

Until recently, Martial Arts fiction has often been assigned the same genealogy as Mandarin Duck and Butterfly—a pejorative classification, to be sure. In this respect, John Minford’s commitment to translate Louis Cha (Jin Yong 金庸) takes on “decentering” implications. For, just as Hanan is able to affirm the value of *The Carnal Prayer Mat* by locating an alternative world in its “sexual comedy,” Minford performs a veritable deed of discoverism by making the claim that Trinket (Wei Xiaobao 韋小寶) belongs with Monkey (Sun Wukong 孫悟空), Jia Baoyu 賈寶玉 and Ah Q as “one of the truly unforgettable characters in Chinese fiction.”

To the extent that discoverism assumes a commitment to advance a contrarian cause in defense of the perceived value of a given work, it doubles as endorsement. Seen in this light, Minford’s translation is more than an idle exercise in linguistic transmigration. It is, in his own words, “translation as Kungfu” an act that might lead to fresh insights into the familiar world of Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies—a world that we thought we knew better than we cared to know.

Of course, before the translation project is completed it is premature to judge whether Louis Cha can vie for comparison with Scott, Dumas, or Stevenson as “a source of great enjoyment to Western readers.” Louis Cha’s narrative in English promises a Brave New World to students of Chinese literature in translation. We look forward to the day when we can hear Wei Xiaobao swear in the lingo of Trinket. That should be fun.

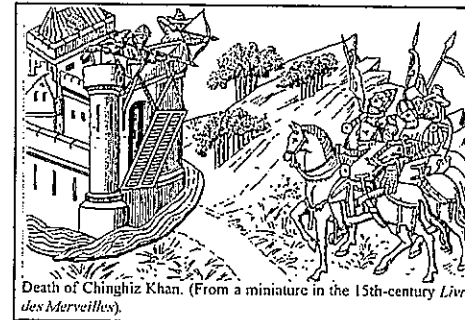
Kungfu in Translation, Translation as Kungfu

John Minford

For my grandfather,
Richard Sale,
cricketer

The Universal Spirit of Romance

Romance is a mistress
who requires of those
who woo her quiet,
solitude and a single
mind!¹



Just glance at the
effortless ease with which

Lin Shu translates the opening lines of Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*:

In that pleasant district of merry England which is watered by the river Don, there extended in ancient times a large forest. . . . Here haunted of yore the fabulous dragon of Wantley; here were fought many of the most desperate battles during the Civil Wars of the Roses; and here also flourished in ancient times those bands of gallant outlaws, whose deeds have been rendered so popular in English song.

(Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, Chapter 1 [1817])

¹ Rider Haggard, in Lilian Rider Haggard, *The Cloak That I Left: A Biography of the Author Henry Rider Haggard* K. B. E., London, 1951, 124.

英國東河流域之內，前此有大樹林，…相傳古來有神龍窟蟠其地。當時玫瑰之戰，兄弟爭立，即以此地為戰場；而綠林豪客，仗俠尚義，亦據為寨。

(林紓：《撒克遜劫後英雄略》)

One can see why Guo Moruo was so “decisively” influenced by the *Ivanhoe* translation: “The translation may have had its faults, but Lin succeeded in opening my eyes to the book’s romantic spirit. . . .”² And yet Lin has left behind all of the “cultural comfort and euphoria” of the original—no “pleasant district” in his Chinese, no “merry” England. Perhaps that (as well as his extraordinary mastery of Chinese prose) was the secret of his success. Lucky Lin—emancipated, made fearless, by the fact that he knew no English!³ But he caught something else—a spirit, and a universal sense of romance.⁴

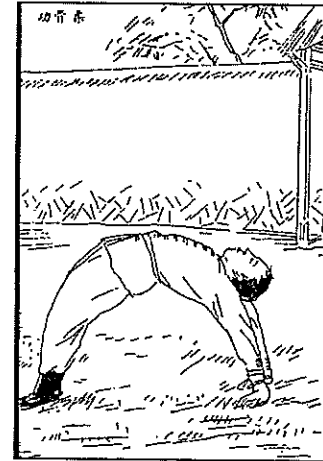
² See Guo’s *My Childhood and Youth*. Lin Shu’s “transformations” of Western fiction also led Qian Zhongshu, at the age of 11 or 12, “into a whole new world” (just as Chapman’s *translation* of Homer had showed Keats a “new planet”). See Qian Zhongshu, “Lin Shu de fanyi.” Qian’s father Qian Jibo had already praised Lin highly in his *History of Modern Chinese Literature*, emphasizing his great versatility as a writer of narrative and descriptive prose, capable of being both humorous and moving.

³ Cf Steiner, *After Babel*, 375: “Some of the most persuasive translations in the history of the *métier* have been made by writers ignorant of the language from which they were translating. . . .” As he goes on to say, “the relevant mechanics of penetration and transfer are obviously intricate and special.”

⁴ Cf Dick Davis’ Introduction to Edward FitzGerald’s *Rubaiyat*, London, 1989: “It bestrides the two worlds—and such diverse worlds—so that it gives the illusion of being universal.”

A

The Game



Try to imagine the fascination that might be exercised among English readers by a (hitherto non-existent) genre combining the content of good old-fashioned cloak-and-dagger historical romance (well told—a rattling good yarn, preferably set in 17th-century France, or during the Jacobite uprising, or in the British navy during the Napoleonic wars, or in the late British Empire), with a certain amount of material from the Occult (the Knights Templar, the Cathar Treasure, Nostradamus etc.) and a lot of detailed (indeed fanciful) description of some national sport that combined the excitement of duelling and boxing with the underlying “national philosophy” of cricket.⁵

When the script, *Kung Fu, The Sign of the Dragon*, arrived at my door, I knew it was the one. Not because of the martial arts—none of us even

⁵ See my Translator’s Introduction to *The Deer and the Cauldron*, *East Asian History* 5, 1994, 2-3.

knew anything about that. That was just the hook the movie hung on. It could have been basketball or downhill skiing. It was “the one” because it was a great story. . . . ⁶

It is interesting that the secret of both enjoyment and success in games is concentration. A man is happy not when he says “I am happy,” but when he forgets himself altogether and concentrates entire attention on work or play. Then time ceases to exist. . . . To the true games-player the game itself, the changing pattern, the playing of each shot, is all-important. . . .

Games after all are not *only* games, they are games, just as an elephant is not *only* an elephant, it is an elephant. Games are also rituals, patterns and symbols of life itself. . . . As symbols they can at once be rejoiced in and treated with respect as the mysterious provider of that intense peace which is both action and contemplation.⁷

My grandfather was the latest in a long line of Richard Sales, going back to the Domesday Book and some minor Norman who accompanied William the Conqueror. His two passions in life were cricket (he played for England and knew many of the best cricketers of his day), and the Times crossword puzzle. Cricket isn't what it used to be. Nor is good old-fashioned cloak-and-dagger romance. Or kungfu. Or the Times. Or translation. Or anything else for that matter. So what hope can there be for Martial Arts fiction in English translation? What hope for the bastard child, in this strange world into which we are proposing to drag it? Who wants it anyway?

Holland today (February 21, 1996) came to within a hair's breadth of beating England, playing in Peshawar, Pakistan, in the preliminary

⁶ David Carradine, *Spirit of Shaolin*, Sydney, 1991, 13.

⁷ J. B. Pick, *Dictionary of Games*, London, 1952, 16-17.

round of the Wills Cricket World Cup. I gave a few feeble cheers. Batsmen wearing not white but strangely coloured clothes, with even stranger names like Lubbers and Van den Kooning, out there heroically and successfully slogging—in England's national game. In between wickets the commentators showed us video clips of sites from the ancient Buddhist kingdom of Gandhara, and talked of Alexander the Great. (But of all the world's brave heroes. . . .)

We sit powerless, Canute-like, in our ergonomic armchairs (IKEA-designed, made-in-China), watching the indiscriminate tidal wave of multinational culture—satellite TV, CNN, the World Wide Web—sweep up the shore, bowling over our cultural debris, hitting our pet icons for six, disabling what's left of our tribal memory. We watch stunned, the new *fin-de-siècle* exiles, as we try to remember what it is we are mourning the passing of, and collect our frequent-flyer points. This global island we inhabit is not even as real as Bali. It does not even possess a residual tourist charm or identifiable culture of its own.

The Elizabethans translating Livy and Homer had their cultural bearings, knew who they were, where they were coming from. They stood firmly on their own soil.⁸ So did Scott Moncrieff, when he translated Proust—even if he did shy away from masturbation. And Arthur Waley brought a Chinese Monkey scintillating into the world (Edith Sitwell's world?) in the full darkness of the Blitz—because he and his Schloss forebears and his Bloomsbury friends had their roots firmly planted in European literary culture. He knew what he was doing. And he didn't care too much what anyone else thought.

Our ancestors knew. They knew the moves. They were Brave Men

⁸ Cf Carl Jung, Commentary to *The Secret of the Golden Flower*: “Denial of our historical foundations would be sheer folly and would be the best way to bring about another uprooting of consciousness. Only by standing firmly on our own soil can we assimilate the spirit of the East.” In C. G. Jung, ed. Jacobi, *Psychological Reflections*, London, 1953, 292.

and True. Heroes. Haven't we given up too easily? We operate in such a restricted universe, demanding so little of ourselves, and expecting so little of our readers? The average translation of old-fashioned Chinese fiction to be found in the bookstores is about as alive as a stuffed eagle.⁹

I do think it possible to translate Chinese Martial Arts fiction into English, to create novels that will both entertain English readers and present to them a whole world of the Chinese imagination. But in thinking about how to do it, we have come up against a number of recurring problems and obstacles. My collaborator Sharon Lai has written in some concrete detail about certain of these, and some of the ways of dealing with them that we have tried out. My own concerns here will be more general.

At the same time, I have taken this opportunity to reflect on the nature of this activity itself—translation. It is like kungfu. Like cricket. There are the moves or strokes to be learned, the daily practice. This is the outer work, the *waigong*. And there is the inner work, the *neigong*, the development of that inner space and energy that can sustain the enterprise. This is not theoretical knowledge, it is more an attitude, a perennial philosophy. It is a way of life. Like cricket.

Can Trinket Travel?

Why should this be so? Why should an obscure dilettante's translation of the quatrains of a minor Persian poet have gone more or less straight to

⁹ Edward FitzGerald to Edward Cowell, shortly after publication of his Omar Khayyam: "But at all Cost, a Thing must live: with a transfusion of one's own worse Life if one can't retain the Original's better. Better a live Sparrow than a stuffed Eagle. . . ." See Dick Davis' excellent Introduction to the *Rubaiyat* in the Penguin Poetry Library.

the reading public's heart and stayed there for a hundred years or so?¹⁰

The dessert wines of Madeira, made of Malmsey, Bual or sometimes Verdelho grapes, were also often sweetened with "vinho de surdo," a mixture of unfermented must and brandy. . . . Why these wines, constantly in motion in stifling heat, the barrels often submerged in foetid bilgewater, did not turn out undrinkable is a mystery. On the contrary, they developed softness and depth of flavour. . . .¹¹

Some wines travel better than others. Like a well-loved local wine, kungfu fiction has not travelled well. Jackie Chan's recent movie—*Police Cop 4: First Strike*—is being promoted as the big kungfu breakthrough into Hollywood. It roller-blades through a pastiche of James Bond in three languages, its occasional Cantonese authenticity peppered with poor Mandarin and worse English. But Jackie saves the show, with his slapstick, his homemade stunts and his stepladder kungfu routines. Like Tristram Shandy. Like Trinket, the principal character in Louis Cha's last novel, *The Deer and the Cauldron*.¹² Jackie Chan has described himself as a cross between Sylvester Stallone, Buster Keaton and Donald Duck.

Today's translator is inevitably a "player" in the global media village. There is already a Louis Cha page on the Internet, and parts of *Deer* are already posted on it. Communication proceeds apace. Or certainly the technology does. But can we keep pace with the technology? Who—if anyone—does Trinket become? What sort of a passport has he been issued with? Are we translators operating from an island without a runway, let alone a name?¹³ And is there a viable cricket pitch on the

¹⁰ Dick Davis, Introduction, *Rubaiyat*.

¹¹ Hugh Johnson, *Vintage: The Story of Wine*, New York, 1989, 249.

¹² After much deliberation, I settled on Trinket as Wei Xiaobao's English alias. It seems to catch something of the mischief, the glitzy but loveable worthlessness of the character. The bauble.

¹³ For the island, see my "Pieces of Eight," in Eoyang and Lin eds.,

beach?

Can Trinket travel? Or is he fated to remain an Honorary Chinese White, confined to the Chinese diaspora, trapped in a post-Apartheid world? Can he slip gracefully into the salons of the west, riding on the shoulders of Monkey? Can he emulate Jia Baoyu, and join Li Ang in flippant conversations with Emma Thompson and Hugh Grant?

What is it that makes this kind of travel, and acceptance, possible? ¹⁴

When I was a child, I had a big West Indian nanny called Ivy. Years after leaving us, she announced that she was coming to visit my grandparents (the cricketer and his wife) in their village in the heart of the Berkshire countryside. This was in the early 1960s. Colour was still a sensitive issue. How could my very conservative grandparents come to terms with having a big black woman to stay? How would they explain it to their church-going friends? They were not racist, they just were not used to the idea. The breakthrough came one morning, during discussion at breakfast, a few weeks before Ivy's arrival. After all, my grandmother ventured, the Queen of Tonga (another very large, black person) had recently visited Windsor Castle, as the guest of Queen Elizabeth. Once that connection had been made, the rest was easy. The *known* had provided an analogy, a model for a venture into the *unknown*. The visit

Translating Chinese Literature, Bloomington, 1995.

¹⁴ Dick Davis answers this very question in connection with the *Rubaiyat*, giving a brilliant analysis of the mid-nineteenth century mental world (the *Rubaiyat* was published in the same year as *The Origin of the Species*), and of FitzGerald's personality (his repressed homosexuality). Kenneth Rexroth puts it differently: "Is FitzGerald a translation of Omar? Here the two cultures are so radically different, all that can be said is that he is probably all of medieval Persia that Victorian England was prepared to assimilate." "The Poet as Translator," in Arrowsmith and Shattuck eds., *The Craft and Context of Translation*. Texas. 1961, 22.

was a great success. Ivy came. She sang loudly in church. She was accepted.¹⁵

Kai Lung was accepted into the Western popular imagination, in the 1920s, with his quaint manner of speaking.

"It is scarcely to be expected that one who has spent his life beneath an official umbrella should have at his command the finer analogies of light and shade," tolerantly replied Kai Lung. . . .

At least he succeeded in "cancelling out the image of Fu Manchu, the villainous Oriental."¹⁶

Oliver Goldsmith's 18th-century Chinaman (Lien Chi Altangi), and Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson's early 20th-century John Chinaman were very much accepted too, into the mainstream cultures of their times.

But these were Western fantasies. They were projections of Cathay. None were creations of the Chinese imagination. If we start to count the real Chinese literary travellers, items genuinely exported and accepted, we hardly even need the fingers of both hands. Wilhelm's *Changes*, Pound's *Cathay*, Waley's Bo Juyi and *Monkey*, Snyder's *Cold Mountain*. The 5-volume *Stone*. The innumerable versions of the *Daodejing*. There have been plenty of other things translated. But few of them have travelled.

¹⁵ Having recently sat through a 4-hour Cantonese opera version of *Honglouloumeng*, in which Grandmother Jia was played by a man, and Jia Baoyu by a woman; having heard Grandmother Jia walk into Prospect Garden and exclaim "Ho leung!"; having experienced this totally Southern transmogrification (dialect, music, dramatic idiom, sets, colours) of the quintessentially Northern masterpiece of Chinese literature; and having actually enjoyed it, and thought it rather good, I have to admit that *anything* can be acceptable, if it is done well.

¹⁶ See H. J. Lethbridge's Introduction to the 1985 OUP reprint of *Kai Lung's Golden Hours*.

Translation as Karma

The prime criterion of successful translation is assimilability. Does it get across to the jury? . . . How much does Proust mean to a Chinese collective farmer, and vice versa?¹⁷

As a profession, we translators of Chinese (with a very few exceptions) have too often been working in a void, protected by the esoteric nature of what we do from the demands of any real readership. It is highly unprofessional. We haven't really had to answer for ourselves, and have often got away with literary murder. Waley was different. He operated within the literary world of his time, treated sinology with disdain, welcoming inquisitive visiting scholars who knocked on his door in Highgate with silence and a walk in his rose garden. He related to his authors, wrote for real readers, and knew that if he didn't do a good job his readers would be disappointed. That's the normal way a writer works, and Waley's books have survived, and are part of 20th-century English literature.¹⁸ In 1970, four years after Waley's death, when David Hawkes embarked upon the 15-year travail that produced the 5-volume *Stone*, he emulated his friend in his own determination to write for a real readership, for people who enjoyed reading novels.

¹⁷ Kenneth Rexroth, "The Poet as Translator," 22-23.

¹⁸ As early as 1936, Yeats included Waley's long translation of Bo Juyi's poem "The Temple" in the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. It comes a few pages after Pound's version of Li Bo/Rihaku's "The River-merchant's Wife: A Letter," which Kenneth Rexroth described as "one of the dozen or so major poems to be written in American in the twentieth century."

The genesis of the Penguin *Stone* was, I believe, a suggestion made by Arthur Cooper (himself a "gentleman-translator/philologist," and unofficial adviser to Penguin Classics) to Betty Radice, then editor of the Classics, that they should "do" the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. (Those were the days when men and women of letters, and caring editors, still existed, when Penguins still corresponded at exhaustive length with their translators. Things are very different now.)¹⁹ The nature of the *Stone's* English birth fore-shadowed its subsequent development. It was done the risky way, without a single grant (though with kindly offered and gratefully accepted support from Oxford and the Australian National University). Its two translators were at different stages unemployed and living from hand to mouth (in varying degrees). But throughout there was a destiny binding it together, a strong sense of the predestined literary affinity of which the Chinese themselves are so aware. *Hongloumeng* is one of those books that definitely "has its fate" —for writers, readers, translators, editors and publishers.²⁰

¹⁹ For a fine tribute to Betty Radice, and a sampling of the "Penguin stable" of translators that she inherited from E. V. Rieu, see *The Translator's Art: Essays in Honour of Betty Radice*, Penguin Books, 1987.

²⁰ The idea of literary destiny or *yinyuan* is often referred to by critics, even if all they mean by it is an uncanny sense that the translator has somehow *become* his chosen author, that there is a congruence, a true marriage of minds, an identity, a sort of inevitability. Qian Zhongshu devotes the opening pages of his long essay on Lin Shu to the idea. D. B. Wyndham Lewis, in the Introduction to the Everyman reprint of *Rabelais*, wrote that Sir Thomas Urquhart, the dandified cavalier who died laughing at the news of the restoration, was the "fore-ordained translator" of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*; George Saintsbury in a preface to the *Rubaiyat* described it is a sort of "literary metempsychosis.... FitzGerald is Omar Khayaam, and one may almost dare to say Omar Khayaam is FitzGerald...."

Betting a Bob, Having a Go

It [*King Solomon's Mines*] happened apparently quite by chance. Travelling up to London with one of his brothers they started discussing *Treasure Island*, just then making a great success. Rider said he didn't think it was so very remarkable, whereupon his brother remarked, rather indignantly: "Well, I'd like to see you write anything half so good—bet you a bob you can't."²¹

"What is your secret, Old Man? It goes, and it grips, and it moves with all the freshness of youth. . . . It's ripping good and I am damned jealous."²²

The two sample chapters of *The Deer and the Cauldron* published in the pages of *East Asian History* owe their existence to the fact that in January 1994 Louis Cha came as one of the chief guests to the Sydney Festival Writers Week. It seemed a good idea to have a sample available of the work-in-progress. He and I were scheduled to do a public dialogue (of the "The author in conversation with . . ." type), to be followed by a forum on Martial Arts fiction, involving Cha, Liang Yusheng (now resident in Sydney) and others.

The festival took place shortly after the catastrophic Sydney fires, in which so many lost their homes. The Sydney Chinese community threw a big dinner for Cha, at which he gave a speech exhibiting his usual knack for going to the heart of the popular preoccupations around him, comparing the selflessly heroic efforts of the Sydney fire-fighters, which had received worldwide TV coverage, with the timeless spirit and courage of the Chinese *jianghu* heroes. He knew how to talk to his audience.

²¹ Lilian Rider Haggard, *The Cloak That I Left*, 121.

²² Kipling to Rider Haggard, writing of *Moon of Israel*. *The Cloak That I Left*, 263.

Cha is the master storyteller. He touches Vital Points—*dianxue*—cradling and releasing the flow of a narrative. This is the challenge for the translator. To try to get it right, so that the story reads like a story. It is hard work and it takes a lot of time—*gongfu*. If it works it works—if it comes off it comes off—kungfu.

Not Out! Howlers as Liberation

Be kind to my mistakes, and live happy!²³

There is something rather "alienating" about proofreading. I was doing some recently, and it brought on an unusual fit of honesty. I realized that a huge percentage of the translations of Chinese poetry I was proofreading, translations by well-respected sinologists, translations more or less accepted as "good," simply didn't work. They sat there dead on the page. They definitely would never travel. They needed to be propped up by commentary. And yet at the same time I found "howlers" in translations that work very well.

I have a couple of instructive examples (which I use regularly with students) of poems in translation. They both involve mistakes.

少年聽雨歌樓上
紅燭昏羅帳
壯年聽雨客舟中
江闊雲低
斷雁叫西風

而今聽雨僧廬下

²³ Anonymous Italian translator of *Robinson Crusoe*. See de la Mare, *Desert Islands*, London, 1930, x.

鬢已星星也
悲歡離合總無情
一任階前滴到明

(蔣捷：〈虞美人〉)

The rain song in youth I heard from some bedroom
red candle setting behind a satin screen
Older and travelling I heard rain in a boat
huge river, low clouds
a goose crying in the west wind parted from the flock

Now when I hear the rain, in a hermit's cell
my hair has long turned grey
Sorrow, happiness, parting, joining are all neutral
raindrops all night long on the stone steps

(Lyric to the Tune Yumeiren
by Jiang Jie [fl. 13th century]
translated by John Scott and Graham Martin²⁴)

Scott makes a mistake in the very first line, and then goes on to write a poem. Of course the words that go together are not *yu-ge*, rain-song, but *ge-lou*, singsong-house. The rain *becomes* a song in the first stanza of Scott's version, by "mis-take," and by the end of the second stanza the raindrops on the stone steps have *become* the unforgettable embodiment of the hermit's vision beyond emotion. They sing. The translation has come to life almost *because* the translator had the gall to stick to a "mistake." But are there really mistakes? Or are they all just "takes"?²⁵

²⁴ See John Scott and Graham Martin, *Love and Protest*, London, 1971, 118.

²⁵ Compare Ezra Pound's "wet leaf clinging to the threshold," in "Liu Ch'e," his early recasting of Giles' "Gone." A. C. Graham has a close exegesis of this in

多少恨，
昨夜夢魂中：
還似舊時游上苑，
車如流水馬如龍，
花月正春風！

(李煜：〈望江南〉)

Immeasurable pain!
My dreaming soul last night was king again.
As in past days
I wandered through the Palace of Delight,
And in my dream
Down grassy garden-ways
Glided my chariot, smoother than a summer stream;
There was moonlight,
The trees were blossoming,
And a faint wind softened the air of night,
For it was spring.

(Immeasurable Pain
by Li Houzhu, last Emperor of the Southern Tang Dynasty [c. 975]
translated by Arthur Waley)

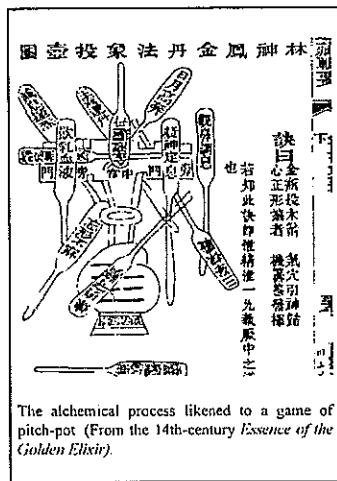
Waley seldom tried his hand at the *ci*, the lyric. And he soon gave up using rhyming verse altogether. But here, in this rare early example of his art as a traditional rhyming poet, he excelled, a little in the Georgian manner. It is one of his boldest and most unforgettable translations, despite, or maybe because of, the mistakes—the Chinese gives us no "grassy ways" (indeed the laying of a lawn in a medieval Chinese palace is a classic act

his introduction to *Poems of the Late T'ang*, London, 1965, 34-36.

of “Orientalist appropriation,” a wonderfully loving piece of Chinoiserie!), there are no gliding chariots or summer streams (just a lot of courtiers and their carriages thronging the entrance). But “Immeasurable Pain” stands as a poem, and the eternal sadness of Li Yu echoes through the lines, just as Omar Khayyam’s wit and melancholy reverberate in FitzGerald.

B

Neigong—The Ball-Game Alchemy of Translation



The Ball no Question makes of Ayes or Noes,
 But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;
 And He that toss'd Thee down into the Field,
 He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!²⁶

²⁶ Edward FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, stanza XLIX. The game referred to here is of course not cricket, but polo.

Keeping the One is above all a *creative process* realized in the freeing of our energies from the shackles of concepts. The fusion of *yin* and *yang* at the Center comes in a moment of self-mastery, in love or in artistic creation; one may find it in calligraphy, in poetry, dance, or in all other forms of art. . . .²⁷

Everything may be transformed into anything else, since nothing is really anything.²⁸

Translations are part of the cultural flux. They are emblematic of the life of a work.²⁹

Fiction may be regarded as an art which must translate life into words . . . without in any way destroying its vital quality.³⁰

Pound insisted that translation was a way to break through cultural provincialism. . . . Translation is a model of consciousness, or critical attention and imagination and cultural responsibility.³¹

By means of those frail tentacles, our sense, we explore the outward semblance of our fellow-creatures; but flesh is flesh and bone is bone, and only by insight and by divination can we pierce inward to the citadel of the mind and soul. We can only translate their touch, their gestures, words they use, the changing looks on their faces into terms of our own consciousness and spirit.³²

²⁷ Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, Berkeley, 1993, 158-59.

²⁸ J. E. Cirlot, “Metamorphosis” in *A Dictionary of Symbols*, New York, 1962, 199.

²⁹ Eugene Eoyang, *The Transparent Eye*, Honolulu, 1993, 22.

³⁰ Herbert Read, *English Prose Style*, London, 1928, 85.

³¹ University of Texas, Dallas, Translation Center, *Translation Workshop Handbook*.

³² Walter de la Mare, *Desert Islands*, 11.

Bless thee, Bottom! Bless thee! thou art translated.³³

Translation, in its Shakespearean sense, is transformation. It is verbal and cultural alchemy. It is a work that demands an openness of spirit—an inner stillness, the opening of heart and mind to meaning and imagination. Too often we do not respect the strange intensity of this process, and the demands it makes on the psyche of the translator. The translator is working in a laboratory where things are constantly changing. Everything is analogy.

In George Macdonald's long story *The Golden Key*, the boy and girl, at the end of their long quest, reach the subterranean centre of the universe and are dazzled by a Blakean vision of a little child (the Old Man of the Fire) playing with coloured balls (Macdonald says he got the idea from Novalis). This is the elemental play of the cosmic mind. Recently my friend Sean Golden of the Autonomous University of Barcelona has been devising a fascinating "recursive-dynamic" model of the translation process, as a game of billiards, with the white ball as the translation and the billiard cue as the translator, and the walls of the billiard table as the horizons of the source and target cultures. It is a brilliant attempt to depict the ever-shifting alchemical process of translation.

Dada: The Pataphysics of Translation

"I can't believe that!" said Alice.

"Can't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone. "Try again: draw a long breath and shut your eyes."

"There's no use trying," she said: "One can't believe impossible

³³ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, III.i.

things."

"I dare say you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

(Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*)

"Transmute boldly."

(Hilaire Belloc, "On Translation," *Taylorian Lecture*, Oxford 1931)

Yan Fu's Three Things will probably be around for ever. They are still useful. *Xin* 信 as a mnemonic for the ethical responsibilities of the translator, the relationship between translator and author, one of duty and trust. Like anyone representing anyone else to an audience—lawyer, pianist, friend. *Da* 達 as a mnemonic for the process/attitude of getting "in and out": penetration, *da-1* (*dadao* 達到) in the sense of arriving, getting in there, to the underlying meaning (how patient and tireless one has to be, constantly burrowing, worrying away at threads of meaning, teasing things out, using every available resource, logic, imagination, sympathy, verbal and factual research—it is certainly not a kind of activity that suits many people), until something clicks and you know you're there, you know that "you've been there before"; and then *da-2* (*biaoda* 表達), in the sense of getting back *out* again, so that in addition to knowing it you also express it. Then it means something, the whole process, Author/Original/Translator/Translation/Reader, is a meaningful communicative act. Twice times *da* = Dada. Then there's *ya* 雅, which both Yan and Lin were so good at, as was Waley, as is Hawkes—the ability to work with language so that you are in control of your material, and can find the words you need. A lot of hard work and practice, and endless reading.

This is the classic Yanfucian Trinity.³⁴ Because it has so often been distorted to lend support to a rigid doctrine of literal fidelity, far from Yan's own practice (he was himself one of the freest translators), it is perhaps advisable to stress the dynamic quality of *da* (hence Dada), and to add a Fourth Thing—*hua* 化, Transformation, or Transmutation.³⁵

Recasting is the best and most practical single English word to describe this process. It is a process in which the translator actually lets go of the original, but without betraying it. (See how one always talks of translation as if it were a personal relationship! It is. One is always half in love with one's author.)

Let me give an instance of this process at its best. From the author's Preface to *The Story of the Stone*:³⁶

今風塵碌碌，一事無成，忽念及當日所有之女子，一一細考較去，覺其行止見識皆出我之上；我堂堂鬚眉，誠不若彼裙釵；我實愧則有餘，悔又無益，大無可如何之日也！當此日，欲將已往所賴天恩祖德，錦衣紈褲之時，飫甘糜肥之日，背父兄教育之恩，負師友規訓之德，以

³⁴ The early Jesuits (great "cultural fusionists," and therefore great and prolific translators—unfortunately for today's readers, mostly into Latin) showed characteristic boldness by Latinizing the names (as was after all done in polyglot Europe, Erasmus, Coletus etc.) of Kongzi and Mengzi. The two leading sages of the Chinese state ideology became Confucius and Mencius—and these names have stuck ever since. People can get used to anything. Therefore, why not Yanfucius.

...

³⁵ The idea is as old as the hills, but the most memorable exposition of it in Chinese is that of Qian Zhongshu, in his essay on Lin Shu. I suppose he thereby becomes the Mencius of the Yanfucian tradition.

³⁶ Although often printed as an integral part of the text of the novel, this powerful piece of prose must have been some sort of preface, and Hawkes accordingly puts it into his own Introduction. For a detailed study of this passage, see Wu Shih-ch'ang, *On the Red Chamber Dream*, Oxford, 1958.

致今日一技無成、半生潦倒之罪，編述一集，以告天下：知我之負罪固多，然閨閣中歷歷有人，萬不可因我之不肖，自護己短，一并使其泯滅也。所以蓬牖茅椽，繩床瓦灶，並不足妨我襟懷；況那晨風夕月，階柳庭花，更覺得潤人筆墨；我雖不學無文，又何妨用假語村言，敷演出來，亦可使閨閣昭傳，復可破一時之悶，醒同人之目，不亦宜乎？

Having made an utter failure of my life, I found myself one day, in the midst of my poverty and wretchedness, thinking about the female companions of my youth. As I went over them one by one, examining and comparing them in my mind's eye, it suddenly came over me that those slips of girls—which is all they were then—were in every way, both morally and intellectually, superior to the "grave and mustachioed signior" I am now supposed to have become. The realization brought with it an overpowering sense of shame and remorse, and for a while I was plunged in the deepest despair. There and then I resolved to make a record of all the recollections of those days I could muster—those golden days when I dressed in silk and ate delicately, when we still nestled in the protecting shadow of the Ancestors and Heaven still smiled on us. I resolved to tell the world how, in defiance of all my family's attempts to bring me up properly and all the warnings and advice of my friends, I had brought myself to this present wretched state, in which, having frittered away half a lifetime, I find myself without a single skill with which I could earn a decent living. I resolved that, however unsightly my own shortcomings might be, I must not, for the sake of keeping them hid, allow those wonderful girls to pass into oblivion without a memorial.

Reminders of my poverty were all about me: the thatched roof, the wicker lattices, the string beds, the crockery stove. But these did not need to be an impediment to the workings of the imagination. Indeed, the beauties of nature outside my door—the morning breeze, the evening dew, the flowers and trees of my garden—were a positive encouragement to write. I might lack learning and literary aptitude, but what was to prevent me from turning it all into a story and writing it in the vernacular? In this

way the memorial to my beloved girls could at one and the same time serve as a source of harmless entertainment and as a warning to those who were in the same predicament as myself but who were still in need of awakening.³⁷

If one reads this as a piece of English, it has none of the telltale signs of a translation.³⁸ It is authentic English. And yet, compare it carefully with the Chinese, and you will find that everything is there—every idea, every image, transformed and recast. And the feelings, the tender, passionate, wry feelings are all there. It speaks from the heart. It is Cao Xueqin speaking. It is David Hawkes speaking. It is Cao sitting in a Welsh shepherd's house, sipping a hot Whisky toddy after a long rainy walk across the hills; it is Hawkes sitting in Cao's cottage in the Western Hills outside Peking, sipping congee after a night of hard drinking and writing poems. It is both, and it is neither. It puts us to shame.

Hermes, Muse of Translation

Hermes, Mercurius, god of revelation, lord of thought and sovereign psychopomp. . . .³⁹

All things and situations in the world are subject to change and transformation, and so are their images, the trigrams and hexagrams (of the *Book of Changes*). They are in a state of continual transition. . . .

³⁷ Cao Xueqin, trans. Hawkes. Introduction, *The Story of the Stone*, vol. 1. Penguin Classics, 1973.

³⁸ This was one of Qian Zhongshu's criteria for determining transformation. See the opening of his essay on Lin Shu.

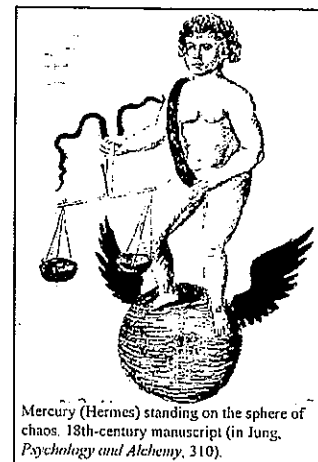
³⁹ C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, New York, 1953, 280-82.

In modern physics we have come to see the "things" of the sub-atomic world in very much the same way, laying stress upon movement, change and transformation and regarding the particles as transient stages in an ongoing cosmic process.⁴⁰

The *logos spermatikos*, the Gnostic Word scattered about the universe, quicksilver and quickthinking interpreter and messenger; cultural hermaphrodite and transvestite; the juggler, cross-cultural cabaret artiste, with an unlimited capacity for transformation, invention and mischief. Such is Hermes, the translator's Muse. He discovers and appropriates hidden treasures, puts them back into circulation. Better than the solemn bearded Jerome, or Fu Xi, the cosmic caveman playing with his Hexagrams.

It is possible to live with constant change. But very demanding and very dangerous. Very Heraclitean. One must accept flux—no fact, no fiction; no original text, just flux;⁴¹ and yet one must keep in touch with something underlying. Like jazz, everything keeps changing, but there is still the underlying chord sequence. It is only when one is in this volatile space, that it is possible to make the essential lateral connections.

It is an impossible and absurd world, translation—how could Jia Baoyu ever speak Latin? Or Chinese actresses have French names? Or Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount in Swahili? The translator balances on a knife-edge, and can easily descend into insanity. He or she, or he and she, operate in a universe where anything can become anything,



⁴⁰ Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, London, 1975, 312.

⁴¹ Cf Eugene Eoyang's "myth that an actual original exists" in the first chapter of his *The Transparent Eye*.

where the molecules are highly unstable. Universals beckon, sometimes gleaming with a treacherous light. The translator wants so badly to believe, with Witter Bynner, that literature binds like-minded souls together across the world:

Li Shang-yin, a gentle scholar, continues saying, as he said in the 9th century:

*Literature endures, like the universal spirit,
And its breath becomes a part of the vitals of all men.*

And Kiang Kang-hu continues quoting, even in prison:

*All human beings are of the same heart,
And all hearts are for the same reason.⁴²*

The translator reads that “the human urge to devise an idealised past seems to be recurrent, for the Camelot of Arthur has its counterpart in the Sherwood Forest of Robin Hood and the American West,”⁴³ and wants to add to that list the Chinese Brotherhood of River and Lake. Don’t we all want all men to be brothers, in all the four seas? But how often do we wake rudely from this dream to a realization of the separateness of cultures and peoples, the inscrutability of friends and even of brothers.

This universe in which translators roam (the Sea of Primordial Chaos⁴⁴) is full of exciting encounters, brief stopovers in Hong Kong, Macau, Venice, Byzantium, Alexandria—the intercultural ports of call. But it can also be a lonely place of exile. This is the occupational malaise of the translator, this feeling of being everywhere and nowhere. The

⁴² *The Translations of Witter Bynner*, New York, 1978. Bynner is paying tribute to his collaborator Kiang Kang-hu, who died in a Mainland prison.

⁴³ Introduction to Malory’s *Morte D’Arthur* in the *Norton Anthology*.

⁴⁴ Hundun—see my “Pieces of Eight,” in Eoyang and Lin, *Translating Chinese Literature*.

scholar gipsy, destined to “come to Oxford and his friends no more.” But as the Master Empty Cloud said:

To a student of the Dao, his home is everywhere and if you lay down everything, the place where you are is a place for realizing the truth. Please set your mind at rest.⁴⁵

Perhaps that loneliness, that sense of “nowhere,” is why collaboration has been so successful in translating from and into the Chinese. Examples leap to mind: Judith Gautier and her Chinese friend, the “mandarin refugie” Ting Tun-ling, Legge and Wang Tao, Lin Shu and his many friends, Richard Wilhelm and Lao Naixuan, Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu, Harold Acton and Chen Shixiang, Ts’ui Chi and Gerald Bullett, Jerome Ch’en and Michael Bullock, etc. Having a co-conspirator, a partner in the enterprise, makes the perpetual somersault a little less daunting, a little less impossible, a little less lonely.

One of the most moving testimonies to the perils of being a translator is Jung’s. Writing of his friend, the great Richard Wilhelm, who had recently died, Jung spoke of the intense spiritual conflict that threatened Wilhelm’s health after his return from China to Germany in the 1930s. Wilhelm’s mission of transmitting East to West had taken its toll, and in his last months he lay in a German hospital dreaming of revisiting the endless stretches of desolate Asiatic steppes. His soul had strayed into that “untrodden, untreadable region whose precincts cannot and should not be entered by force, a destiny which will brook no intervention.”⁴⁶

This is the danger, of laying the soul open to forces that can overwhelm and destroy. It is not unique to translation. It was well

⁴⁵ *Empty Cloud: The Autobiography of the Chinese Zen Master*. Shaftesbury, 1988, 137.

⁴⁶ Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Appendix IV. See also his Memorial Address in *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Jung is quoting Goethe’s *Faust*.

described by Rider Haggard in one of his last public speeches, "The Good and Bad of Imagination."

Imagination, he told them, was a great gift, but a terrible steed to ride. Those that dwelt under the shadow of its wings ate of the fruit of both good and evil, for if genius and inspiration was theirs, so also was madness and misery undreamed of by those of more phlegmatic mind. Imagination was power that came from they knew not where.⁴⁷

It is the classic peril expressed in the Chinese words *zouhuo rumo*, the condition described so well in the latter part of *The Story of the Stone*, when the nun Adamantina's soul soars into the realm of enlightenment, only to be possessed by unfulfilled earthly desires.

This translator's realm, this open space, has much in common with the Chaos that lies at the root of Taoist philosophy.

The union of being and non-being is achieved in the breaking up and the disintegration of the conceptual system. . . . The vision of chaotic order in the Yellow Court, the sounds of cosmic music that vibrate through the body. . . . The forces liberated during this privileged moment should not be exploited, say the masters. When existence is reduced to essence, when the universe is condensed into signs and images, it is dangerous to try to make use of them.⁴⁸

It may be argued that all this is overstated—after all, the prime quality of a translator is to be matter-of-fact, self-effacing, to disappear in the very act.⁴⁹ I agree: I have only gone to this extreme, have utterly

⁴⁷ *The Cloak That I Left*, 277.

⁴⁸ Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, 155.

⁴⁹ David Hawkes, "On Pound and Waley," in *Classical, Modern and Humane*.

overstated my case, because I perceive the situation to be so critical, especially in the world's universities, which must bear a lot of the blame.⁵⁰

Amor Vincit Omnia

The knowledge everyone lacked was analysis of style, the understanding of how a phrase is constructed and articulated. People study lifeless models and translations, following teachers who are dolts incapable of wielding the scientific instrument they teach—I mean the pen—and life is missing, and love—love, the divine secret which does not give itself away—and soul, without which nothing can be understood.⁵¹

(The living relationship of translation demands) sympathy . . . the ability to project into experience and then transmit it back.⁵²

People in a book at once become my nearest and dearest relations. When they are in difficulties I fall into despair; when they are successful, I am triumphant. I am no longer a human being, but a puppet whom the author dangles on his strings.⁵³

Hong Kong, 1987.

⁵⁰ As Ezra Pound observed in *Kulchur*, commenting on the fact that Lacharme's Latin version of the *Book of Songs* had been ignored for so long: "Where did it lie doggo for 107 years? . . . The yoke of the universities has been heavy." It is also worth remembering that Pound himself went on to "do" the *Songs*, after his trial for treason, in St. Elizabeth's mental asylum.

⁵¹ Gustave Flaubert, letter to Louise Colet, 7 September 1853. See Miriam Allott, *Novelists on the Novel*, London, 1959, 313.

⁵² Rexroth, "The Poet as Translator," 29.

⁵³ Lin Shu's Preface to Charlotte Yonge's *The Eagle and the Dove* (Arthur Waley's translation, from his "Notes on Translation").

C

Matthew Arnold described the ideal attitude of a would-be translator of Homer as “a most undivided and disinterested love for the subject . . . a single-hearted care for it.”⁵⁴ The Belgian translator and novelist Pierre Ryckmans, speaking briefly at the end of a conference on translation in Australia in 1980, commented poignantly that the one essential prerequisite for a translator was to “love the book.”

Three centuries earlier, the Earl of Roscommon, translator of Horace’s *Art of Poetry* wrote in his *Essay on Translated Verse*:

Examine how your Humour is inclin’d,
And which the ruling passion of your mind;
Then, seek a poet who your way do’s bend,
And chuse an Author as you chuse a Friend.
United by this Sympathetick Bond,
You grow Familiar, Intimate and Fond;
Your thoughts, your Words, your Stiles, your Souls agree,
No longer his interpreter, but He.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Matthew Arnold, “On Translating Homer: Last Words,” Oxford 30 November 1861.

⁵⁵ Quoted by Adrian Poole and Jeremy Maule, in their introduction to *The Oxford Book of Classical Verse in Translation*, Oxford, 1995, xlii.

Waigong—Some Strokes



Tendulkar has all the strokes in the book. He’s a little master.

(World Cup commentator, March 1996)

Go to the Charles Dickens rooms at the British Museum and observe the insertions, the amendments of every paragraph of his writing—you will succeed in literary enterprise if it is your ambition to do so.⁵⁶

Chen Zhi loved the Lute, and would play on it day and night without stopping. When he had done so for twenty-eight years, suddenly a purple flower blossomed forth from the Lute. He ate it, and disappeared as an Immortal.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Cordy Jeaffreson to Rider Haggard, *The Cloak That I Left*, 119.

⁵⁷ Van Gulik, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*, Tokyo, 1940, 152.

Vision of Light had it from Whispered Instructions,
Who in turn had it from Hard Apprenticeship. . . .⁵⁸

The scene is set, and incense is burning at the shrine of Hermes. Out there at the wicket, the game is under way. Clearly a bowler's wicket. The home side is fielding. The balls delivered present the batsmen with a bewildering variety of problems. Each one has to be played. There are no ground rules, except to hit the ball.

We must try to create a new idiom for a new kind of novel, try out strokes, moves, details, what to call things, how people should speak.

National Essence, Cultural Euphoria



Sha Huizi was a master of the powerful form of *gongfu* known as Steel Shirt. He could put his fingers together and hack through the neck of an ox; or he could thrust them directly into the animal's belly. Once he was at Qiu Pengsan's house. There he saw, suspended in mid air, a large block

⁵⁸ Zhuangzi, Chapter 6.

of wood, and ordered two strapping great fellows to hoist it up and let it fall. He took the full impact on his naked belly: the block merely smacked loudly into him and bounced across the room. Then he took out his penis, laid it on a stone and began hammering away at it with a wooden mallet, without suffering the least injury. But he refused to try using a knife.⁵⁹

Louis Cha's novels provide Chinese readers with a celebration of Chinese culture, of Chineseness, a fictional experience which is in some respects more "Chinese" than any of the available Chinese realities. They create a powerful sense of euphoria. A Chinese banquet.

1982. Walking down a street in Tientsin, near the Southern Market (*nanshi*), where storytellers and sellers of bric-a-brac hang out. A big man with a crowd of fifty or so gathered around him, demonstrating a form of kungfu that involves tying himself up in ever tighter coils of heavy-duty wire, until his body resembles a cork with a corkscrew in it. He sees us coming, and quietly begins addressing the crowd on the subject of foreigners and their inability to understand things like kungfu—the *guocui*, the national essence. Not for export.

We cannot expect the new readers of Martial Arts fiction in translation to share this sense of cultural euphoria. They are, by definition, not entitled to. They are not Chinese. (Overseas Chinese readers with no Chinese are an interesting exception.) All they can do is enjoy the spectacle of a culture rejoicing in itself. We the translators, like the commentators at a cricket match being broadcast for the blind, must invest the things we present with a new kind of glamour, at one remove.

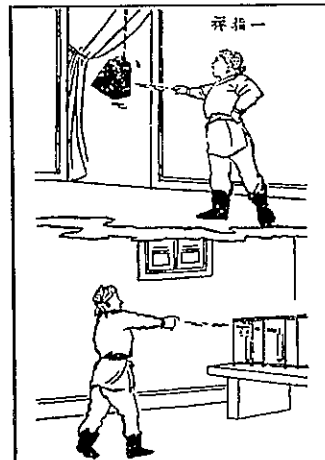
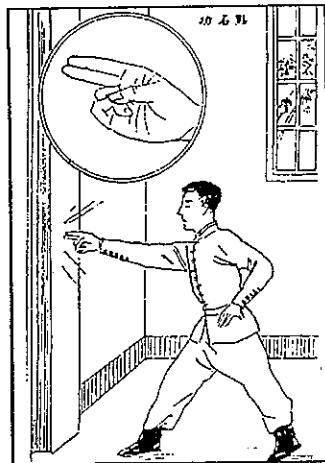
But this is a dangerous position to be in. We can so easily be seen by the custodians of the culture as traitors—allowing cultural secrets to be shared.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ The *Liaozhai* story "Steel Shirt" (my translation from *Meanjin* 1, 1995.)

⁶⁰ I have written about this in "Translation as Treason," *Bulletin of the Hong Kong Psychological Society* 15, 1985.

But sharing is surely of the essence. It means “wrapping” cultural gifts in such a way that they can travel, can be understood and accepted. Like Hermes, we must put things back into circulation. Yangzhou, Hangzhou and Suzhou are more than just names of cities; Tao Yuanming is more than “a poet,” he is a very particular kind of poet, standing for a whole set of values; Jiangnan is more than simply the geographical area south of the Yangtze. It is all these “more thans” that present the challenge. Sometimes they demand an “incorporated footnote,” or a Friendly Note to the Reader, or even a bit of Commentary. If that all seems too cumbersome, then in certain circumstances, the best thing may be to abandon the item altogether, rather than keep it there in a halfhearted way, and thereby create a logjam in the flow of the novel.⁶¹

Hong Kong



⁶¹ These issues are treated at greater length by Sharon Lai.

I seemed to feel that I had found at last the home for which I had left Scotland. . . . I see this island the natural outlet to all Europe, and by the Pacific lines to the United States. I see itself the home of a happy population, three times more numerous than the present, and foreigner and Chinese dwelling together in mutual appreciation. . . . The enterprise and integrity of its merchants, the kindness, forbearance and purity of all its inhabitants are spoken of with delight from Peking to Hainan, from the farthest west of Szechuan to the borders of the Eastern Sea.⁶²

In Hong Kong time is up. And the sooner we approach the fateful hour of 1997, the more the unique kungfu cinema, not content to re-invent the past, bears witness to the craziness of this equally unique city: an imaginary city, a true cinema city.⁶³

We should not underestimate Cha’s skill in creating this cultural euphoria. It is a knack, a kind of *gongfu*. It is the key to the spell that his books exert. And we should not forget that it was done in Hong Kong.

What more appropriate place therefore from which to launch Cha’s fictional world in English than Hong Kong? (After all, the new Bank of China building is built on the old cricket ground.) What more appropriate year than 1997, the first centenary of the death of James Legge, who spent so much of his life in Hong Kong translating, before leaving to become the first Professor of Chinese at Oxford in 1876? And what more appropriate publishing house than Oxford, the press that published Legge’s Confucian Classics?

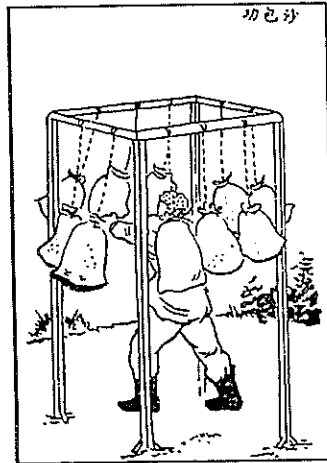
Legge’s English translations of the Confucian classics educated the

⁶² James Legge, Address delivered at City Hall, Hong Kong, 5 November 1872. See Barbara-Sue White, *Hong Kong: Somewhere Between Heaven and Earth*, Hong Kong, 1996, 31-32.

⁶³ Translated from the French of François and Max Armanet, *Ciné Kung Fu*, Paris, 1988.

Victorians about Chinese mandarin culture. Can Cha's novels provide a window into Chinese popular culture?

Martial Arts, River and Lake: "Excellent Kungfu!"



The interviewers always wanted to know if I really knew karate. The name of the show was *Kung Fu*, but no one seemed to understand that it was the name of the art as well. I made no secret of my ignorance of kung fu. When asked, I'd say "I know nothing." And then make some subtly dazzling move. I was being funny, sure. What I also meant was that what you see, what I do, although graceful, fast and effective, is as nothing compared to what there is to be learned. Not too many of the people out there got the point.⁶⁴

I write each film with rhythm. I want the audience to feel like they are dancing. When I make a fight scene, I'll write the music first and then

⁶⁴ Carradine, *Spirit of Shaolin*, 30.

make sure the sounds of punching, kicking and breathing come out like music. When I go to a theatre to watch my films, I watch the audience and if their bodies are moving like they're sitting in a disco, I know I've succeeded.⁶⁵

None of us knows any "real" kungfu—neither Cha, Liang Yusheng, nor the translators. (They said as much at the Sydney 1994 colloquium.) In fiction, the fighting, like the dialogue, is fake—it only exists on paper, but it must create the illusion of being real.⁶⁶ The crucial consideration is whether or not the readers can believe in and visualize people fighting, whether or not they can hear people speaking. In order to achieve this goal, a whole lexicon has to be created, partly from the detail of Chinese kungfu, partly from whatever bits and pieces we can use—beg, borrow or steal, Hermes-magpie-like—from the Western traditions of fighting, wrestling, fencing, duelling.⁶⁷ But more important than all of this is the rhythm of the language, the cut and thrust of the sentence and paragraph.

The *jianghu* world—the world of River and Lake—must speak its own lingo. For his translation of *Yue Fei*, T. L. Yang decided to copy Pearl Buck's quaint idiom from *Water Margin*. The trouble is, that never worked in the first place. The nearest I have got to a model has been the

⁶⁵ Jackie Chan Internet web site, quoted in Tom Hilditch, "Jumping Jackie Flash," *Sunday Morning Post Magazine*, Hong Kong March 17, 1996.

⁶⁶ Good dialogue in fiction is carefully crafted to achieve the effect of a mock reality—it is not an exact facsimile of real conversation. As Yeats commented, only Oscar Wilde spoke in perfect sentences. See Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*, Chapter Five, "Language and the Fictional World," London, 1981.

⁶⁷ Jacques Dars has set a fine example of this in his French version of *Shuihuzhuan*, *Au Bord de l'eau*. He pilfers the medieval lexicon for his own purposes, and very successfully. It is a huge handicap for English translators of Martial Arts fiction not having a decent English *Shuihu*. One would then have something to build on.

Rafael Sabatini/Jeffrey Farnol well-written historical adventure-romances of the '30s. Recent practitioners of this tradition are Patrick O'Brian with his Aubrey/Maturin novels, and in a lighter vein George MacDonald Fraser (Sabatini was his hero), with *The Pyrates* and the Flashman series.

These long sprawling picaresque novels of the Chinese tradition can be made more manageable with suggestive English chapter and section titles. We tend to forget how crucial the choice of a name or a heading is, how one or two words can help to set the tone, the pace, the scene.⁶⁸

Trinket's Father: Foreign Devil?

Louis Cha's last novel finishes in typically playful fashion:

Historians of later times all tell of the Emperor Kang Xi's Six Tours of the South, claiming that the main purpose of these visits was to inspect the state of river conservation. But how do they account for the fact that the first tour took place the very year Trinket disappeared? And if it was the river conservation that he was inspecting, why go to Hangzhou? And why spend so long each time in Yangzhou? And send so many of his personal guards to search every brothel, every gambling den, every teahouse, every bar—for Trinket? And why, when this search proved fruitless, as it always did, was the Emperor so down in the dumps?

The researches of subsequent scholars have established that the grandfather of Cao Xueqin, the author of *The Story of the Stone*, was once a member of the Imperial Guard, and that he actually served under

⁶⁸ "The name of *Ivanhoe* was suggested by an old rhyme. All novelists have had occasion at some time or other to wish, with Falstaff, that they knew where a commodity of good names was to be had. . . . The word suited the author's purpose in two material respects: for, first, it had an ancient English sound, and, secondly, it conveyed no indication whatever of the nature of the story." Scott, Introduction to *Ivanhoe*.

Trinket's command . . . Kang Xi later appointed him Imperial Textile Commissioner in Suzhou and Nanking, and ordered him to take up semi-permanent residence in the happy playground of the South, so as to be on the spot to continue the never-ending quest for Trinket . . .

*

Now the day Trinket arrived in Yangzhou, with all of his womenfolk in tow, he went straight to the House of Vernal Delights to find his mother. She was overjoyed to see her long-lost son again. And when she beheld his seven beautiful wives—each one as fair as fairest flower or jade—she thought to herself:

"Well, the little rake has certainly got a good eye for the women! He should open a brothel here in Yangzhou—he'd do well for himself, with an eye like that!"

Trinket drew her aside into her chamber and asked her:

"Mum, tell me, who really was my dad?"

Spring Blossom Wei looked him straight in the eye.

"How the hell should I know?"

Trinket frowned.

"I mean, when you had me inside you—who'd you been doing it with?"

"I was a beautiful woman in those days, my boy. I had several customers every day—I couldn't possibly work out who it was?"

"Were all of them Chinese?"

"Well, I had Chinese, Manchus, Mongols . . ."

"Any foreign devils?"

"What kind of shameless slut do you take me for?!" came the angry retort. "Do it with one of *them*? Not on your life!! Hot-piece tamardy! If one of those Russians, or those Red-haired devils had ever tried sneaking in here, I'd have booted them straight out the door!"

Trinket heaved a sigh of relief.

His mother looked up. She seemed to be remembering something.

"I do recall, around that time, having a regular who was a Muslim. . . Very good-looking feller he was, too. I sometimes used to say to myself, now my Trinket's got a fine nose, just like his. . ."

"You had Chinese, Manchus, Mongols, Muslims—did you ever have a Tibetan?" asked Trinket.

A glow of pleasurable recollection lit up his mother's face.

"Why yes, of course I did! There was this Tibetan Lama—every time he came to bed he'd start chanting his sutra—and all the time he chanted he'd give me this really dirty look, his eyes'd be just about popping out of his head. Saucy little pair of eyes he had too—just like yours!"

(*The Deer and the Cauldron*, Chapter 50)

Trinket's Sons: the Chinaman

A third member of this sisterhood (of lady buccaneers), more venturesome and longer-lived than the others, was a lady pirate who operated in Asian waters, all the way from the Yellow Sea to the rivers of the Annam coast. I speak of the veteran widow Ching.⁶⁹

The "Chinaman" was the name given to a deadly style of spinner bowled by one Ellis Achong, a Chinese member of the West Indies cricket team early this century. Batsmen couldn't tell which way his balls were going to spin. Where did that particular Chinaman get the knack? Was it some subtle sleight of hand, some gyration developed in an esoteric style of Lesser Catch-Can (*qin-na*)? Perhaps the move known as Twisting the Dragon's Tail?

⁶⁹ Jorge Luis Borges, "The Widow Ching, Lady Pirate," in *A Universal History of Infamy*, London, 1973.

Did one of his brothers-in-arms discover the correct counter move? The Diagonal Chop from the Three Powers Sword Sequence? Smashed him for six?

A recently discovered manuscript, found in a battered tea-chest among the items salvaged from the National Archives of Cuba in the aftermath of Castro's downfall, may offer some clues.⁷⁰ It contains some fragmentary chapters from a novel in early eighteenth-century Spanish-Creole entitled *La Joya: Sus Fortunas y Adversidades: Segunda Parte* (*The Further Adventures of Trinket*). The first fragment, which also seems to be the opening of the novel, begins thus:

Long long ago, in the last years of the seventeenth century of the Christian era, when in one corner of the globe buccaneers⁷¹ freely roamed the Spanish Main, and when in another distant corner the Manchu Tartars had finally established their rule over the Empire of China, the story goes that a boatload of Chinamen—skilled kungfu warriors, members of the Triad Resistance, fleeing from the persecutions of their Manchu

⁷⁰ The story of this discovery is strangely similar to that of the celebrated Flashman Papers, the personal memoirs of the bully from *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, whose adventures subsequent to his expulsion from Rugby School in 1830 formed the basis of George MacDonald Fraser's highly entertaining Flashman novels.

⁷¹ *Buccaneer*, from the French *boucanier*. The origin of this term has long perplexed historians, who used to derive it from the word *boucan*, a kind of dried meat popular in the lawless Caribbean islands during the seventeenth century. Recent researches however indicate that the word originated in a pidgin expression *bu-gan*, said to have been used by the early Chinese settlers in that region, as a polite form of self-deprecation, of the sort used by one warrior to another, after some compliment has been paid. E.g. "Your kungfu is truly superlative!" "Bu-gan, bu-gan!" From this it came to refer to the whole class of fighting free-booters—they were "*bu-gan*"-eers.

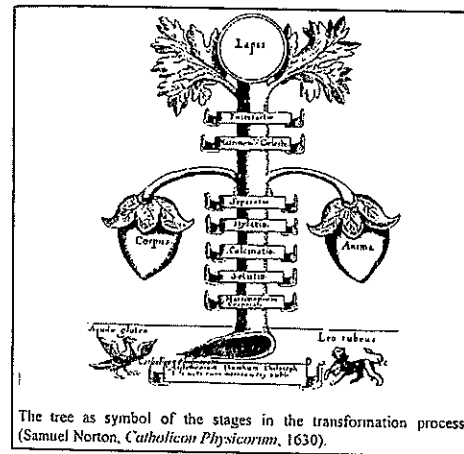
oppressors—set sail from the southern port of Canton, and drifted half way across the world. First they were blown south by the prevailing winds and came to the Dutch East Indies port of Batavia, where they fell in with a bunch of seafaring rogues of mixed blood, lascars, pirates and smugglers. They joined forces with their newly made friends and sailed on, via the island of Madagascar, round the Cape of Good Hope, until finally they arrived at the fabled island of Hispaniola. Here they established a settlement, and soon made a name for themselves in the lagoons and bays of the Spanish Main, becoming feared among the Brotherhood of the Coast as deadly warriors, whose strange martial skills, and ability to use secret weapons and sudden feints, unnerved and overcame their opponents. Their secret skills were jealously preserved and handed down from one generation of Chinamen to the next.

The acknowledged chief among these Chinamen was a strange fellow (he rejoiced in the name La Joya, which in Spanish means a little trinket or bauble) whose favorite pastime was to boast that at one time he had been the confidant and comrade-in-arms of the Emperor of China himself, and that he had enjoyed the favours of a large number of beautiful women, some of whom were even Princesses of the realm! When this Chinaman went on, in his broken pidgin, to claim that he had also been the lover of the Empress of Russia, none but his own Chinese were inclined to believe him. But he was respected as a wily fighter, and known for his ability to extricate himself from the deadliest scrape. Even in play he was known to devise ingenious methods of coming out the winner. It was common for the motley crew that inhabited the Coast settlements to entertain themselves on the long deserted beaches in between hectic periods of piracy, by playing a primitive form of cricket, hitting the ball wildly along the white sands, and occasionally far out to sea. La Joya had a way of throwing the ball that completely flummoxed his opponents—but then he was like that in everything. . . .

A later, tiny fragment from the same manuscript contains some words in a semi-illiterate Chinese scrawl, which seem to be part of a song. Loosely translated (some of the names are hard to transliterate), they read:

*Tintin was a Belgian,
Asterix a Gaul.
Trinket was a Chinaman,
And bowled a funny ball.*

Perhaps a Beginning?



The tree as symbol of the stages in the transformation process (Samuel Norton, *Catholicum Physicorum*, 1630).

To be born is to be wrecked on an island.⁷²

Let the last words be those of Zhuangzi:

Nüzhu, the woman-with-the-bump, told this story of transformation. When asked, “Where did you hear about the Tao?”, she replied:

I heard it from the descendants of Calligraphy,
Who had it from the child of Repeated Recitation,
Who in turn knew it from Vision of Light;
Vision of Light had it from Whispered Instructions,

⁷² J. M. Barrie, Introduction to Ballantyne’s *Coral Island*.

Who in turn had it from Hard Apprenticeship;
Hard Apprenticeship from Popular Song,
Popular Song from Obscurity,
Obscurity from Three-Void,
Who heard it from:
Perhaps a Beginning?⁷³

TRINKET, a Common Property*

Geremie R. Barmé

Prolegomenon

Wei Xiaobao or Trinket is the “hero” of *The Deer and the Cauldron* [Luding ji], Jin Yong’s last martial arts novel. Since his appearance from 1969 to 1972 Trinket has become a popular icon among Chinese readers and cultural figures, first in Hong Kong, Taiwan and within Chinese reading communities throughout the world, then during the 1980s in Mainland China. He has left the world of pure fictional creation and entered the realm of cultural fantasy. This has been nowhere more evident over the past decade than on Mainland China.

In China today, Trinket has achieved the status of a common cultural property. Apart from his wideranging appeal among readers throughout the country, he has also enthralled a number of Mainland cultural figures. For example, he has been taken as a role model by the punk/romantic rock singer He Yong in Beijing, famous for his songs “The Garbage Dump” and “The Bell and Drum Towers” [Laji chang and Zhonggu lou respectively] and his wilful antics among his musical contemporaries. Trinket’s foul-mouthed, violence-oriented persona fits in both with the stereotype of rebellious youth now so fashionable on the Mainland, and with the womanizing realities of the life of cultro-brats like He Yong.¹

* Some of the material in this article has been garnered from two monographs, *Shades of Mao: the Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader*, (M. E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1996), and *In the Red, Contemporary Chinese Culture*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, forthcoming).

¹ See also John Minford, trans. and introduced, “The Deer and the Cauldron:

⁷³ Chapter 6. The translation is from Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, 215-16.