somehow I feel shortchanged by his substituting "salvation" for "*shen-hsien*" (神仙). His decision to approximate the idea rather than translating the

term is obviously an expedient one. In the Chinese popular imagination, a *shen-hsien* is not only immune to the curse of death, but would have more fun than an immortal or god in the Greco-Roman mythology – if we associate a *shen-hsien* with Lü Tung-pin (呂洞賓) or Ho Hsien-ku (何仙姑).

In this respect what Eugene Eoyang has to say about the “challenge of translation” is relevant:

Some translators convey what they view as the original meaning with the exact equivalent, yet the equivalence is merely nominalistic: while the two words designate the same reality (or set of realities), they do not, as words, affect the reader with the same sense or feeling; they do not, to put it as a Chinese might, “bear the same fragrance.”²⁹

Tuberose is the equivalent of *wan-hsiang yü*, yet it takes on a foreboding fragrance once transplanted to Yin Hsüeh-yen’s living room. Aide-de-camp in French is what a *fu-kuan* is in Chinese, yet Ch’in I-fang serves his superior more than the capacity of a “camp assistant” would call for. Thus, if by a “co-eval” translation we mean a work as good as the original, I am afraid that we don’t have any example to offer from works that are translated from the Chinese. Even Hawkes ends his Introduction to *The Story of the Stone* with this disclaimer: “I cannot pretend always to have done so successfully, but if I can convey to the reader even a fraction of the pleasure this Chinese novel has given me, I shall not have lived in vain.”³⁰

However, as far as the academic community is concerned, it makes little difference whether Yin Hsüeh-yen is Snow Beauty or Frigid Beauty. No responsible scholar or critic in our time would venture to do an *explication de texte* on the basis of a translation. When it comes to interpretation and evaluation, not even the author-translator is to be trusted. The classroom situation is different. All the alleged shortcomings and limitations notwithstanding, translation will continue to serve its purpose as medium of instruction that bears this title: Literature in Translation. For this reason, in spite of Mr. Burton Raffel’s judgment to the contrary, I would think that anyone who could deliver us a translation as competently executed as *Wandering in the Garden* deserves our thanks for rendering a valuable service to the field. Though the multilingual scholar has little professional use for translation, it is my belief that the “interlingual critic” teaching a course in translation may find himself rewarded with an unexpected discovery on his

way to the classroom. Presumably, a native speaker is a more effective "speed reader" than if he were confronted with a foreign text. It is also possible that when a language has been "mother tongue" to him for so long that he may become insensitive to certain nuance and shades of meaning on account of his over-familiarity with the usage or the syntax. In other words, he is more prone to take the meaning of a given term for granted simply because it was taught to him, well, by his "mother." By way of a conclusion, I would like to cite a passage from the frosty prose of Eileen Chang:

Unless it's because you play around too much outside. You're in the wrong and still signing away as if you're wronged. There's not one good man among you Chiangs! Ch'i-ch'iao said, smiling, and lifted her round white fan as if to strike him. He [Chi-tse] moved his interlocked fingers downward, with both thumbs pressed on his lips and the forefingers slowly stroking the bridge of his nose, and his eyes seemed brighter. The irises were the black pebbles at the bottom of a bowl of narcissus, covered with cold water and expressionless.³¹

I read "The Golden Cangue" in the original some twenty years ago. Like Madame Ch'ien's visit with Cassia, the present episode is also about a reversal of fortunes. Before her husband dies, Ch'i-ch'iao is tormented by an incestuous desire for Chi-tse, her brother-in-law. He rejects her presumably out of moral scruples. Now that his brother is dead, his inherited fortune duly squandered, he flings his scruples to the winds and comes to seduce his sister-in-law for her money. Ch'i-ch'iao, however, is a changed woman. Though the sight of him used to make her muscles ache with passion, she now finds the gold smelted from her "golden cangue" a more salving substitute for sexual gratification.

That this situation is taut with tension between the hide-and-seek players in the game of love did not escape me when I first read it in the original. However, it was not until I consulted the translation (again for a class) did the situational irony become visually dramatic to me. The catalytic word is "narcissus," the equivalent to "*shui-hsien hua*" 水仙花 in Chinese. *Shui-hsien hua*, however, is no Greek, and I have no habit of mind translating every sentence I read in Chinese into English. Because the sight of *shui-hsien hua* has been so familiar and so self-sufficient, it would not prompt me to

associate it with Narcissus in Greek mythology — unless I were reading the story in English. But as the above-cited passage demonstrates, the role Chi-tse is playing before Ch'i-ch'iao is indeed narcissistic. She knows what he is after even before he opens his mouth. With indulgent courtesy, she assumes the position of a bemused spectator doing her level best to listen to his protestations of love. Though Chi-tse's eyes occasionally "seemed brighter," they appear to Ch'i-ch'iao at this moment no more seductive than the "black pebbles at the bottom of a bowl of narcissus."

Since Eileen Chang is a bilingual writer, it is possible that she had deliberately planted this "narcissus" symbol to enhance the ironic effect of this confrontation, even though the story was first written and published in Chinese. If this really were the case, she was taking her reader's knowledge of Western literature for granted, even though I had been blind to her grand design until she made an English version of the story for us. But then, who knows, the mention of *shui-hsien hua* may be purely accidental, or she was not conscious of its Greek connection herself since the tale was conceived in a Chinese context. In any event, I was happy to be forced by my profession to read her work in Translation.

Notes

1. *Tamkang Review (TR)*, 10, Nos. 1 & 2 (Fall-Winter 1979), 227-40.
2. "Translation — Its Use," *TR*, 4, No. 2 (October 1933), 49.
3. "Translation as Excommunication: Notes Toward an Intraworldly Poetics" (unpublished paper prepared for the Symposium on Comparative Literature, August 1983, Peking; here quoted with permission of the author). Eoyang defines a "contingent" translation as: "If one considers the work of translation as a reliable introduction to the original, but not intended as its replacement, then its value is conditional, its audience is at least potentially bilingual, and the test of its quality is whether it effectively 'familiarizes' the supramundane — how accessible it makes a foreign text to a student of that text" (pp. 50-51).
4. This word is coined by James J. Y. Liu who concedes that "while I share [the critics'] exasperation at English-speaking readers who prefer their Confucius Pounded, compounded and confounded, I cannot agree with the historicists all the way, . . ." See *The Interlingual Critic: Interpreting Chinese Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press), p. 52. As will be apparent in subsequent notes, I have benefitted a great deal from Professor Liu's most recent book in preparing this paper. *The Jade Mountain* is a translation of three hundred T'ang poems (New York: Anchor Books, 1964) by Witter Bynner "from the texts of Kiang Kang-hu." For an example of Bynner's "Poundedness," the reader can conveniently compare his translation of Li Po's "*Yu-chieh yuan*" (*Jade*, p. 40) with that of Robert Payne's

cited in the note below.

5. *The White Pony* (New York: Mentor Books, 1960), p. 160.
6. As an example of the *embarras de choix* in Chinese poetry, James Liu uses the word *sheng* (生) as an example. When used as a verb, it "could mean to live, to give birth to, to be born; as a noun, life, young man, student; as an adjective: alive, raw, strange, innate, natural, lively." See *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 8.
7. "The First Paragraph of *The Ambassadors: An Explication*," in Glen A. Love and Michael Payne, eds., *Contemporary Essays on Style: Rhetoric, Linguistics, and Criticism* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1969), pp. 266-83.
8. In Note 29 to my forthcoming paper entitled "Expressions of Selfhood in Traditional Chinese Literature" (in *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, edited by Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney, Columbia Univ. Press), I have contended that the presence of certain "lewd" passages in a work of high seriousness can be justified so long as they are pivotal to the structure of the work. "The Case of the Dead Infant" [*K'uang-t'ai-shou tuan szu-hai erh* 况太守斷死孩兒, *chuan* 35, *Ching-shih tung-yen* 警世通言) offers a good example. True, graphic [erotic] description . . . can be deleted without impairing the main thrust of the narrative. But unless we are given some specific information with regard to [the widow's] conduct in the 'game of rain and clouds,' we have no way of telling how much Shao-shih has suffered from her self-imposed sexual privation. Precisely because she is not a Pan Chin-hien known for her wantonness, the more abandoned she appears in the company of her servant boy [of a lover], the closer we can perceive the degree of her misery."
9. "Foreword," *The Dragon King's Daughter*, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (Peking: Foreign Language Press, rev. ed. 1962), p. vii.
10. "The Chinese believe that reciprocity of action (favor and hatred, reward and punishment) between man and man, and indeed between man and supernatural beings, should be as certain as a cause-and-effect relationship, and therefore, when a Chinese acts, he normally anticipates a response or return." See "The Concept of *Pao* as a Basis for Social Relations in China," in Lien-sheng Yang, *Excursions in Sinology* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969), p. 3.
11. See James Liu's interpretation of these two terms in Chapter Four of *The Interlingual Critic*, particularly pp. 52-54.
12. "Wu-shuang the Peerless" is translated in full by Dale Johnson, included in *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, ed. Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1978); the quotation appears on p. 56.
13. *Ibid.*
14. "Chinese Novels and American Critics: Reflections on Structure, Tradition, and Satire" (unpublished paper prepared for the Conference on "Korean Literature in the Context of East Asian Literature," Seoul, Korea, June 13-18, 1983), p. 13.
15. *Taipei jen* was first published by Taipei's Ch'en-chung Ch'u-p'an-she in 1971. *Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream* was published by Indiana University Press in 1982. Page references for *Wandering* will appear in the text. Since all the key sentences cited in this paper are given in Chinese, no corresponding page reference to *Taipei jen* is necessary.
16. Stephen Cheng holds similar view: "The exuberance of [Eileen Chang's] imagery and her manipulation of it are not rivalled in the forties. It is not until Pai Hsien-

- young emerges on the literary scene in the sixties that we witness splendid imagery in another writer." See "Themes and Techniques in Eileen Chang's Stories," in *TR*, 8, No. 2 (October 1977), 180.
17. Eugene Eoyang, "Translation as Excommunication," p. 58.
 18. Published by the University of Chicago Press, the first volume appeared in 1977; the last volume 1983.
 19. Unlike his predecessors, David Hawkes only "translates" the names of the maids or other secondary characters in *The Story of the Stone*, more commonly known as *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. Thus Xi-ren (Hsi-jeñ) is Aroma, and Qing-wen (Ch'ing-wen) is Skybright. For good reasons he gives all the major characters in transliteration: thus Dai-yü (Tai-yü) rather than Black Jade, Bao-chai (Pao-ch'ai) rather than Precious Clasp. The advantage of this nomenclatural system is obvious: it will not mislead the reader into any pre-conceived notions about the personality of a character as suggested by the translated names. For the same reason, unless one is prepared to make an ironic comment, one should not give Mao Tse-tung's name in English as "East-Benefitor Mao."
 20. *The Poetry of Li Shang-yin: Ninth-Century Baroque Chinese Poet* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 160.
 21. Joseph S. M. Lau, "How Much Truth Can a Blade of Grass Carry?: Ch'en Ying-chen and the Emergence of Native Taiwan Writers," in the *Journal of Asian Studies* (*JAS*), 32, No. 4 (August 1973), 627. Readers interested in an analysis of the stories in *Taipei jen* can consult my article, "Crowded Hours Revisited: the Evocation of the Past in *Taipei-jen*," in *JAS*, 35, No. 1 (November 1975), 31-47.
 22. Fredson Bowers, ed., *Lectures on Russian Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), p. 104.
 23. This episode occurs in Chapter 41 of *The Story of the Stone*. Its recipe is worth quoting in full in Hawkes's translation. "It's simple," said Xi-feng. "You pick the aubergines in the fourth or fifth month when they're just ripe, skin them, remove the pulp and pips and cut into thread-fine strips which you dry in the sun. Then you take the stock from one whole fat boiling-fowl, put the dried aubergine-strips into a steamer and steam them over the chicken stock until it's nearly all boiled away. Then you take them out and dry them in the sun again. You do that, steaming and drying, steaming and drying by turns, altogether nine times. And it has to be dried until it's quite brittle. Then you store in a tightly-sealed jar, and when you want to eat some, you take out about a saucerful and mix it with fried slivers of chicken leg-meat before serving." See *Stone* Vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 306-07. My purpose of quoting this "recipe" in full is not to glorify the Chinese culinary art but to demonstrate the role the Chinese material culture has played in a literary work. If through this "aubergine dish" and the kind of tea prepared by Adamantina (the nun Miao-yu) we can get a glimpse of the excesses of China's aristocratic class, we can similarly infer from the food served regularly on Yin Hsüeh-yen's table what kind of people she and her group actually are. "Gold-and-silver ham, Imperial Favorite chicken, prawns eaten raw with soya sauce, and crabs marinated in wine" (*Wandering*, p. 8) are famous Nanking and Shanghai dishes. To Yin Hsüeh-yen and her circle, they are not only food for the stomach: they are also palliatives for the homesickness of the mainlanders. And if they ever appear on the table of Chin Chao-li (in "The Last Night of Taipan Chin"), they would become appropriate subjects for her to air Shanghai provincial chauvinism.

24. *Translation Spectrum: Essays in Theory and Practice*, ed. Marilyn Gaddis Rose (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1981), pp. 41-42.
25. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 8.
26. *The Interlingual Critic*, p. 44. While a scholar-critic can afford to discuss the endless possibilities for interpreting *jih se ling ch'ing sung* without making a commitment, the translator is denied such luxury. He or she must make a critical choice, though he/she can drop a footnote to indicate its state of "indeterminacy." Thus Pauline Yu is forced to take this line to mean in English: "The color of the sun chills green pines." See her *The Poetry of Wang Wei: New Translations and Commentary* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1980), p. 145.
27. Both "The Red Thread Main" and "The K'un-lun Slave" are available in English translation. The former is in *Ladies of the Tang*, trans. Elizabeth Te-chen Wang (Taipei: Heritage Press, 1961), and the latter is included in *Traditional Chinese Tales*, trans. Chi-chen Wang (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1944), "Old Servant Hsü" is translated by Susan Arnold Zonaza, in *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*.
28. The term "co-eval" is again Eoyang's. "Finally, if a translation is to be considered as a correlate to the original, to co-exist with it, neither as its replacement for those who do not read the original, nor as an aid for those who wish to approach the original, but as its possible rival (and in the event of disappearance of the original, its replacement), then its audience is equivalently bilingual, its readers a more cosmopolitan polyglot tribunal. We may call these *co-eval* translations" ("Translation as Excommunication," p. 51).
29. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
30. "Introduction," *The Story of the Stone*, Vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1979), p. 46.
31. The Chinese original of "The Golden Cangue" ("Chin-so chi," 1943) is included in *The Short Stories of Eileen Chang (Chang Ai-ling t'uan-p'ien hsiao-shuo chi*, Hong Kong, 1954; Taipei, 1968). The English translation is done by the author herself. It was first published in *Twentieth-Century Chinese Stories*, ed. C. T. Hsia (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1971), and was reprinted with minor revisions in *Modern Chinese Stories and Novellas: 1919-1949* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1981). The quotation is taken from the latter edition on page 543.

