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# RETHINKING BINARISM IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

## A CASE STUDY OF TRANSLATING THE CHINESE NOBEL LAUREATES OF LITERATURE

Submitted by

**Di Xiao**

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

In partial fulfilment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Durham University

2017

# DECLARATION

The candidate confirms that the work is her own and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Unless otherwise indicated by reference or acknowledgment, all translations from Chinese are provided by the candidate. The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

DI XIAO

(Signature)

--------------------------------------------

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# ABSTRACT

The theorisation of translation originated in a binary opposition embodied by the debate of word-for-word vs. sense-for-sense translation methods. It is true that by now, theories in Translation Studies (TS) have become significantly more elaborate and sophisticated. However, it cannot be denied that some of its most dominant and pertinent concepts continue to get portrayed in binary concepts, such as translation vs. original, translatability vs. untranslatability and translation vs. interpreting, among many others. This study believes that TS, not different from most intellectual inquiries of the human mind, has been built upon binarism.

The current research project aims to identify the traces of this epistemological tradition in the different stages of the discipline's development, encompassing various theoretical models in the field, while reflecting upon the evolution of TS that marks its departure from such a tradition. It approaches the issue by examining three prevailing dichotomies in the field, namely source vs. target, prescriptive vs. descriptive and translation vs. non-translation. To propose an alternative to the existing binary perspective, this study borrows from the sociological models of Parsons and Giddens to portray translation as a social action.

The binary concepts are then evaluated against empirical evidence obtained through a case study of two translators of Chinese Nobel Laureates, Howard Goldblatt and Mabel Lee. Both paratexts and metatexts are consulted to demonstrate that the scenario is much more complex than what is suggested by these dichotomies. It should be clarified that this study does not advocate that scholars discard these terms altogether. Instead, it acknowledges that dichotomies serve a definite purpose in certain contexts, but aims to problematise their uncritical application. Eventually, it seeks to heighten the awareness of binarism in the discipline and strives for a balance between the precision and standardisation of the metalanguage employed in discussing translation.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AV | alternative version |
| CV | Chinese version |
| DTS | descriptive translation studies |
| EV | English version |
| NPL | Nobel Prize in Literature |
| PTS | prescriptive translation studies |
| TS | Translation Studies |

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# Introduction

## 0.1 Theme and Objective of Research

The theorisation of translation originated in a binary opposition embodied by the debate of word-for-word vs. sense-for-sense translation methods. This controversy has lasted for centuries, from Cicero to the budding stage of Translation Studies (TS). It is true that presently translation theories have moved far beyond that particular line of inquiry, but it cannot be denied that some of the most dominant and pertinent concepts in the field continue to get represented by terminologies with binary implications, such as translation and original, translatability and untranslatability, translating and interpreting, just to name a few. It is argued that *no* different from most intellectual inquiries of the human mind, TS has been built upon *binarism*, an epistemological tradition encouraging an either-or perspective.

This study sets out to identify indications of binarism at different stages of the discipline's development and in various theoretical models of TS, while reflecting upon the evolution of translation theorisation that marks its departure from such a tradition. It argues that although certain dichotomies have been questioned for being dualistic and reductive, most notably by Pym (1993; 1995; 1998; 2004a; 2004b; 2012: 14-16; 2014: 24-42), a systematic examination of binarism in TS is yet to be done. The topic is approached by examining three dichotomies prevailing in the field, namely source vs. target, prescriptive vs. descriptive and translation vs. non-translation. These concepts are considered to have shaped the historical development as well as the current landscape of TS. Through a critical engagement with these concepts, this study does *not* advocate that scholars discard the terms altogether. Instead, it acknowledges that dichotomies serve a definite purpose in certain contexts, but aims to problematise their uncritical application across the field.

The investigation into binarism via TS terminologies serves as a continuation of the metalinguistic discussion conducted in *The Metalanguage of Translation*, a volume edited by Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer and published by John Benjamins in 2009, which in turn acts as a response to James Holmes' proposition for a "meta-discussion" on translation (1972: 191). The special collection sets out to address "the tricky relationship between the quality of concepts and the standardization of terms", among other metalinguistic issues such as the potential detriment of using English as a lingua franca for TS discourse, the disparity between the language used by translation scholars and that of the practitioners, as well as the metaphorical associations activated by the terms employed in the meta-discussion of translation (Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2009: 2).

The current research project acknowledges these concerns addressed in Gambier and van Doorslaer's edited volume, and strives to reconcile the tension between what Dirk Delabastita calls "the pragmatic bent of terminology" that tends to reduce complexities (cited in Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2009: 3) and the optimisation of the interdisciplinarity and diversity that characterise translation research. Through a critical evaluation of the three dichotomies, namely source vs. target, descriptive vs. prescriptive and translation vs. non-translation, this study intends to address the above-mentioned metalinguistic issues including metaphorical implications, theory-practice discrepancies and the dominance of English in TS discourse respectively.

The dichotomous terms are reviewed against empirical evidence obtained through a case study of translating the only two Nobel Laureates of Literature writing in Chinese, namely Mo Yan, who won the prize in 2012, and Gao Xingjian, who was awarded the prize in 2000, focusing on the two translators rendering their fiction into English – Howard Goldblatt and Mabel Lee. The research method combines face-to-face interviews with linguistic and discursive evidence collected from a textual comparison of the Chinese and English versions of Mo Yan and Gao's translated novels. Paratexts and metatexts of the authors and translators are also consulted to demonstrate that the picture is much more complex than what the dichotomous terms might suggest.

Eventually, this research project aspires to make three contributions to the field of TS. Firstly, by examining the binarism in TS metalanguage, it aims to heighten the awareness of this epistemological tradition in the discipline, draw attention to the potentially misleading assumptions that binary language can create in one's intellectual understanding and strive for a balance between the precision and the standardisation of the language used to discuss translation.

Secondly, it attempts to design a framework for analysing translation errors, in order to illustrate the integration of prescriptive and descriptive approaches. This is not only done through the linguistic perspective, but essentially by incorporating a sociological interpretation of errors. The subject of translation error remains largely understudied, despite being a prevalent and persistent phenomenon in real-life translation activities. This study provides a definition and a classification of translation errors, as well as an explanation of its relationship with other more motivated and deliberated translation choices, such as those commonly perceived as translation strategies.

Thirdly, this study borrows from the sociological theories of Talcott Parsons and Anthony Giddens to discuss translator's orientation and consciousness in the process of translational action. Both sociologists' theories have *not* been seriously applied to TS yet, but their insights into social actor's agency are illuminating for analysing translation as a social activity. Therefore, this research hopefully enriches the current "sociological turn" of TS.

By evaluating the three dichotomies against the case study findings, this project aims to address the following research questions: are the existing TS terminologies sufficient for describing the complexities in real-life translation scenarios; what alternative models are available to correct some of the assumptions inspired by these binary terms; can a research focus with strong prescriptive implications (for instance, translation errors) be approached under a descriptive and explanatory framework; what challenges does the definition of the subject of TS pose to the conceptualisation of translation?

The subsequent three sections in this introduction are dedicated to elucidating the reasons for the design of this research project, including why the epistemological tradition of binarism demands *rethinking* at the present stage of TS' development, why the English translations of the two Chinese Nobel Laureates in Literature have been chosen as the materials for the case study, why the three particular dichotomies have been selected for critical analysis, and why the sociological theories of Parsons and Giddens are deemed relevant to this research.

## 0.2 "Binarism" Explained

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, *binarism* refers to "a mode of thought" or "a specific dichotomy" that is "predicated on stable oppositions" ("Binarism", 2015). In other words, even without "a specific dichotomy", "a mode of thought" could have been constructed on the basis of binarism. In the case of TS, although many translation theories do not explicitly advocate a particular binary opposition, their conceptualisation of translation might still bear traces of a binary perspective.

At times, binarism can allow the opposing concepts to constitute a continuum with real-life cases placed at different points of the spectrum, but this concession does not alter the fact that the initial epistemological stance is positioned in view of two polarised ends. For instance, Venuti defends his concepts of domestication and foreignisation by claiming that his terms do not endorse "a neat binary opposition" (2008: 19). In response to earlier criticisms, he argues that his terms cannot be reduced to the "true binaries" in translation history, i.e. literal vs. free translation methods (ibid.). The justification he offered was that these terms do not correspond with translation strategies *per se* but bespeak ethical attitudes towards translation. Nevertheless, the argument lacks force when one considers that his second edition of *The Translation Studies Reader* listed "domesticating vs. foreignizing" as one of the translation strategies along with "free vs. literal" and "sense-for-sense vs. word-for-word" translation (2004: 8), a juxtaposition that he later deleted in the third edition (2012: 7).

By revealing this contradiction, this study certainly does not try to discredit Venuti, who can legitimately revise his own theories. However, the inconsistency in his argumentation hopefully demonstrates that binarism is deeply rooted in epistemology, and an endeavour to break away from its repercussions might have to start with the metalinguistic formulation of terminologies. In other words, fine-tuning the interpretation of binary concepts like domestication and foreignisation is *not* sufficient for overcoming binarism, but questions need to be directed at the binary perspective implied by the metalanguage itself.

Hence, the subject of the present critical evaluation is the epistemological tradition of binarism that can be found underlying many of the established concepts and default assumptions in translation theories. In order to approach the subject, this study has selected three pairs of dichotomies still prevalent in the field today as the objects of examination, namely source vs. target, prescriptive vs. descriptive and translation vs. non-translation. When addressing these specific pairs of terminologies, this study employs the word *dichotomy*, defined as "a division into two especially *mutually exclusive* or *contradictory* groups or entities" ("Dichotomy", 2015, italics added). Being "mutually exclusive" and "contradictory" indicates that the initial relationship between the two concepts in each dichotomy has been presented as irreconcilable and polarised. This means that a "source" can never be its own "target" and vice versa; "description" does not allow room for "prescription" and similarly the other way around; the understanding of "translation" is defined by everything it is *not*.

While binarism does not necessarily manifest itself in explicit dichotomies or irreconcilable differences, a binary perspective can be grounded in such stable opposition. Similarly, some of the translation theories discussed in this study might not involve an absolutist insistence on mutual exclusivity or contradiction, but the arguments used in those theories can still be traced back to their compliance with the three sets of dichotomous terms mentioned above. Investigation into the metalanguage is highly relevant for studying binarism, because the established terminologies provide an initial frame of reference for the otherwise multitudinous possibilities of dividing the reality.

It is vital to stress that although binarism is the centre of investigation here, the current study is not proclaiming a radical break with this epistemological tradition. In fact, it is highly sceptical about the probability of such a *clean* break in the foreseeable future. Most likely, the understanding of its arguments often relies on the binary oppositions in the English language, but this research hopefully constitutes a conscious effort in distancing from binary thinking and its assumptions, especially from the manifestations of binarism targeted by this particular investigation.

The concern with binarism dates back to the philosophical school of Structuralism, commonly believed to have originated from Ferdinand de Saussure's theorisation of human languages (Kearney, 1994: 240). Saussure considers language to be a system of signs, which are composed of the "signifier" [*significant*] (the sound-image of words) and the "signified" [*signifié*] (the mental concept represented by words) (Saussure et al., 1966: 65-70). The relationship between the two is arbitrary, indicating that there is no essential connection between how something is pronounced or spelled and what it is supposed to mean. For instance, a "tree" is thus named only because the convention of usage dictates so; otherwise, there is no reason why a tall plant with a trunk, branches and leaves cannot be called "bottle" or essentially, anything else. Due to this arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified, all words lost the physical form that can anchor their meanings in the material world. They can only be understood against other words, and in terms of what they are *not.* As Saussure puts it, “in a language, there are only differences without positive terms” (ibid.: 120).

This view of language that is both differential and relational has been further developed in later Structuralist thoughts, where the most basic differential relation that makes meaning possible is believed to be binary oppositions (Culler, 1975: 14-16). Although the contrast between any two opposing concepts is naturally incessant, for example, the spectrum between wide and narrow (also known as “width”) or tall and short (also known as “height”) is infinitely divisible in reality, structuralists argue that in order to make a linguistic distinction significant, the contrast has to be reduced from the continuous to the *discrete*. This would allow the meaning of words like “happy” and “sad” to be precisely specified, regardless of the immense nebula and dynamic flux of emotions people actually experience (Chandler, 2002: 46). Therefore, binary oppositions are inherent in languages, or indeed any signifying or coding system, and they underlie “a child’s first logical operation” (Jakobson and Halle, 1971: 60).

When Claude Lévi-Strauss applied Structuralist linguistic theories to anthropology, he presented binary opposition as the fundamental mechanism of the human mind, not only in terms of its thought process but “what we might call the raw material of *immediate* visual perception already consists of binary oppositions” (Lévi-Strauss, 1990: 692, italics added). Such propensity to binarism is revealed to be “profound organic truths” (ibid.), determined by human physiological constitutions. In other words, the human mind follows the dialectic process of *thesis*, *antithesis* and the unification of the two – *synthesis* in all its logical operations, an idea Lévi-Strauss borrowed from Hegel (Penner, 1998: 192). From the basic structure of two opposing poles, a system can be constructed, as new terms start to aggregate at each end, standing in opposition, correlation or analogy to the initial binary opposition (Lévi-Strauss, 1966: 161). Binarism is, therefore, the “elementary logic” and the “smallest common denominator of all thought” (Lévi-Strauss, 1964: 90), on the basis of which associations can be made.

Human mind’s natural susceptibility to binarism is an epistemological feature that extends beyond the language system and permeates all the cultural constructs, as evidenced by the human perception of man and woman, young and old, white and black, East and West, good and bad, right and wrong etc. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2013: 25-28). This type of binary perspective can potentially pose several dangers to intellectual inquiry.

Firstly, it suppresses ambiguities and hybridities as inconveniences that fail to fit neatly into categories. Whilst allowing the human mind to impose order upon the otherwise overwhelmingly heterogeneous reality, binarism also runs the risk of factitious organisation (Culler, 1975: 16). In the words of the American biologist, David Ehrenfeld: “Dichotomies are most mischievous when they arbitrarily separate parts of a highly interrelated and complex system” (1981: 11). For instance, in the case of man vs. woman dichotomy, individuals who are born intersex or who have difficulties with their sexual identity are marginalised in society as taboo and excluded from debates representing either camp.

Secondly, binarism generally entails hierarchical order, where one of the two opposing concepts is favoured over the other, as evidenced by the opposition between right and wrong, good and bad or hero and villain. Sometimes, one of the two concepts occupies such a dominant position that the other can only be conceptualised as the absence of the dominant concept. Returning to the wide vs. narrow and tall vs. short dichotomy, the synthesis of these binary oppositions is termed “width” and “height” respectively, implying that the concept of “narrow” and “short” can only be understood as the lack of “width” and “height”. In its most blatant form, this biased relationship in a binary opposition can manifest itself in what Roman Jakobson terms *markedness* and *unmarkedness* (Jakobson, Rudy and Waugh, 1985: 85). For instance, “rational” is often placed against its logical contradictory – “irrational”, a telling clue that “rationality” is the primary concept in the English culture. Similar examples include “unhappy” and “hopeless”. These words are linguistically marked to show their ancillary status to the unmarked forms. In contrast, “unsad” or “despairless” are not considered as legitimate forms of markedness. The hierarchical order of binary oppositions is evident here.

Thirdly, the hierarchy of a binary opposition does not stand alone but is normally allied with other dichotomous attributes, an epistemological feature known as *alignment* (Chandler, 2002: 106-110). As postulated by Lévi-Strauss, a pair of binary opposition constitutes the most elementary form of a system, based on which elaborate associations can be built. For instance, the democracy vs. dictatorship dichotomy in the public’s mind is almost automatically aligned with good and evil, peace and violence, justice and corruption, freedom and suppression etc. (Li, 2013). Consequently, multiplicities and complexities are reduced to necessary correlations with the initial binary opposition, furthering the division between dichotomies.

Lastly, when the subordinate concept in a dichotomy challenges the dominant concept, its resistance often attempts to reverse the hierarchy, but nonetheless, it is still imprisoned by the opposing construct. Again, using the man vs. woman dichotomy as an illustration, it is suggested that for a long time, feminist movements have been suspected of being anti-men, antagonising and isolating. This has been a strong impression that the UN HeForShe Campaign aims to rectify (Watson, 2014). The same applies to the internal resistance against apartheid in South Africa, where the preservation of the white vs. black dichotomy in the rebellion against white supremacy further incited racial hatred and segregation (Smith, 2012). An effective subversion of power imbalance must begin with disrupting the “structural relations of the binary system itself” and allow interaction to replace division (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2013: 27).

Bearing these potential pitfalls of binarism in mind, this project is by no means declaring that all studies in the field of TS are conducted upon binary oppositions, nor is it denouncing the value of researches that are explicitly built on dichotomous concepts. Instead, it attempts to identify traces of this epistemological tradition that can be found in different stages of the discipline's development and reflect upon the evolution of translation theorisation that marks its departure from such a tradition. Ultimately, by conducting a critical review of TS' development, it aims to challenge the existing "structural relations of the binary system" in the field (ibid.), and lay the foundation for a theoretical model informed by sociological theories.

## 0.3 Contextualisation of Case Study

The current research implements its critical engagement with binarism in TS through the case study of translating the two Chinese Nobel Laureates of Literature, namely Mo Yan (awarded in 2012) and Gao Xingjian (awarded in 2000), specifically focusing on the translators rendering their fictional works into English – Howard Goldblatt and Mabel Lee. Mo Yan and Gao Xingjian are the only two authors writing in Chinese who have ever won a Nobel Prize in Literature (NPL), while Howard Goldblatt and Mabel Lee have been their primary and almost exclusive translators when it comes to their fictional works on the Anglophone market. In this study, when Mo Yan and Gao Xingjian are referred to as "*Chinese* writers", the designation of "Chinese" indicates the dominant language of their literary composition, *not* their nationality, since Gao had become a French citizen by the time he received the prize. Moreover, while "Gao Xingjian" is a combination of the writer's family name "Gao" and given name "Xingjian", "Mo Yan" is the writer's pen name. Therefore, the full name "Mo Yan" is used throughout this thesis, as a Chinese pen name should not be broken up. This section explains the selection of research subjects by presenting an introduction to the relevant biographical details of both authors, highlighting the contrast between the authors' political affiliations, their shared beliefs in the relationship between politics and literature, as well as the media responses they received after being awarded the NPL.

Since only one member of the Nobel Committee, Göran Malmqvist, is proficient in Chinese, the selection of Mo Yan and Gao as awardees inevitably involves translation issues. Although there is no proof that their translations into English played a critical role in the selection process, it is undeniable that the announcement of these two Nobel Laureates significantly boosted the sales of their English translations, expanded their readership and attracted more-than-usual attention for the Chinese literature and literary translation from the media, critics, academics and the general public. This resulted in abundant research materials in terms of the contextual factors of translation activities.

Although the announcement of Nobel winners is likely to arouse controversies, the media reports and critics' comments on the 2000 and 2012 NPL awardees seemed to largely fixate on the two Chinese writers' political affiliations rather than the literary value of their works. When Gao won the prize as a political refugee of French nationality, Nobel Committee was suspected of having "ulterior political motives" giving the award to a writer most western critics had never heard of (*BBC News*, 2000). More than a decade later, when Mo Yan won the prize, his identity as not just a party member but also the chairman of "the pro-establishment Chinese Writers' Association" aroused great discontent among western critics and Chinese dissidents, who interpreted the Nobel Committee's decision as an "olive branch" to the Chinese government (*BBC News*, 2012a; 2012b).

The combination of the two authors' contrasting political backgrounds, the political focus of their reception in the Anglophone media, and the wealth of research materials provided by the repercussions after their Nobel victories has been the rationale behind selecting these two authors and their respective Anglophone translators as the case study for this research project. The subsequent sections illustrate these aspects in further detail.

### 0.3.1 Introducing Gao Xingjian

Among the few authors that Mabel Lee translates for, Gao Xingjian is the only writer considered to be truly living in exile, as he believes that he cannot go back to China as long as the Communist Party is in power (Wai and Lee, 1998). Here, it is necessary to briefly trace Gao's experience of writing in an autocratic regime that eventually led to his life in exile. Born in China in 1940, Gao burned most of his early manuscripts during the Cultural Revolution in fear of prosecution and only started to see his writings published in the 1980s (Gao and Lee, 2007). His first book *Preliminary Explorations into the Art of Modern Fiction* was put to print in 1981, which advocated the adoption of Western literary techniques that deviated from the Socialist-Realist doctrines upheld during Mao's rule. In the same year, Gao was transferred to work at People's Art Theatre in Beijing and completed his first Beckett-esque play – *Bus Stop*. However, the rehearsal had to be put off because the content was deemed unsuitable.

In 1982, an influential member of the Chinese Writers' Association, Wang Meng, openly supported Gao's works in a public letter, which soon led to a heated debate about modernism that concluded in an anti-Wang Meng campaign and the banning of Gao's books. At that time, Gao was not named in the criticisms but was only referred to as "a minor writer". Meanwhile, the rehearsal for Gao's second play – *Absolute Signal* was underway. As Gao's first play to finally make the stage, it received primarily literary criticisms free from political accusations. However, in 1983, Gao was explicitly named and criticised in relation to Wang Meng during meetings of the Writers' Association. Later that year, as the Oppose Spiritual Pollution Campaign escalated, *Bus Stop* was banned after a few performances. 1983 was also the year when Gao had a brush with death, as he was wrongly diagnosed with lung cancer. With this newly gained perspective on life, Gao chose to flee from the capital city, when it was rumoured that he might be sent to the Qinghai Prison Farm for “training”, a euphemism reminiscent of the political oppression inflicted on intellectuals during the Cultural Revolution. Thus, Gao absconded to the remote mountainous areas in Southwest China. This five-month excursion along Yangtze River in the name of collecting folk songs was featured in his work *Soul Mountain*, a novel that was commissioned in 1982.

Meanwhile, in Beijing, the liberalist Party Secretary General, Hu Yaobang, put the Oppose Spiritual Pollution Campaign under control and by 1984, it was safe for Gao to return. In this favourable political environment, Gao wrote his third play *Wild Man*, whose performances in 1985 yielded reviews solely based on aesthetic grounds. That year, Gao made a trip to Europe for cultural visits and started to contemplate the option of leaving the country. The next year, in 1986, he completed his fourth play *The Other Shore*. By the time it was rehearsed, Hu Yaobang was purged through the Oppose Capitalist Liberalisation Campaign and the play was banned before it even made it to the stage.

With all hope for publication gone, Gao again travelled to Europe in 1987 and successfully settled in Paris. It was not until the June 4th Tian’anmen Incident in 1989 that he decisively tore up his passport, officially breaking off with China and applying for political refugee status. His play *Fleeing,* which was written under the commission of an American theatre company, directly addressed the event. However, back then, the play pleased neither the Chinese government nor the West. *Fleeing* sealed Gao’s fate as a *persona non-grata* in China, and requests were made by the American company to modify the play for its Western audience by creating a heroic protagonist. Gao rejected the offer and retrieved his manuscript.

In the same year, he completed his 7-year project *Soul Mountain* that was later published in 1990 in Taiwan. He became a French citizen in 1997, but it was the publication of *One Man’s Bible* in 1999 that marked his psychological break from all his Chinese connections. Although these two books are the only two novels that Gao wrote throughout his creative career, they are the works that were primarily recognised by the Nobel committee and were placed before the numerous plays that identified Gao as more of a dramatist than a novelist (*Nobelprize.org*, 2000a).

Apart from his novels and plays, Gao also published many essays musing on the relationship between literature and language and between literature and politics, which are included in a collection titled *The Case for Literature* (Gao and Lee, 2007). According to Gao, a higher form of literature should be “cold literature” (Gao, Fong and Lee, 2005). This requires the writer to detach himself from the subject of his writings and assume the role of an observer. The effort to maintain such a distance is what Gao terms the perpetual “fleeing” in life – “fleeing” from political affiliation, from others and sometimes even from oneself (Gao and Lee, 2007: 124). This prominence given to the detachment from oneself serves as the motivation behind his unique narrative design in *Soul Mountain* and *One Man’s Bible*, where he employed pronouns “he” and “you” in addition to “I” for self-reference, creating what Göran Malmqvist terms “pronominal projections” (*Nobelprize.org*, 2000b).

For Gao, to flee was a strategy of self-preservation (Gao and Lee, 2007), and to preserve the self is the most essential and most challenging task for a writer, as the socialisation process always sets out to engulf the self and subsume it under the collective will, through either the pressure of subscribing to a certain political discourse, or the incentive of catering to the mainstream market. The moment literature is hijacked by the promotion of a cause, it dies. Gao believes that the motivation for writing should only originate from the pleasure of writing itself, stripped of any utilitarian concerns. It acts as the impulse for writers to continue writing without considering the possibility of publication or even readership.

Therefore, literature is essentially seen as an individual’s voice standing on its own and confronting the whole society. Its strength is weak, and its impact is limited, but this frailty is the most authentic form of individual voice. Gao is strongly against the self-aggrandisement embodied by Nietzsche's philosophy of the "superman", which inspired many intellectuals in modern China to establish themselves as heroes writing to save the people, the nation or the race. He asserts that the burden of such a heroic mission would impose pressure on literature to create falsity and pull it further away from the truth. Gao believes that intellectuals ought to stay clear of the collective and must occupy a marginalised position in the society. This is a necessary condition for literature. The loneliness it entails can provide the writer with the psychological space for reflection and rationality. In this isolated state, as the individual initiates a conversation with himself, the earliest form of literature is born.

This is also the philosophy behind Gao's narrative design in both *Soul Mountain* and *One Man's Bible*, where stories are told in the form of a soliloquy. In this conversation with the self, conventional characters are replaced by pronouns, the denotation of subjects that mark the starting point of one's perception of the world. When "I" is detached from the self, "you" is employed; "he" is then invented to put the self under more intense scrutiny and to further detach from the traumatic personal experience of Cultural Revolution depicted in *One Man's Bible*. Meanwhile, Gao highlights the perils of autobiographical writings such as his two novels. He emphasizes that it is vital to maintain a distance from the subject of writing so that the writer can avoid being reduced to a victim of his own history and the novel can go beyond being just an indictment.

As regards to the differences between Chinese and European languages, Gao underscores the highly flexible syntax and grammar in Chinese. With no conjugation based on pronoun or tense, the Chinese language can more naturally portray the individual psyche, which transcends time and space by reorganising events in accordance with the psychological process. Moreover, Chinese sentences can do away with the subject, allowing for a freer mode of narrative, which Gao terms the "flow of language". Despite its many advantages as a literary language, modern Chinese suffers from Europeanisation, which is caused by intellectuals' ambition to thoroughly westernise Chinese thinking since the May Fourth Movement in 1919. Hence, Gao aims to recover some of the traditional beauties of Old Chinese in his own writings, by using monosyllabic instead of multisyllabic words whenever possible, cutting away most of the superfluous attributives and omitting conjunctions between clauses to keep their logical relationship ambiguous. In short, he aims to be more concise and versatile in his use of the Chinese language.

When addressing the relationship between literature and politics, Gao proposes the idea of writing "without isms". However, this does not prohibit the writer from having political attitudes or standpoints. In fact, literary works can directly address political issues, as long as it is not the coercive preaching of one's own ideological beliefs. "Without isms" also refers to the freedom from a certain literary school. Gao himself has been labelled as modernist, absurdist, postmodernist etc. by literary critics. It has been fashionable in literary circles to follow the trend of new literary styles, and the modern-day market economy thrives on the pursuit of new trends and the repudiation of traditions. In this consumerist society, Gao values the independence of writers from any literary trend, which proves to be more challenging than resisting political pressures under an autocratic regime. For him, the essential prerequisite of literature is freedom – freedom from political ideologies, social norms and even moral standards, and the only criterion for judging literature should be its aesthetic quality.

After winning the NPL in 2000, Gao suffered from declining health due to "fatigue and pressure" (Jaggi, 2008). He felt like "an ornament on the political scene" amidst all the media "whirlwind" (ibid.). He eventually collapsed and had to be hospitalised in 2002. The illness later developed and in 2003 he underwent two bypass operations. Although his health significantly improved in 2006, his creative life is now dominated by filmmaking (see Appendix: 321).

### 0.3.2 Introducing Mo Yan

Being the son of a banker and an actress, Gao received urban-based and western-styled education, and later majored in French literature at the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute (Lee, 2000: 2). In comparison, Mo Yan is very much an autodidact. He was born in 1955 in Gaomi County, Shandong Province, a place that later became his spiritual homeland and the fictitious setting for most of his stories. It was a literary landmark often analogised to William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County (Zhang, 2016: 111).

According to Mo Yan, he was notoriously inquisitive and garrulous as a child, a personality trait not exactly desirable during that historical period, when China was rapidly moving towards collectivisation and building up to the Cultural Revolution of the mid-60s. Mo Yan's loose lips frequently invited trouble into the family and aroused great concern in his parents regarding the fate awaiting him. This was partly the reason why the writer chose "Mo Yan" as his pseudonym, which means "don't speak", serving as an admonition against his talkative nature and a self-mockery of the inability to heed such a warning. Furthermore, the author's original name is "Guan Moye", and the middle character "Mo" (謨) is composed of the characters for "Mo" (莫) and "Yan" (言), giving birth to the pseudonym he is known by today (ChinaNews, 2013).

Mo Yan was born on the brink of the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962) and the Great Chinese Famine (1958-1961), which is widely believed to be caused by the extreme economic campaign. His childhood memories were thus filled with experiences of hunger, which he later considered to be the primary source of his literary imagination (Mo Yan, 2012: 35-40). He flippantly defies any attempt at attributing his writing career to lofty aspirations. In fact, Mo Yan often frivolously recounts that he first dreamed of being a writer because one of the university students sent to the countryside for "re-education" during the Cultural Revolution told him that a novelist can afford to eat dumplings for three meals a day, which was at that time quite a delicacy in the eyes of a village boy. His allegedly real-life experience of eating coal from a cart parked in front of his school in 1961, along with a group of village children who had never seen coal before, is featured in the opening scene of his latest novel *Frog* (Mo Yan, 2009; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2014).

In the fifth grade, Mo Yan dropped out of school due to the Cultural Revolution and spent most of his childhood working among adults or cattle herding in the field alone. Similar to other Chinese writers growing up in the rural areas, Mo Yan credited most of his creative talent to his early-life experience as a peasant and his extensive first-hand knowledge of crops and farm animals in Northern China (Fairbank, 2015). As a primary school dropout, Mo Yan claims that his education has been mainly acquired through his ears, as he eagerly listened to all the folk tales and at times improvised stories narrated by relatives or village elderly (Mo Yan, 2012: 55-59). Back then, there were families in possession of a few books in the village, including the great classics of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Mo Yan borrowed and devoured nearly a dozen books by offering to help the owners with farm work in return (ibid.: 23-25).

It was not until he joined the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in 1976 that Mo Yan gained access to a much more sophisticated library and started to pay more serious efforts to advance a career in the field of writing. Mo Yan recalls that he was struggling to find his voice at first, for all the education and propaganda he had received taught him to feature black and white villains and heroes in his stories. Following China’s 1978 Reform and Opening-up campaign, more translated literature arrived in the 80s, especially the works of William Faulkner, Gabriel García Márquez and Franz Kafka, who were later identified as Mo Yan’s sources of inspiration. Their styles of writing instantly clicked with Mo Yan, and without even reading an entire book by these authors, he arrived at an epiphany regarding the type of literature he should create (ibid.: 23-28).

While other young writers fervently imitated the styles of these newly discovered literary giants, Mo Yan realised that they were “blazing furnaces” that would make him evaporate if pressed too close. His answer to the call for innovation on the Chinese literary scene was to return to his roots in Northern China village life, and heavily borrow from Shandong dialect, village folklores and the supernatural stories famously compiled by the Qing scholar, Pu Songling, who used to reside in the nearby city of Zibo in Shandong Province (ChinaNews, 2013).

Having been admitted on to the PLA Academy of Art in 1984, Mo Yan graduated two years later and soon published his first novel, *Red Sorghum*. This was the work that established his name home and abroad. This was also the book that put his hometown Northeast Gaomi Township firmly on the map of contemporary Chinese literature and consolidated his microcosmic method of retelling national history through family sagas (Mo Yan, 2012: 1-5). The film of the same title, which was adapted based on the first two chapters of the book, went on to win the Golden Bear Award at the 1988 Berlin International Film Festival. The international recognition of the film *Red Sorghum* instantly pushed the then little-known director Zhang Yimou and actress Gong Li into the spotlight of global entertainment.

In 1988, Mo Yan was accepted into the MA courses run by the Lu Xun Literature Institute and Beijing Normal University (Mo Yan, 2010: 62-64). In the same year, Mo Yan learned of the peasant riot against the local government in his home province, nationally known as the Garlic Incident. Spurred on by a rage, he completed his second novel *The Garlic Ballads* within one month. This book is perceived as Mo Yan's most impassioned and politically motivated work so far. Its explicit connection with the real-life political event and its provocative content resulted in a temporary ban on its publication and circulation during the student movement of 1989. The June 4th Incident disrupted Mo Yan's MA studies and left him so disillusioned that he quit the course and returned to his hometown, Gaomi. It was also in this historical context that Mo Yan started writing his next novel *The Republic of Wine*, a poignant piece of social criticism directed at bureaucratic corruption. However, it could only be published in China after its Taiwanese edition created quite a stir among overseas readers and sinologists (Mo Yan, Dutrait and Frow, 2000: 58-59).

Meanwhile, after much haggling with the school and persuasion from his mentor, Mo Yan's student status at Beijing Normal University was restored and he eventually finished the degree in 1991. In the following two decades, Mo Yan moved on to create his impressive portfolio of over 100 novels, novellas and short stories, with ten of these books translated into English by Howard Goldblatt. This included eight full-length novels, one semi-autobiographical novella and one collection of short stories. Currently, Mo Yan is focusing his literary endeavours on drama, a genre that he briefly experimented with in his last novel *Frog* (2009).

If Gao's philosophy on literature is grounded in the preservation of individualism, then Mo Yan claims to uphold the principle of humanism. While acknowledging that an author is "entitled to his own stance and viewpoint", Mo Yan believes that "a humanistic stance" is the starting point of any literary creation (*Nobelprize.org*, 2012). Mo Yan, however, does not mean to claim that he writes *for* the people, a position of Nietzschean self-aggrandisement that Gao strongly opposes. Rather, he advocates a mindset of writing *as* a member of the people (Mo Yan, 2012: 65-70). Unlike Gao's insistence on "cold literature", Mo Yan's creative efforts are characterised by bouts of passion and intensive but short periods of composition. For instance, he wrote half a million words for *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* in only 83 days (*Nobelprize.org*, 2012). Mo Yan never denies that a novelist shoulders certain social responsibilities, but these may be fulfilled in different manners. When it comes to the relationship between literature and politics, he professes that "some may want to shout on the street, but we should tolerate those who hide in their rooms and use literature to voice their opinions" (cited in Ramzy, 2012a).

While Gao's two novels are largely autobiographical, Mo Yan also frequently introduces personal experiences into his writings, which on at least two occasions resulted in designing a character bearing his own name, as seen in *The Republic of Wine* (Mo Yan, 1992) and *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* (Mo Yan, 2006). Besides incorporating his self-portrait characterised by unpopularity, timidity and officiousness, he often assimilates others' experiences into his storytelling. Typical examples include Birdman Han from *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, based on the real-life character of Liu Lianren, whom Mo Yan interviewed as a schoolboy. Liu was forcibly taken to Japan to work in a coal mine during the war and later escaped to lead a savage life of 13 years in the mountains, before being discovered by a hunter and sent back to Shandong Province. Other than borrowing generously from others' stories, Mo Yan regularly employs the names of acquaintances for his characters to build a personal connection with the narrative, a tactic that also led to frequent complaints from those who read themselves in his books.

Similar to Gao's proposal for writing "without isms", Mo Yan believes that literature should transcend politics. He insists that literature should "not just show concern for politics but be greater than politics" (*Nobelprize.org*, 2012). Even when composing his explicitly politically themed novel *The Garlic Ballads*, Mo Yan had to constantly remind himself to not let "heated emotions and anger" overtake his humanistic concerns and turn the novel into "reportage of a social event" (ibid.). In the end, Mo Yan refuses to idolise or demonise characters but instead focuses on the "nebulous terrain" of the human nature (ibid.). He devotes his creative efforts to the vivid portrayal of this grey area in the human heart and mind that defies a dualistic moral judgement.

### 0.3.3 Bafflement over Gao's NPL

The announcement of Gao Xingjian's win came as a pleasant surprise to some and an embarrassing shock to others, but it can be safely deduced that very few were prepared for the result (Jeffries, 2000). Many had predicted that Mo Yan had a much better claim to the prize that year (Rose, 2000; see Appendix: 313). When *The Guardian* journalist Stuart Jeffries went to interview Gao in his home city Paris, where his works were most "extensively translated", Jeffries could not succeed in procuring his books after visiting four Parisian bookstores (Jeffries, 2000). This was because Gao had been too obscure a writer for the shops to maintain a regular stock. Jeffries was told to return the week after as the store owner had just "ordered a few because he's won the prize" (ibid.).

Similarly, DJ Taylor also writing from *The Guardian* claimed that "I have never heard of him, and neither had anyone else whose opinion I canvassed" (2000a). On encountering the little-known laureate, who had been identified as a "Chinese expatriate living in Paris (and therefore presumably representing the cause of 'freedom')" (ibid.), Taylor remained unperturbed, because he believed that the history of Nobel Prize in Literature has been littered with "half-a-dozen laureates who won for reasons that had little to do with literary merit" (ibid.). Taylor's peer at *The New York Times,* Alan Riding, shares his perplexity upon receiving the news of Gao's award. Riding writes, "in France and beyond […] a more common response to his selection was, who?" (2000). Even Gao's own neighbours living in the same "run-down housing project" had no clue that he worked as a writer and an artist until the Nobel announcement sent a swarm of reporters to their doorstep (ibid.). Gao's lack of recognition even prompted Swedish newspapers to entertain doubts about the "conflict of interest" during the selection process (Riding, 2000), for one of Gao's most adamant advocates Göran Malmqvist was one of the 18 Swedish Academy members involved in reaching the final decision.

Apart from Gao's rather esoteric reputation limited to intellectuals familiar with avant-garde theatre (Lyall, 2000), some also reflected that "rarely has the Nobel prize been awarded to a corpus as slender as Gao Xingjian's" (Mishra, 2008). A few critics expressed reservations towards Gao's sometimes bitter semi-autobiographical accounts in his two novels, including the London-based Sinologist and literary translator, Julia Lovell. She believed that Gao’s fiction was a “sprawling, self-indulgent take on the horrors of political oppression” (cited in Jaggi, 2008). The same scholar found Mo Yan’s works to “have shone an unforgiving spotlight on communist society” (Lovell, 2012), despite his less advantageous position in speaking up against the Chinese government in his public remarks.

Gao’s obscurity is explainable to a certain extent, for his works had mainly been published in Taiwan, Sweden, France and Australia by 2000, with his translators commissioned mostly through personal connections. Also, the rights to his English translations in the US and the UK were only purchased after his rise to fame following his Nobel success (Riding, 2000; Lyall, 2000). In addition to the uncomfortable fact that only a few critics could directly comment on Gao as a writer due to their lack of exposure to his works, the Anglophone media’s immediate responses to his selection was relatively neutral.

What soon captured the media’s full attention were reactions from the Chinese government. China had been long obsessed with the Nobel Prize and treated it as a strong indication of its cultural influence on the world stage with a patriotic fervour that was comparable to that found at the Olympic Games. An acknowledgement from the Swedish Academy goes far beyond individual honour. Back in 1986, the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Liu Xiaobo already described China’s excessive fixation on the prize as “childish” (cited in Larson and Kraus, 1989). The desire China attaches to the prize and the belated arrival of its satisfaction due to the foreign citizenship assumed by all previous China-born laureates have formed what many call the country’s “Nobel Complex” (*CBS News*, 2010; Lovell, 2010; Osnos, 2012; Rojas, 2012; Lovell, 2012; *The Economist*, 2012). Julia Lovell even dedicated a book to China’s avid pursuit after the prize (2006).

Yet the government’s reaction to Nobel Committee’s decision on this occasion was *not* keen, to say the least. The day after the press release from Stockholm, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson dismissed the prize for having been “used for ulterior political motives”, and head of the state-sponsored Chinese Writer’s Association reiterated the "political purposes" of this decision and accused the Committee of being "ignorant" of the numerous Chinese writers out there, who significantly surpassed the "very, very average" writer they chose, despite later admitting that he did not read Gao's writings after his exile, since his works had been banned in Mainland China (cited in *BBC News*, 2000; Jaggi, 2008; Osnos, 2012).

The then Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji was reported to have extended his congratulations to Gao and the French Ministry of Culture when questioned by journalists at a press conference that was held two days after the announcement. Confronted with doubts of Nobel Committee's political agenda, he replied that a political motivation is "inevitable", since "the judgments made in awarding a literary prize always have a certain human or even political background", but "anyone with a brain may form their own judgment" (cited in Veg, 2010). However, the very next day, a Foreign Ministry spokesman denied that Premier Zhu ever made such a comment in an official address (*Sina.com.cn*, 2000), even though the alleged quote had already been published in Hong Kong paper *Oriental Daily* and dissident news agency *Renminbao*. Meanwhile, outsiders speculated that Premier Zhu might not have received word of the official rhetoric when he gave his blessings, since he was on a state visit to Japan (Cheung, 2013; Osnos, 2012).

### 0.3.4 Controversies over Mo Yan's NPL

Compared to Gao's relatively "convenient" status as an exiled writer, Mo Yan's writings from inside an authoritarian system proved to be even harder to sell as world-class literature. Harsh criticisms flooded in following the announcement of his win. Salman Rushdie labelled him "a patsy of the regime"; Wang Xiaohong lamented that Mr Nobel will be "squirming in his grave"; Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei viewed the result as an "insult to humanity and to literature"; the 2009 NPL Laureate Herta Müller regarded it as "a slap in the face for all those working for democracy and human rights" (cited in Phillips, 2015; Liu, 2014; Flood, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; Khong, 2012; Clark, 2012; Link, 2012a; Daley, 2012).

Such scepticism against Mo Yan's claim to the prize was rarely directed at his actual writings but was primarily based on his party affiliations, his honorary title as the Vice-Chairman of the state-run Chinese Writers' Association, as well as his choice of words and actions on several occasions of his public appearance. This includes his comment on state censorship at the Stockholm conference prior to the award ceremony, where he analogised censorship to airport security, thereby endorsing it as a necessary evil, a remark deemed by *The Telegraph* as "unforgivable" (Khong, 2012).

Earlier that year, Mo Yan was reviled for participating in a commercial project to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Mao Zedong's 1942 "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art", where he was among the 100 renowned literary figures invited to hand copy Mao's talks, a choice that prompted critics to accuse them of having "sold their souls" (Branigan, 2012a). These documents have been interpreted as the guidelines behind the prosecution of literati based on the ideological stance of their works in the following decades. As Mo Yan recalls the incident, for which he was repeatedly castigated, he explains that the decision to participate was much more spontaneous than the media depicted, for the editor of the book simply walked around a conference attended by the writers with a book and a pen soliciting one paragraph from each. Mo Yan admits that "I was vain enough to take the opportunity to show off with my calligraphy" (*Der Spiegel*, 2013). Many writers who were involved also regretted afterwards for "not taking this more seriously" (Abrahamsen, 2012).

Earlier in 2009 at the Frankfurt Book Fair, organisers of the event stirred up public fury by succumbing to the pressure from the Chinese government and withdrawing invitations to the Chinese exiled poet Bei Ling and journalist Dai Qing. Later, due to the public outcry, they reinstated their invitations. Mo Yan, a member of the official Chinese delegation at the symposium, joined the walkout as a gesture of silent protest against the organisers, when the two dissident writers walked in (*South China Morning Post*, 2012a; Ulin, 2012; *The Economist*, 2012). Although Mo Yan later explained that he had no say in the matter (Link, 2012a), the incident became another widely quoted evidence of his anti-democratic inclinations after receiving the Nobel accolade in 2012.

Soon afterwards, Mo Yan invited further criticisms by refusing to sign a petition for the release of Liu Xiaobo, the winner of 2010 Nobel Peace Prize and a human rights activist sentenced to 11 years in prison by the Chinese government. Despite having expressed his wish for Liu's release, Mo Yan has been berated for not resorting to his newly gained power and influence in exerting pressure on his own government for Liu's freedom. Mo Yan's attitude on Liu made headline news on major media outlets, including *The Guardian*, *BBC*, *Reuters*, *The New York Times*, *The Time* and *South China Morning Post*, becoming one of the most newsworthy focuses for reporters worldwide (Branigan, 2012b; *BBC News*, 2012b; Martina and Duncan, 2012; Jacobs, 2012; Ramzy, 2012b; *South China Morning Post*, 2012b).

Mo Yan's political identity has become such a primary criterion in judging his eligibility for the prize that his outfit at the award ceremony was described as "a Mao suit with a red emblem pinned to the breast pocket", which "looked like a party emblem" (*Der Spiegel*, 2013), despite the fact that Mo Yan was simply wearing a traditional Zhongshan suit embroidered with a Chinese seal of his own name. In the ensuing debate regarding whether there is any necessary correlation between a writer's literary merit and his/her political choices, some critics appear unfazed by others' reservations. In order to illustrate that an author's political affiliation should determine the evaluation of his literary works, one critic bluntly comments, "if a chef layered in faeces presents me with a meal, it doesn't matter how delectable the food is; I'm going to have trouble swallowing it" (cited in Link, 2012a).

There is, however, one critic who referenced Mo Yan’s writings when voicing his criticisms. He was Perry Link, Chancellorial Chair at the University of California and Professor Emeritus of East Asian Studies at Princeton University. Whilst acknowledging that Mo Yan is no stranger to social satire, Link was concerned that the sarcasm and black humour ubiquitous in Mo Yan’s writings signalled the compromises he made as a writer within the regime. Link describes Mo Yan’s style as “daft hilarity” shying away from the cruel reality, which he believes serves as a “safety valve” for the Chinese government and a “spiritual massage” for the Chinese readers, allowing them dismissive laughs at the otherwise gruesome events in Chinese history (2012a). This is an argument that En Khong from *The Telegraph* readily agrees to. In Khong’s view, “Mo seeks refuge in a manic, ironic voice, that dances round open dissent” (2012).

Link lends further support to his argument by quoting Mo Yan’s *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, a family saga spanning from the Japanese invasion during WWII to contemporary China under a market economy. Link contends that the design of the protagonist, the only male heir in the family, who suffers from a lifetime addiction to breast milk, is so outrageous and ludicrous that it diverts attention away from the true calamities such as the Great Famine from 1958 to 1961. According to Link, “Mo Yan has great fun with the craziness […] Meanwhile, there is *no sign of a famine*” (2012a, italics added).

He reiterated this point in another article on *The New York Review of Books* titled “Why We Should Criticize Mo Yan” (2012b), written in response to Pankaj Mishra’s defence of Mo Yan in *The Guardian* (2012). Link notes, “when he arrives at catastrophic episodes like the Great Leap famine, he deflects attention by resorting to what I call ‘daft hilarity’ […] while making *no mention of starvation* that cost 30 million or more lives” (2012b, italics added). Link highlights the gross negligence on Mo Yan’s part by questioning his readers whether they would laugh along with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the NPL Laureate of 1970, if Solzhenitsyn “instead of exposing the gulag, had cracked jokes about it” (ibid.), leaving out the fact that Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* is a non-fictional historical account about the Soviet labour camps rather than a novel (1973).

The most blatant omission in Link's critique is the very accounts Mo Yan dedicated to the Great Famine in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, with clear indications of the specific historical event addressed, as seen in examples like "In the spring of 1960, when the countryside was littered with the corpses of famine victims […]", along with detailed description of the extremely restricted diet everybody was compelled to follow (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2004: 430). What ensues is the protagonist's witness testimony of the repulsive Pockface Zhang raping his own sister, who was lured into the depth of the woods by a steamed bun on a skewer, because "when a woman is so undernourished that her breasts lie flat on her chest and her periods stops coming, self-respect and chastity cease to exist" (ibid.: 432). As the famine drew to an end, the very same sister died of a ruptured stomach, as her long-starved digestive system could not handle the extra portion of bean cakes her rapist allocated to her as a favour (ibid.: 435-436).

The following section of the same chapter provides another testimony of the famine on the basis of Mo Yan's personal experience, where the protagonist's mother was forced to steal food from the commune mill she worked at by gorging on beans and throwing them up at home to feed the children (ibid.: 439-441). These depictions of the famine could count as some of the most harrowing scenes throughout the book, and they can hardly be described as "daft hilarity". For Mo Yan, a writer who claims his childhood experience of "hunger and loneliness" as his muse, descriptions of starvation during the famine are unlikely to be wanting in his works. If Link were to weigh the disturbing violence and sufferings in Mo Yan's works as seriously as he does those farcical episodes, he might at least pause before he boldly places "Jin Yong (the Hong Kong writer of popular historical martial-arts fiction) above Mo Yan" (2012b).

Some critics, however, did recognise Mo Yan's credits as a distinguished writer. Literary translator Eric Abrahamsen argues that Mo Yan's ability to take historical facts and turn them into "convincing art" is "enough, right there, to win the Nobel" (cited in Branigan, 2012a); SOAS professor of Chinese Michel Hockx comments that "choosing a dissident is the safe choice", while "to choose an author with a strong literary reputation, because of the strength and power of his work, is a very brave choice" (cited in Flood, 2012a). In his article on *The Guardian*, Pankaj Mishra questions whether Mo Yan really stands alone in his reservations from challenging the institution he works in and benefits from, or if he has been subjected to a "selective humanism" applied by the western critics (2012). These critics willingly overlook the wars their countries wage on others in history or the present day, along with the complicity with their own government that some of their most renowned writers are guilty of.

Indeed, the extra burden placed on Mo Yan being a writer surviving under the Communist rule seems to be a rather exclusive expectation. As a writer disinclined to give political statements but nevertheless situated at the centre of a media storm, Mo Yan hoped that "once the new laureate is announced, no one will pay attention to [him] anymore" (cited in Shi, 2013). Meanwhile, the 2013 NPL laureate Alice Munro, a Canadian short story writer, was reported to be "anything but a political author", but instead of being chastised for her lack of political commitment, she was acclaimed for being "a writer's writer and not a talk show fixture with an opinion about everything under the sun" (Chase, 2013). Juxtaposed with a piece written one year before by a journalist from the very same news agency – Deutsche Welle, Mo Yan's disinclination when it comes to political side-taking is interpreted as a "failure to use his influence to speak up for political prisoners and dissidents" (Connor, 2012).

An overview of the media responses received by Gao and Mo Yan after their respective triumph in the Nobel contest has demonstrated that the two Chinese-language writers have been significantly politicised in the Anglophone media, and the subsequent public interest in them is not entirely directed at their literary works. This distinctively political focus informs the perspective adopted in the current study, especially when it comes to the example analysis based on the textual comparison between Chinese and English versions of Mo Yan and Gao's novels (cf. Chapter 3 and 4).

### 0.3.5 Introducing Mabel Lee

Born in 1939, Mabel Lee is a third-generation Chinese immigrant to Australia (Ouyang and Lee, 2014; Wai and Lee, 1998). Her father was born in Australia but taken back to his hometown Doumen in Guangdong Province as a child, which is also where Lee's three elder siblings were born. Lee was born in Australia shortly after the whole family relocated there. Growing up in a Cantonese family in Australia, Lee spoke Cantonese and English as her mother tongues. She later majored in Chinese at the University of Sydney, where she completed her BA, MA and PhD degree. Despite being a university student majoring in Chinese, Lee's BA education was mainly focused on the reading of Chinese classical texts, showing little concern with modern Chinese. It was only after she met a Chinese monk who encouraged her to memorise Chinese texts that she started to develop confidence in speaking Chinese.

For a long time, Lee never showed any interest in literature, but used Chinese literary texts as either language learning or historical research materials. Her PhD project was on Chinese intellectual history in the Late Qing Dynasty. The writer who first inspired her interest in literature for its own sake was one of the greatest modern Chinese writers – Lu Xun. After her graduation in 1966, Lee stayed in the faculty and devoted herself to establishing a programme for modern Chinese at the University of Sydney. With little available teaching resources, she compiled her own textbooks. There she remained for the rest of her academic career until her retirement from teaching in 2000.

Lee first met Gao in Paris on 23 March 1991, when she was taken to Gao's flat and personally introduced by the poet Yang Lian (Liu, 2012). By that time, Lee had already translated and published two volumes of Yang's poetry collection and finished another translated manuscript. Yang was the first writer she ever translated for. He had also been introduced to Lee through a common friend, when he was living in exile in New Zealand. Throughout Lee's translation endeavours, she has only translated for three other writers apart from Gao, all of whom are poets and personal friends. Although Lee's translation of Gao started with one of his novels, she always considered his fictional work to be "a very long poem" (ibid.: 5).

At this first meeting between the two, Gao gave a copy of *Lingshan* (Soul Mountain) to Lee as a gift. The novel had just been published in Taiwan the year before. While flipping through it, Lee was moved by the poetic quality of Gao's language and offered to translate it into English, a suggestion Gao gladly consented to. After taking on the project, Lee was appointed Head of the School of Asian Studies and was only able to work on the translation after the post terminated in 1993. Even then, she still had 9-hour teaching weeks while working as a co-editor on two university series and one academic journal. She found it difficult to do any translation except on the weekends and finished the project in 1998, when the manuscript was submitted to an Australian literary agent to secure a publisher. It took almost two years before this first English version of Gao's novel could be put to print, even though the initial reader's report from Harper Collins was described as "excellent" by Lee (ibid.: 4).

During the ten years between the publication of the Chinese and English versions of *Soul Mountain*, the Swedish version produced by the Nobel Prize committee member Göran Malmqvist and the French version provided by Noël and Liliane Dutrait were published in 1992 and 1996 respectively. However, Lee adamantly claimed that she never felt the need to contact the other translators of Gao, nor did their later conversations ever touch upon matters of translation (ibid.).

Lee does not identify herself as a translator. In fact, she emphasized on multiple occasions that she never considered herself to be a professional translator. She believes that her primarily academic affiliation allowed her to be highly selective in the works that she translated, only working with authors that she likes and respects. Therefore, in every one of her translation project, she felt a sense of mission, a strong commitment to the author. Combined with her academic background, this commitment urges her to "stick rigidly to the text" and "adhere as closely as possible to the text" (ibid.: 6). She did not approve of the practice of improving a piece of work through translation, because she believed that there is no value in attempting to translate what is badly written in the first place, and posed the question: "If the translator is such a good writer, why not be a writer herself/himself?" (ibid.). It is thus implied that translation is a secondary activity undertaken by those who cannot write as well on their own.

### 0.3.6 Introducing Howard Goldblatt

Howard Goldblatt is reputed to be "the premier English-language translator of contemporary Chinese fiction" in both academic and literary circles (Levitt, 2013); some applauded him for "single-handedly [introducing] contemporary Chinese-language literature to the English-speaking world" (Lingenfelter, 2007); John Updike regarded the field of translating contemporary Chinese fiction as "the lonely province of [this] one man" (2005). Goldblatt's portfolio includes over 50 published translations, the exact number of which even Goldblatt himself has lost track of (Ge, 2011: 98). To illustrate his extensive repertoire, Sinologist Christopher Lupke reckoned that it was entirely possible to design a university module in modern Chinese fiction "using only works that Howard Goldblatt has translated" (2011: 87). Goldblatt's achievement in literary translation has been acknowledged by accolades such as Translation of the Year Award selected by the American Literary Translators Association, three Man Asian Literary Prizes, two translation grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Guggenheim Fellowship (Orbach, 2012).

Goldblatt's primary identity as a literary translator has been so immediately recognisable that it often overshadows his accomplishment as an academic (Lupke, 2011: 86). However, his contribution to Chinese language and literature research can hardly be overlooked either. For his PhD research, Goldblatt chose to study the female writer Xiao Hong, who had been mostly forgotten by the literary world and her own countrymen. His rigorous research into her works and his pioneering translation endeavours led to the rediscovery of this modern Chinese author, who soon afterwards rose to be "the second most studied and written about writer from that period" (Lingenfelter, 2007). Goldblatt moved on to establish the cornerstone of Chinese literary studies in the US by creating the journal *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, as well as editing several volumes of Chinese anthology, including *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* (Lupke, 2011: 86).

When it comes to the start of his translation career, Goldblatt's path does not seem to be a conventional one. Born in 1939 to a "super-low middle class Jewish family" (Orbach, 2012), he described himself as an "absolutely abysmal student" (Lingenfelter, 2007), who was extremely ill-suited "for college or a meaningful life" in his community college years (Goldblatt, 2011). Ironically, the one course that he dropped in college was the one on Asian History, for he found the idea of learning about another language and culture ridiculous when he could hardly manage to read and write English. Things only turned around for him when he joined the American Navy during the Vietnam War, for which he was sent to Taipei with light duties as a communications officer (*China Daily*). Back then, he had no understanding of the name and the geographical concept of Taipei or Taiwan (Lingenfelter, 2007). For the first 30 years of his life, he described himself as "amazingly stupid" (Orbach, 2012), and Chinese only entered his life in his 30s.

Whilst he was settling down in the orient, however, something clicked, and he developed an interest in learning the language and reading. He was trained at the Mandarin Training Center of Taiwan Normal University and would have stayed on for much longer had he not been called back by the emergency of his father's impending death in 1968 (*China Daily*; Stalling, 2014: 2). This time, he returned to his home country "with the first sense of purpose not involving alcohol [he] had ever known" (Goldblatt, 2011). Once back in the US, he started to apply for master programmes in Chinese, and only San Francisco State University gave him an offer. There, he became greatly indebted to a professor Kai-yu Hsu, who made him recite Chinese poetry and recommended him for a PhD programme after graduation. He continued his PhD education in Indiana University, which was considered to be "one of the powerhouses of sinology" (Lupke, 2011: 86). After his graduation, Goldblatt returned to San Francisco State University to teach. Back then, interest in Chinese literature was so rare that he would give away translations for free to be published (Orbach, 2012). Like Mabel Lee, Goldblatt also retired from teaching in 2000 (Orbach, 2012).

Goldblatt believes that translated literature is suffering in America, mainly because of "literalism" (Lingenfelter, 2007). He repeatedly emphasizes the importance of extensive reading in one's own language – English in the case of translators introducing Chinese literature into the US market. While his authors wrote the works for their Chinese-language readers, Goldblatt sees it as his mission to translate for his English-language readers (Stalling, 2014: 9; Sparks and Goldblatt, 2013; Lingenfelter, 2007). According to him, the problem of language style is particularly poignant in the case of working in Chinese-English combination, because the two languages are significantly dissimilar, while translating between European languages often tells you "how" to translate on top of "what" to translate (Sparks and Goldblatt, 2013). Therefore, in contrast with Lee's position, Goldblatt insists that translating Chinese literature "requires a keener sense of creativity" (Kabat, 2008). Consequently, he believes that whatever the style of the translated product is, "lovely, grotesque, or something in between, it is that of the translator, not the author" (Ge, 2011: 99-100), and "anyone who reads Mo Yan in English is reading Goldblatt" (Efthimiatou and Goldblatt, 2012). His mission is to turn Chinese literature into accessible and "even marketable English books" (*The Washington Post*, 2002).

Among Goldblatt's frequent collaborators, Mo Yan must be one of the most prominent and the most translated writers. In 1985, Goldblatt was working on a research project in Harbin, where he first read Mo Yan's short story in a collection. In 1988, when a Hong Kong friend sent him a literary magazine which published *The Garlic Ballads* by Mo Yan, he was "stunned" and "knocked out" by the novel and immediately contacted the writer to seek permission for translation (Efthimiatou and Goldblatt, 2012). Yet shortly after Goldblatt started to work on the translation of *The Garlic Ballads*, he travelled to Taipei and became very seriously ill. While reading to kill time in his hospital bed, he stumbled upon *The Red Sorghum* and decided that "this is absolutely the book to open up Chinese literature to the West" (ibid.). The writer's style has been described by Goldblatt as "robust, rambling, highly imagistic" with "a historical perspective" (Kabat, 2008), a style that suits

Goldblatt very well and reminds him of Charles Dickens (Efthimiatou and Goldblatt, 2012), another writer famous for producing “big, bold works” with “powerful writing and strong moral core” (Goldblatt and Chan, 2012). His collaboration with Mo Yan often involved back and forth communication, with the author patiently providing Goldblatt with “long, descriptive explanations” and even sometimes drawings (Efthimiatou and Goldblatt, 2012).

While acknowledging the immense creative prowess of his writers, Goldblatt also laments over the literary scene in China for the lack of respect paid to the secondary language experts such as editors and translators, who are suffocating in the publishing industry, because writers still retain a romantic idea of their untouchable genius and refuse any interference with their works (Stalling, 2014: 12; Lingenfelter, 2007). The situation is exacerbated by the unusually tolerant Chinese-language readers, who have the patience to wade through bad writing for the sake of a few brilliant ideas (Lingenfelter, 2007). Fortunately for Goldblatt, most of the writers he translates for adopted a different attitude when it comes to their English translations, giving Goldblatt considerable freedom in rendering their works.

Goldblatt considers himself extremely lucky by “stumbling into good opportunities and falling under the tutelage of great teachers” (Kabat, 2008; Sparks and Goldblatt, 2013). His winding path leading up to a prosperous translation career helped him make literary translation his “day job” (Kabat, 2008). According to him, translation is something that he cannot live without (Lingenfelter, 2007), and there is nothing else he “enjoy[s] more” (Ge, 2011: 98).

## 0.4 Corpus and Methodology

This study focuses on the Anglophone translators of Mo Yan and Gao Xingjian’s fiction, Howard Goldblatt and Mabel Lee, and collects evidence from both authors and both translators’ paratextual and metatextual materials. Here, Gerard Genette’s definitions of *paratext* and *metatext* have been adopted. According to Genette, *paratext* refers to the texts reinforcing and accompanying the physical presentation of a literary work, such as titles, subtitles, forewords, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, intertitles, notes, epilogues, and afterwords etc. (1997: xviii). Meanwhile, the boundary of *metatext* is much more ambiguous and inclusive, as the term applies to any commentary on the text in question outside the physical presentation of the text itself, “without necessarily citing it” (ibid.: xix).

An initial textual comparison between the Chinese and English versions of Mo Yan and Gao’s works has been conducted, based on a corpus composed of two novels by Gao that Lee translated – *Soul Mountain* (Gao, 1990; Gao and Lee, 2000) and *One Man’s Bible* (Gao, 1999; Gao and Lee, 2002), and nine novels by Mo Yan that Goldblatt translated (a collection of short stories by Mo Yan, also translated by Goldblatt, has been excluded from this corpus) – *Red Sorghum* (Mo Yan, 1987; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 1993), *The Garlic Ballads* (Mo Yan, 1988a; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 1995), *The Republic of Wine* (Mo Yan, 1992; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2000), *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (Mo Yan, 1996; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2004), *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* (Mo Yan, 2006; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008), *Change* (Mo Yan, 2010; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2010), *Pow!* (Mo Yan, 2003; Mo Yan and Goldblatt 2012), *Sandalwood Death* (Mo Yan, 2001; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2013), *Frog* (Mo Yan, 2009; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2014). Paratextual evidence has been gathered from introductions, prefaces, blurbs, cover designs, translator’s notes, glossary lists etc. found in the above-mentioned books. Metatextual evidence has been collected through an exhaustive research into any published or online news reports, book reviews, lectures, essays and interviews concerning the two translators.

The initial textual comparison aims to identify points of interest and narrow the research focus. Some of the findings at this stage are also incorporated into the thesis. Specifically, the textual comparison has uncovered notable discrepancies between the earliest Chinese editions and the published English versions of *The Garlic Ballads* and *The Republic of Wine*, discrepancies that go far beyond what strategic translation solutions would normally warrant, so these discoveries led to further investigation into the various Chinese editions available before the publication of the English versions, the findings of which are mainly presented in Section 6.1.

After the initial textual comparison, *One Man's Bible* and *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* are selected for more detailed and thorough comparison, due to their similar focus on modern China's political history as well as the sufficiency of translation errors they contain for the discussion of error analysis. These findings are discussed at length in Part II. The diagnosis of translation errors starts from a preliminary identification of translation changes that cannot be explained by a reasonable interpretation of the Chinese versions. These translation changes are further analysed to distinguish those likely to be errors from other potentially more deliberated translation choices, according to an error analysis framework developed for this study. The specific criteria used for the distinction and the method of describing and explaining these errors can be found in Section 2.3.

In addition, metatextual evidence suggests that another novel, *Wolf Totem*, although not composed by Mo Yan but by another bestselling Chinese writer Jiang Rong, was translated by Goldblatt around the same time when he was working on the translation of *Life and Death Are Wearing Out*. Therefore, the Chinese and English versions of this novel were also compared to examine the influence of a different translation project on the current translational action, specifically on the manifestation of translation errors. The findings from this textual comparison are mainly presented in Section 4.3.

Among the metatextual materials, the interview data collected for this study includes a face-to-face interview conducted with one of the translators – Mabel Lee, as well as secondary analysis of all interviews with the two translators, gathered from online and published materials. Interview is employed here as an important qualitative research method. In the following, the merits and pitfalls of interview as a research method are discussed, including the advantages and challenges of using secondary analysis of interview data collected by others.

An interview for qualitative research is defined as "an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry" (Babbie, 2013: 346), and unlike the interview surveys done for quantitative research, qualitative interview is more flexible, personal and continuous, more akin to a conversation. Therefore, although the general themes of inquiry would have been established in advance with the preliminary questions carefully designed, the actual process of face-to-face interview is likely to deviate from the original plan, changing the order of the questions asked and the specific wording of those questions depending on the interviewee's response. For instance, six themes were identified for the interview with Mabel Lee, including personal background, selection of works, translation process, editing process, critical reception and modern Chinese literature. Yet during the interview process, whenever it was observed that the interviewee interpreted the questions differently, refused a particular line of questioning, revealed certain facts previously unknown or misrepresented, the conversation would diverge from the original plan to ensure the most efficient and effective retrieval of information.

Such a face-to-face interview is very helpful for research, as it ensures the maximum validity of data collected, since the questions have been designed specifically for the project at hand and aim to retrieve information that cannot be obtained through other channels. Combined with the close-up observation and follow-up clarification allowed in a personal interaction, it also improves the reliability of information gathered by eliminating third-party mediation. In addition, prolonged, intensive and direct engagement with the subject of the case study can deepen one’s understanding to an extent that is hard to achieve through research into secondary resources alone (ibid.: 353-355).

However, the up-close and personal contact with the subject of study also significantly highlights the ethical concerns of field research. To best fulfil the ethical requirement of interview as a method of social research, a consent form was signed prior to the interviews, clearly indicating the topics to be covered in the interview and the intended use of data. The interviewee was made fully aware that the interview would be recorded and transcribed before being sent to her for further editing and approval. While these procedures were followed through, such ethical considerations also limited the scope of enquiry.

Due to the specific dynamics determined by the power relations between the interviewer and the interviewee, the former an early career researcher and the latter an established and renowned literary translator and Chinese scholar with international recognition, it was deemed unwise to directly and explicitly challenge the interviewee on the quality of her translation. Therefore, although questions were prepared and asked on the book reviews and specific criticisms of Lee’s translations, as well as her processes of translation, editing and proofreading, the responses from the interviewee clearly indicated that she either could not recall specific examples of her translation or was reluctant to discuss her works on such a microscopic level. Since the presentation and use of data had to be approved by the interviewee every step of the way, the topic of translation error was not explicitly addressed in the interview, to avoid sabotaging a field trip funded by the school.

Moreover, only one translator in the case study has been interviewed, because the other translator – Howard Goldblatt refused the interview request. He advised drawing conclusions from "[his] published essays and interviews" (personal communication, 27 March 2015). Meanwhile, Mabel Lee granted two two-hour sessions of interview, which were arranged for the 24th and 25th of September 2015, in Sydney, Australia (see Appendix). Given the limited time frame, the distance of travel and the scarcity of research funds, the interviews were conducted following exhaustive research into any available existing interviews and essays of Lee, to avoid repetition of previously covered information. Therefore, in both cases, secondary analysis of other interviews was deemed necessary.

The advantages of using second-hand interview data are many: it saves time, energy and funding; it can cover a wider range of topics than what one individual can think of; it benefits from information obtained by another interviewer with perhaps better access to the interviewee, due to either different power relations or a better command of interview techniques; it also enhances "the possibility of meta-analysis", according to American sociologist Earl Babbie (2013: 266), with comparison and cross-reference of interviews done in various settings for different purposes.

The challenges of such secondary analysis are also obvious, the most important one being the question of validity. When questions are designed and phrased by a different person for a different purpose, it is difficult to ascertain whether they adequately address the same topics this study aims to investigate. For example, apart from Lily Liu's interview of Lee published in *Translation Review* (2001), Michael

Berry's interview of Goldblatt for *Persimmon* (2002) and Goldblatt's self-interview conducted by his Chinese alter ego Ge Haowen (2011), other interviews with the two translators showed little interest in their translation methods or processes, but mostly focused on their biographical details and their opinions of the authors they translate. Another potential challenge is doubts over reliability, since such secondary resources would inevitably have undergone transcription and very likely editing by the interviewers and the journal editors, and thereby be tinged with their respective biases, subjective interpretation and stylistic preferences. It is hardly possible to verify the impact of such interference on the data presented.

## 0.5 Outline and Scope of Study

The main body of this thesis is divided into three parts. Part One begins with a brief recapitulation of the early translation theories dedicated to the debate of word-for-word vs. sense-for-sense translation methods, before embarking on a critical review of the existing literatures on the three dichotomies selected for this study. The three dichotomies – source vs. target, prescriptive vs. descriptive and translation vs. non-translation are considered to be *supermemes* that have prominently featured in the meta-discussion of translation. The three dichotomies are not equal in status, but they offer an initial frame of reference for the selection of research materials, the design of research methodologies and the conception of the very subject of the discipline respectively; although "prescriptive" approaches were only named and categorised thus following the emergence of DTS, the two are seen as dichotomies because either term in the pair can only be conceptualised in opposition to the other.

The concept of *supermeme* was first introduced into TS by Andrew Chesterman. It is a term Chesterman devised based on Richard Dawkins' coinage *meme*, which is in turn a sociobiological concept proposed as the cultural equivalent of "gene" to illustrate the propagation and evolution of cultural units, such as an idea, a catch phrase, a fashion trend etc., as they spread through a population, comparable to the replication and variation of specific genes (Chesterman, 1997: 5-7). Similar to gene's inherent tendency to mutate, these memes do not necessarily resume an identical form when being passed on from one person to the other, and individuals' interpretation of them may significantly vary. Yet, there should be sufficient similarity among the formulations of these memes across a community to assign them a common denominator. When a denominator is accepted with a particularly high level of generality, it can be classified as a *supermeme* (ibid.: 7-8). Chesterman employed the term *supermeme* as a meta-theoretical tool to group "disparate views of translation" (ibid.: 2). Therefore, the identification of supermemes constitutes a meaningful step towards the evaluation of theories in meta-theoretical terms.

This research project can be seen as a continuation of Chesterman's initiative to conduct an overview of the historical and recent development of TS from a meta-theoretical perspective. Although the five supermemes Chesterman identified in his book are not borrowed *in toto* for the current investigation, this study argues that Chesterman's discussion of supermemes was not exclusive and the term is found to be useful for highlighting the prevalence of these dichotomies that survived long and spread wide, gradually forming distinctive research cultures but nevertheless constantly evolving. By critically engaging with these three dichotomies, this study does *not* proclaim that they are the most important terminologies in TS, but rather, it plans to demonstrate the manifestation of binarism in TS through an initial exploration into these three dichotomies, in order to drive future debate over the quality of TS metalanguage.

This research project also serves as a tribute to the eminent Professor Gideon Toury, who recently passed away. Toury's pioneering efforts in introducing the concept of "assumed translation", establishing a target-oriented framework and promoting a descriptive approach in translation research have set the scene for the investigation of the current study. In his first edition of *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, Toury maintained that his initiative does not aim for “general agreement”, but intends to “stir a debate” that can eventually lead to real progress in the discipline (1995: 5). This piece of research therefore aims to participate in such a debate and hopefully make its humble contribution to advancing the understanding of what Toury has rightfully identified as the fundamental concerns of translation theories – what TS is supposed to study and how researchers should approach their subject.

Following the critical review of existing literatures in TS, this study aims to propose an alternative model primarily informed by Talcott Parsons’ theory of social action and Anthony Giddens’ theory of structuration. Parsons’ theory has been selected for this study because of his systematic discussion on errors as a possible outcome of the *voluntaristic* nature of social action. According to Parsons, the actor’s orientation of action demonstrates consistency due to the longstanding influence of personality, society and culture, but it also remains responsive to the immediate impact of the situation of action (cf. Section 2.1). As for Giddens, his conceptualisation of the different levels of *consciousness* involved in ensuring the continuous flow of most social practices in daily life has proven instrumental in portraying error as a by-product of social knowledge, as opposed to simple negligence or incompetence (cf. Section 2.2).

In light of the insights borrowed from Parsons and Giddens, this study subsequently reviews the existing literatures on translation errors and proposes a tentative framework for their analysis. By recognising error as a relevant research topic in TS, it aims to demonstrate the potential for the integration of and interaction between the descriptive and prescriptive approaches to translation research. This particular section also establishes a working definition for translation error, including a clarification of its relationship with other translation choices and a specification of the criteria for its identification.

Having laid the theoretical foundations, Part Two starts applying the above theoretical framework to the actual case study, focusing on the sociological interpretation of translation errors. Examples of errors are first classified according to the two books they are drawn from, i.e. *One Man's Bible* by Gao and Lee and *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* by Mo Yan and Goldblatt. After the initial analysis of case study evidence, a classification of translation errors is presented, containing twelve types of error identified from the example analysis. Since this study adopts a sociological approach towards errors, these categories are not formulated on linguistic grounds, but are engaged with Parsons' and Giddens' sociological insights on actors' orientation and consciousness.

While Part Two primarily presents evidence collected from the textual comparison between the Chinese and English versions of the two selected novels, Part Three mainly utilises the two authors and translators' paratexts as well as metatexts as research materials. Findings from the case study are presented against the source-target model and the definition of translation against non-translation.

The dichotomy of source vs. target is examined by first questioning the implications in the respective terms of "source text" and "target text". Then the assumption of translation being a unidirectional journey from "source" to "target" will be challenged. Finally, the systematic associations inspired by other source and target-related terms will be called upon for critical evaluation. When it comes to the dichotomy of translation vs. non-translation, the problem of defining the subject of TS will be addressed from an *a posterior* perspective. Evidence is provided to argue that translation might be more aptly portrayed as a social and interpersonal activity rather than a strictly textual or language-related event. Ultimately, Chapter 7 sets out to answer whether TS researchers need a definition of translation, and what kind of definition they might be in search of. In the end, this thesis is concluded with a summary of research findings and a proposition of potential disciplinary development facilitated by an alternative perspective to the binary models.

# Part I Constructing the Conceptual Scheme

## Chapter 1 Literature Review

### 1.1 Word vs. Sense

In the early stages of translation theorisation, before the subject of investigation came to be recognised as an academic discipline, translation was primarily discussed in translators' commentaries. At that time, there were already early indications of a separation between word and sense as the two main concerns of a translating task, the relationship between which was deemed incompatible from the start.

According to the great Roman orator Cicero, he does not translate [*converti*] as an interpreter [*interpres*], but as an orator [*orator*]. This implies a certain superiority in the role of an orator as someone who performs the force of the language, as opposed to an "interpres" who slavishly doles the words out piece by piece (cited in McElduff, 2013: 112-113). Cicero's preference for the ideas over words offered guidance for many succeeding generations of translators. Jerome quoted Cicero when mounting the defence for his own translation of the Vulgate Bible, claiming that he also renders "sense for sense", not "word for word" (cited in Rebenich, 2002: 101). This is also the method followed by Martin Luther when producing the German version of the sacred text. Luther validates his addition of the word "sola" in translating "sola fide" (by faith alone) by claiming that his intention was to convey "the sense of the text" (1530). This rivalry between word and sense is at the root of the longstanding debate between what is essentially literal and free translation approaches for the centuries to come.

Later, the binarism in viewing translation reached a new peak with the famous paradox of "les belles infidèles", raised in criticisms against the works of the French translator Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt (Salama-Carr, 2009: 406-407). By positioning beauty and fidelity in an antithesis, "les belles infidèles" declares an insolvable dilemma between loyalty to the author and enjoyment for the readers. The "infidelity" of early translation trends, epitomised by the French traditions during the 17th and 18th century (ibid.), has been vehemently criticised by many, including Vladimir Nabokov. He expressed his "spasms of helpless fury" in reaction to free translations and contended that "the clumsiest literal translation is a thousand times more useful than the prettiest paraphrase" (1955: 113).

Friedrich Schleiermacher further elaborated on the unbridgeable chasm between the author and the readers, by categorically announcing that "there are only two possibilities" in translation – either bringing the reader to the author or bringing the author to the reader (1813: 49). Schleiermacher further dictated that translators can only follow one path or the other, and any attempt at combining the two methods would utterly defeat the purpose of translation. Not only did he deny the possibility of integrating the two proposed approaches, but he also firmly insisted that "beside these two methods there can exist no third one that might serve some particular end" (ibid.). Adopting his perspective, a translator is caught in an impossible position, facing the inevitable peril of either offending the author or burdening the reader.

Undeniably, when Schleiermacher wrote this article, he had a specific purpose in mind – to refine the German language through translation, and his preference for moving the reader towards the writer was largely motivated by this goal (ibid.: 63). However, his strongly dichotomous perspective left a mark on the later development of TS, and after almost two centuries Lawrence Venuti borrowed from his ideas to develop another pair of canonised binary concepts – domestication and foreignisation (Venuti, 1995: 20).

The persistence of the word vs. sense dichotomy can find its theoretical support in Saussure's division of signs into the *signifier* and the *signified*, or the *form* of a sign and its *content* (Saussure et al., 1966). Structural linguists believe that since languages are constructed on the basis of arbitrary differential relations, different language systems ultimately represent divergent world views with their unique systems of dividing realities in human experience, as epitomised by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Underhill, 2009: 14-19). Thus, the binary opposition between the word and the sense in one language extended to the dichotomous relationship between two languages – the foreign and the domestic languages in translation, generally presumed to be the language of the author and that of the readers respectively.

Therefore, there is a fine distinction between theories dividing either of the two languages involved in a typical translation activity into word and sense and theories dividing translators' concerns into the author's language and the readers' language. Anthony Pym has categorised them as *natural equivalence* and *directional equivalence*, both subsumed under the equivalence paradigm (Pym, 2014: 6-42). While natural equivalence assumes that there are universal components of all human languages prior to any translation initiative, be it the sense, the signification, the *deverbalised* message or the *tertium comparationis*, directional equivalence posits that translational equivalence is directional rather than reciprocal, situational rather than universal, a concept ensuing from a perceived linguistic border in a particular translation scenario. The latter theoretical strand is more closely associated with the source vs. target dichotomy, which is further explained in Section 1.2.

The term binarism, by default, suggests the employment of two concepts, but it does not exclude sets of more than two concepts. As mentioned in Section 0.2, binarism can be "a mode of thought predicated on stable oppositions" ("Binarism", 2015), and this kind of mindset does not necessarily follow the format of an explicit dichotomy. For instance, race binarism can be represented by white vs. non-white, white vs. black dichotomy, but also by a set of colour differences like white vs. yellow/brown/black, etc. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2013: 27). The binarism does not lie in the number of denotations used, but in the opposing relationship established for the involved concepts.

Back in the 17th century, John Dryden proposed the triadic concept of *metaphrase*, *paraphrase* and *imitation*, which can serve as an example here (1680: 38). Although advocating the middle path of paraphrasing to avoid extreme literalism or free adaptation, Dryden's theorisation of a translation task is still grounded in the two main concerns of word and sense. His definition of metaphrase and paraphrase roughly corresponds with word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation methods, while imitation describes when the translator betrays both word and sense.

In comparison with the claim that a faithful translation can never be beautiful or that loyalty to the author and the reader can never be combined, Dryden acknowledges that there is a way of keeping the author in mind whilst successfully conveying the sense, thus introducing more possibilities into the discussion of translator's choices. However, without the support of a binary perspective, it is hardly possible to determine what metaphrase, paraphrase or imitation actually means. For instance, if rather than just word and sense, a translator also attaches great significance to sound, register, genre etc., he/she might need to adopt a variety of strategies that can range from transliteration to rewriting, all in one text.

A much more refined differentiation of translation methods was adopted by linguists in the 1950s, pioneering the systematic theorisation of translation. Vinay and Darbelnet's seminal article outlined the seven methods or procedures of translating, which can be used in isolation or in combination with each other, on the basis of different stylistic effects a translator aims to produce (1958). Vinay and Darbelnet further acknowledged potential ambiguities and hybridities in the actual application of the methods, by explicitly stating that the translation of one sentence or even one phrase can involve multiple procedures (ibid.: 41-42). However, the overarching principle of discussing translation procedures was again proposed in a dichotomy – *direct* and *oblique* translation, which did not break ties with the age-old literal vs. free binarism. In fact, the seven translation procedures were neatly classified into *direct* (borrowing, calque and literal translation) and *oblique* (transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation) categories, and it seemed to be implied that combination only occurs within either category.

It then becomes debatable whether procedures can be combined across the boundaries of direct and oblique translation, whether there are overlapping aspects of the seven procedures, or whether there are other translation methods not yet covered, especially if this model is to be taken beyond the language pair of French and English. For instance, transliteration from English into Chinese almost automatically involves both borrowing and at least equivalence or adaptation. Since a concept is moving from an alphabetic language into an ideographic language, the Chinese transliteration always acquires extra connotations carried by the chosen characters, besides sounding similar phonetically. Numerous successful transliterations have demonstrated that borrowing in the case of English-Chinese translation almost certainly requires a certain extent of cultural adaptation, for instance, translating "Coca Cola" as "可口可乐" (pronounced as "ke kou ke le" and meaning "delicious and happy"), or translating "humour" as "幽默" (pronounced as "you mo" and meaning "subtle and tacit").

As linguists heralded the establishment of TS as an emerging academic discipline, the trend of dichotomies refused to die down. In fact, new dichotomies started to flourish, such as Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence (1964), Catford's formal correspondence and textual equivalence (1965), House's overt and covert translation (1977), Newmark's semantic and communicative translation (1981), Nord's documentary and instrumental translation (1997), Levý's illusionist and anti-illusionist translation (Levý and Jettmarová, 2011), amongst others. Admittedly, each pair of terms approached the issue with slightly different perspectives, but almost all the various phrasings were deeply rooted in the age-old dichotomy of "word-for-word" versus "sense-for-sense" translation methods (Venuti, 2012: 136).

Moreover, it is evident from the early linguistic approaches towards translation that the translator's role has been returned to its inferior position assigned by Cicero and Horace, who belittles "the faithfulness of a translator" [*fidus interpres*] (Horace, 20BC: 15). According to Vinay and Dalbernet, reinventing the language is not the responsibility of translators, who should resort to "traditional forms of expression", and only writers should take the credit or blame for the success and failure of linguistic innovation (1958: 38). Meanwhile, the role of translators as envisioned by German philosophers, such as Schleiermacher and Benjamin did not generate significant impact in the field until English translations of their writings were made available towards the end of the century (Snell-Hornby, 2006: x). The depreciation of translators' role by the Linguistic School later became the primary driving force for the Cultural Turn and the descriptive paradigm in TS (ibid.: 47-50), which employed telling phrasings such as "manipulation", "rewriting", "power" etc. as a resistance against the image of the faithful translator. This resistance movement is discussed more specifically in Section 1.3.

The above dichotomy, however, has become largely irrelevant before the turn of the century. Therefore, this study is not going to dwell on the historical debate over the word vs. sense dichotomy. Instead, through tracing the origin of the discipline, this study argues that TS, like most intellectual inquiries of the human mind, has been built upon binarism, and this early binary perspective continues to influence some of the assumptions taken for granted in the field today. In the following section, this literature review focuses on the three dichotomies deemed to be still highly relevant and prevalent today.

## 1.2 Source vs. Target

The dominance of the source vs. target dichotomy has been identified by Chesterman as the first "supermeme" in TS (1997: 3-4), but there is no entry of any source or target-related terms in Baker and Saldanha's *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (2009) or Gambier and van Doorslaer's four volumes of *Handbook of Translation Studies* (2010-2013), which are deemed to be two of the most authoritative references in the field. Despite the lack of definition in *Routledge Encyclopedia* and *Handbook*, the terms have been frequently referred to throughout both books. In fact, the source vs. target dichotomy is regarded as a concept so standardised and established in the discipline that the two pairs of sub-terms source language (SL) and target language (TL), as well as source text (ST) and target text (TT), are listed as the main abbreviations utilised in Munday's *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies* (2009), Palumbo's *Key Terms in Translation Studies* (2009), as well as Shuttleworth and Cowie's *Dictionary of Translation Studies* (1997).

Munday's *Routledge Companion* included brief entries on the terms, equating ST with the "original text" and TT with the text (to be) translated (2009: 228, 231). SL and TL are then correspondingly defined as the language of ST and TT (ibid: 227, 230), and the translation process is seen as the rendering of an ST formulated in an SL into a TT using a TL (ibid.: 235). Palumbo's *Key Terms* also carries similar definitions for ST and TT. He designated TT as "the product of translation" (2009: 112), but instead of associating ST with the "original", he likened it to the "foreign" (ibid.: 108). Considering the succinctness of these entries, especially in comparison to the lengthy expositions on other seemingly self-explanatory terms like "equivalence" (Munday, 2009: 185-186; Palumbo, 2009: 42-44), or the very name of the discipline itself – "translation" (Palumbo, 2009: 122-124), it is safe to say that source and target-related terms are among the very few that translation scholars reached a consensus on and questioned little about. As Shuttleworth noted, they are "very basic terms" and "very standard abbreviations" (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 1997: xv).

These one-line definitions implied many presumptions regarding what is "basic" in translation theorisation, including the corresponding relationships between source text vs. target text and original vs. translation, in addition to their respective attributes of being foreign vs. domestic. Moreover, provided that source and target can proliferate many sub-terms in relation to language, text, culture, audience, readership etc., it creates the impression that all the source factors and target factors form their own enclosed systems. The understanding of "translation" is then closely linked with the transition from a source system into a target system, whether phrased in terms of SL to TL, ST to TT, source culture to target culture or source readership to target readership.

In comparison, Shuttleworth and Cowie's *Dictionary* presented relatively detailed explanations of SL, TL, ST and TT, recognising that although most translators translate from an "acquired language", SL can sometimes be the translators' "native language" (1997: 157, 163), and translation can even occur between the translators' second and third language (ibid.: 163). These special cases disrupted the one-to-one correspondence between source vs. target and foreign vs. domestic. The entries then went further to query the neat correspondence between source vs. target and original vs. translation, stating that *indirect translation* would be an exception, where the source text is not the original text but another translation (ibid.: 157, 158). Now the source vs. target dichotomy no longer matches perfectly onto foreign vs. domestic or original vs. translation, but it still stands in a certain corresponding relationship with them. It has also been indicated that the relationship between a TT and its ST is not always "simple" and "one-to-one", with *pseudo-translation* or translation from multiple sources being typical examples (ibid.: 164).

These scenarios challenged the perception of the source system. However, the source language is still regarded as "one of the systems to which ST belongs", alongside "the source literary, textual and cultural systems" (ibid.: 157). These terms were accepted by default and repetitively employed to define other concepts in TS. Similar to Venuti's fine-tuning of his domestication vs. foreignisation concepts, the binarism does not lie so much in the absolutist interpretation of source and target-related terms, but primarily in the division of relevant factors in translation into the source and target categories in the first place.

Scholars who have proposed alternatives to the source vs. target dichotomy include Pym, who in his book *Exploring Translation Theories* chose the term “start text” over “source text” to denote the text being translated from (2014: 1-2). His primary concern was with the metaphorical implications of the word “source”, one that evokes the pristine imagery of water sources. Pym further developed the ideas found in Shuttleworth and Cowie’s *Dictionary* to complicate the assumptions inherent in the source and target opposition. He suggests the possibility that “start text” may consist of fragments from previously translated texts and questions whether a “target text” can be considered as the final destination like the name suggests, or whether it is merely an intermediate stage in the process leading to further “targets” or goals. Eventually, he wonders if not all texts are “tied up in never-ending translational networks” with no discernible “start” or “end” (ibid.: 2). Despite these very sensible reflections on the implications of the source vs. target dichotomy, Pym deems it sufficient for the purpose of explaining general translation theories to substitute “source text” with his slightly less suggestive term “start text”.

Nida also finds the metaphorical implications of the word “target” rather debatable. He prefers the term “receptor language” instead of “target language”, in order to highlight the decoding efforts on the part of the receiving audience (1975: 98-99). In other words, translation does not shoot at an inanimate “target”; it by default involves two-way communication. Hence, translation is at least partly defined by its reception, rather than merely its relationship with a previous text. Without following it through to the receiving end, the understanding of a translating act cannot be complete.

For Chesterman, the source vs. target dichotomy can find its origin in the Latin etymology of “translation” – *trānslātiō*, a spatial concept, which means to transfer and carry across. His objection to the terms is directed against its implication of movement along a path and thereby evacuation of the original space. Instead, he suggests replacing it with genetic metaphors of propagation, extension and evolution (1997: 3). Chesterman restated a significant point that the two terms allude to a one-off journey in space, a displacement, rather than the potential proliferation of different versions that share certain similarities.

Another supermeme fed by the spatial metaphor is equivalence, a concept of "sameness" that is preserved during the transfer (Chesterman, 1997: 4-5). According to Pym, equivalence is a largely historical idea, one that only flourished following the invention of printing press and the standardisation of vernaculars (2014: 20-21). Prior to that, there was no stable identity attached to a text and thereby no invariant to preserve during the transfer. This was either because texts were mainly circulated in oral form, or because they evolved according to the personal preferences of each copyist and the variations of regional dialects. Without a stable textual and linguistic identity, a source-target model can hardly function either. Although equivalence has become a declining concept in TS since the 1980s (Snell-Hornby, 1988: 22), the source and target-related terms continue to persist.

This study argues that the source vs. target dichotomy is closely intertwined with the concept of equivalence, especially *directional* equivalence, as mentioned briefly in Section 1.1. Contrary to commonly held beliefs in the field, equivalence is a rich concept that does not simply correspond with a source-oriented or linguistic approach (Pym, 2014: 7). Instead, equivalence has been discussed from both the source and target ends, as evidenced by Nida's promotion of dynamic equivalence and Toury's interpretation of equivalence as a "*functional-relational* concept" (Toury, 1995: 86, italics in original).

Even though Toury explicitly stated that his "equivalence" is *not* to be understood as a "target-source relationship" that can be established on the basis of an *invariant*, his approach to textual analysis heavily relies on the identification of *shifts*, another spatial metaphor that can only operate when accompanied by the preconception of an invariant (ibid. 107-110). The attribution of translational shifts to *not* source-oriented equivalence but target-oriented norms only addresses the motivation behind shifts rather than dismantling the idea of a necessary invariant. Toury has also been criticised for reverting to the traditional dichotomies of the Linguistic School for classifying the *initial norm* of translation into “adequacy” in relation to the source text and “acceptability” regarding the target culture (ibid.: 56-57). Therefore, as the term “equivalence” went into decline, its basic assumptions of invariants and transfer left an impact on later theoretical models that adopted the source-target framework.

Chesterman and Pym are not the only researchers to address the presumptions underlying the understanding of translation as “transfer”. In fact, Tymoczko has entertained many possibilities enabled by other etymologies of translation – *rupantar* (change in form) and *anuvad* (speaking after) in Indian languages, *tarjama* (biography; definition) in Arabic, *tapia* (to deconstruct and tell it) in Igbo and *fanyi* (to turn over and exchange) in Chinese (2005: 1087-1088; 2006a: 21-22; 2007: 71-72; 2009: 401-421). Indeed, if these alternative perspectives are allowed to compete with “transfer” in academic circles today, translation might not be viewed as directional, but possibly as more equal, reciprocal and interpersonal.

Elsewhere, Tymoczko also proposed alternatives to the binary traditions in TS. By adopting a deconstructivist perspective that treats all literary works as rewritings and retellings based on previous texts, translation is just a similarly derivative *intertext*. She discusses translation as a metonymic act that instantiates and reifies an audience’s understanding of a language, a literature and a culture with each reiteration. Therefore, translation integrates both source and target concerns, which serves to explain the inconsistencies and contradictions in specific translation strategies (1999: 41-61). Although Tymoczko’s argument is very compelling, her criticism is ultimately targeted at the binarism in literal vs. free or domesticating vs. foreignising methods. For her, the mixed orientations of translators are essentially rooted in the source and target intertextual systems. Nonetheless, Tymoczko’s conceptualisation of *intertext* is helpful for dismantling the assumed integrity of either the original or the translation.

Similarly, Hewson has expressed his discontent with the dichotomy of source vs. target from the standpoint of translation criticism, stating that real-life situations are much more complex than what the terms suggest and criticisms should always recognise translator's double status rather than adopting either source-oriented or target-oriented perspective (2011: 16-17). Yet again, behind the translator's double status is his/her divided loyalty between the source and target systems. To a certain extent, the difficulty in shaking off the age-old dichotomy of literal vs. free translation strategies lies in the insistence on the metalanguage of source and target systems.

As Lambert indicated, the source-target model seems to "reflect a world view in which societies (which are not necessarily nations) are assumed to be *either* this *or* that", while contact between societies or even their static relationships are no longer as clear-cut in the contemporary world (Lambert et al., 2006: 92, italics in original). Instead, in today's world, "most cultures are open and hybrid, often resisting the 'source' and 'target' metaphors" (Delabastita, cited in Crisafulli, 2003: 25). This dichotomy and its binary perspective might be conducive to some research purposes, but it should not be taken for granted in the meta-discussion of translation, especially at the current stage of TS as an interdiscipline. If the emergence of the source vs. target dichotomy is attributed to historical circumstances, it may require revision for describing translation activities in the contemporary age. Case studies into specialised fields of translation practice have demonstrated that many real-life scenarios are posing challenges to the source-target model.

To begin with, Kaisa Koskinen's process-oriented study into the EU's translation demonstrates that textual production in the EU has been a process in flux, constituted by numerous drafts and revisions with no definable starting point or finishing line (Koskinen, 2008: 121). The various versions of documents are only "momentarily stabilized" snapshots of this "constant flow". Situated amidst this intertextual network, translators have not just one source text available but multiple *resources* in the form of previously translated documents and undocumented discussions. Their translated versions will, in turn, serve as the source materials for future texts and further action. In addition, translators are potentially involved in the process of rewriting as well as consultation with “text originators” and revisers, thereby assuming a role in generating both “source” and “target” texts (Pym, 2000: 6). Such translation projects are often collective efforts and are characterised by back-and-forth revision and neutralisation of individual styles (Koskinen, 2000a: 88-89). The implied textual directionality from “source” to “target” is thus replaced by interpersonal relationships characterised by multi-directional communication.

Apart from these pragmatic challenges, the institutional setting of EU and its policy of linguistic equality demands that all multilingual documents are *not* treated as translations of any source material but different “language versions” simultaneously drafted and endowed with the same legal status (Koskinen, 2000b). The ideal of linguistic equality is, however, an illusion. This is because most documents are initially drafted and primarily read in the two *lingua francas* – French and English. In order to maintain this “illusion of multilingualism”, the various language versions are valued for their existence, instead of their quality or readability. It is suspected that many language versions are simply unread or not expected to be read, questioning the applicability of target-oriented approaches that stress functional equivalence and readership considerations. Moreover, due to EU’s highly restricted interpretation of equivalence as formal correspondence, the multilingual documents feature an artificially constructed linguistic form known as “Eurospeak”, which emphasizes visual similarity rather than norms in the “target” language or culture. Therefore, documents circulated within the EU institutions are *intracultural* translations, aiming at specialists within the institution, thereby loyal to neither the source nor the target system.

Also situated in institutional settings is marketing translation, a specialised field with its unique challenges for the source vs. target dichotomy. Carmen Millán-Varela’s research into the *Cornetto* Campaign has categorised marketing translation into international adverts and local adverts, with the former being multilingual adverts with identical visual content and corresponding texts, and the latter being localised adverts especially designed for specific audiences (2004). According to Millán-Varela, the international *Cornetto* adverts were released almost simultaneously around the world. Therefore, the identification of "original" text becomes problematic and the international adverts are thus treated as parallel texts. As for the local adverts, the identification of any "source" seems even more out of reach. They carry no comparable texts but form part of "a 'family' of intertextually linked adverts" united by one product and its company values (ibid.: 252). In her study, the dichotomous concepts of "source" and "target" "no longer seem to matter" (ibid.: 256).

Despite the numerous findings debunking the assumptions of the dichotomy, both Koskinen and Millán-Varela returned to the source-target model in their research, rationalising their discoveries as special cases of the source-target framework, either in spite of the "sometimes intentional and politically necessary fuzziness of the source text" (Koskinen, 2000b: 56), or in terms of intersemiotic translation where the "source" is a specific product and "faithfulness" is directed at the company's values (Millán-Varela, 2004: 265-266). Therefore, source and target-related concepts persisted as the most basic and standard terms in TS even without the proportionate explanatory value. However, this study argues that translation research *can* be framed by alternative models free from source and target-related terms. Studies such as translation in the EU and international marketing campaigns can help re-evaluate and revise the metalanguage of translation theorisation.

In addition to in-house translators, cases of self-translation also help to re-examine the assumptions of the source vs. target dichotomy (Grutman, 2009b; Grutman and Bolderen, 2014; Hokenson and Munson, 2007). First of all, since the roles of author and translator merged into one, self-translation evidently defies the metaphor of directionality or spatial movement implied by the source-target model. Secondly, as most literary self-translators are bilinguals in the sense that they practise "the alternate use of two languages" and possess "the sensation of being at ease" with both (Hokenson and Munson, 2007: 12, 211), the correspondence between source vs. target and foreign vs. domestic becomes redundant if not misleading. Thirdly, the chronological order of initial composition and self-translation(s) is often difficult to chart, not to mention verified occasions where both versions were concurrently created (also known as "simultaneous self-translations") (Grutman, 2009b: 259), thereby disrupting the correspondence between source vs. target and original vs. translation. Fourthly, due to the "original" quality of both versions, bilingual readers are more prone to read and savour both, further blurring the boundary between the source and target systems. Fifthly, in cases where the author-translator is a migrant or even an exiled writer, or where the site of the translating action is a diglossic community, the assumed correspondence between text, language and culture becomes highly problematic. This is because subjects on both the producing and receiving ends are hybridised and *intercultural* beings, who are resistant to any monolingual or homogeneous categories.

Compared to the institutional settings of EU and marketing translations, the current study into translating the Chinese Nobel Laureates in Literature focuses on the most canonised genre in translation theories – literary translation. In comparison with the self-translation cases, this study investigates a more prototypical model of translating *the other*, involving multiple social agents and interactive action.

For the purpose of this study, "Chinese version(s)" and "English version(s)" will be used instead of "source text" and "target text" or "original" and "translation" to refer to the novels published in either language. This decision is informed by several reasons. Firstly, the diction of "version" is stripped of the sense of singularity and directionality implied by "source" and "target", thereby averting either heavily source/originality-oriented or target/function-oriented approach and presenting each intermediate text as carrying potentially equal significance in translation research. Secondly, the designation of "Chinese" and "English" does not exclude the possibility of other versions, be it oral history, different editions in the same language or texts in other languages, which allows room for an extensive translational network. Thirdly, by resorting to the language the text is produced in, these terms bring to the fore a caution that translation is not a spatial concept or even a temporal concept, but embedded in a network of intertextuality deeply rooted in human languages (or other coding systems for multimedia translations). Fourthly, although some might argue that Chinese and English as two different languages can still constitute a stable opposition, the terms are less prone to inspire systemic associations because their contrast is unlikely to be portrayed as contraries or opposites. To elaborate the last point, in comparison to source and target-related terms, it should be evident that there are other linguistic categories in the world besides Chinese and English. Therefore, any textual, literary, cultural or readership-related feature must *not* be categorised as either Chinese or English but should be able to crosscut national, social, communal, ethnic or even linguistic borders.

## 1.3 Prescriptive vs. Descriptive

The term "Descriptive Translation Studies" or DTS first appeared in Holmes' seminal paper "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies" (1972: 180-192), subsumed under the branch of "pure translation studies", as opposed to "applied translation studies". Meanwhile, in Holmes' map, DTS is also distinguished from the theoretical branch, posing as an empirical approach covering product-oriented, process-oriented and function-oriented studies. The significant contribution of Holmes' article not only lies in its manifesto for the independence of TS as an academic discipline and its establishment of the discipline’s name but also in heralding the rise of DTS as a paradigm shift in the 70s (Hermans, 1985: 10).

The background of DTS’s development is relevant here. DTS, specifically, aims to address translation’s ancillary status in Linguistics serving mainly practical purposes of producing better translations and training better translators (Brownlie, 2009: 77), as well as its marginal position in Literary Studies, deemed inferior to the artistic genius of original works (Hermans, 1985: 7). Therefore, it sets out to establish the study of translation as an academic discipline that breaks free from its subservience to an unattainable ideal of equivalence. To a certain extent, it was proposed as a resistance movement, one that was nonetheless entrapped by the binary opposition and systemic association between the dichotomies of target and source, theory and practice, objective and subjective, description and prescription.

As the name suggests, DTS focuses on the description of what translation *is* rather than the prescription of what translation *should* be (Hermans, 1999a: 6). In reaction against the equivalence paradigm, which led to little consensus on what type of equivalence translation should strive for or indeed what sort of equivalence warrants the definition of translation as opposed to non-translations, DTS attempted to reinvent “equivalence” as “a *functional-relational* concept”, irrespective of the textual-linguistic representations (Toury, 1995: 86, italics in original). In other words, any textual relationship is potentially equivalent, and any text can be assumed to be a translation, the potential or assumption of which is realised in real-life cultural contexts. As to the cultural context in question, Toury stressed on more than one occasion that translation strictly belongs in the target system (1980: 16, 83; 1995: 12, 29). Hence, DTS is also widely known as the “target-oriented” approach (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 1997: 164-165; Brownlie, 2009: 77; Rosa, 2010: 97).

This vigorous campaign for locating translation in the target system *alone* might be interpreted as a drastic measure of correcting the source-oriented tradition, and it has been rightfully criticised by many for its bias (Munday, 2009: 180-181; Brownlie, 2009: 78). Pym advocates releasing the explanation of translation from either source or target causes, for both sides represent an oversimplified view of the complex settings in real-life situations (1998: 143-159; 2014: 81). As argued in the previous section, as boundaries between cultures are fuzzy, and cultures themselves are heterogeneous, translation activities are highly likely to entail more than two cultures, let alone one. Even the effects of a translation product are not confined to the "target system". This point is well illustrated by Goldblatt's translations of Xiao Hong's works that led to China's rediscovery of a female author, who was previously unknown to her own countrymen (Levitt, 2013).

Besides its target orientation, DTS promises to stay "quite apart from any direct practical application" (Holmes, 1972: 184), with no concern for effecting "changes in the world of our experience" (Toury, 1995: 17), and without any attempt at interfering "directly with the practice of translation" (Hermans, 1999b: 65). Behind their decisive divorce of the "pure" research branch from its practical applications was an urgency to establish TS as a scholarly discipline. However, as translation theories vow to steer clear of instructing translators' practice, "a yawning gap between theory and practice" begins to develop in an intellectual discussion that was initiated by practising translators themselves (Chesterman and Wagner, 2002: 1).

The image of translation scholars living high up in the ivory tower, detached from actual translation activities, has prompted Goldblatt to comment that "literary translation can be taught just so long as theory doesn't get in the way" (Ge, 2011: 100). In fact, this gap has inspired more than scepticism on the part of practising translators, but at times even mistrust and dread when being approached by translation theorists. While sharing his experience of being a popular research subject, Goldblatt admitted that he "seldom read[s] and never respond[s] to these [research works]" and even "shudder[s] to think" what conclusions the theorists might draw (ibid.: 99).

Is there really such an unbridgeable chasm between academic circles and the translation industry? In fact, Toury’s concept of norm already embodies both descriptive and prescriptive elements. Norm is defined as the “translation of general values or ideas shared by a community” regarding right and wrong, good and bad into “*performance instructions*” (Toury, 1995: 54-55, italics added). Although DTS places “norm” in the middle ground between absolute rules and pure idiosyncrasies, thereby not binding in any definite sense, any description of such “performance instructions” governing the current translation industry could be informative for translator training and translation criticism. It is even potentially helpful for developing translation aids and formulating translation policy. Since the objective of DTS is to establish TS as an empirical science that is explanatory and *predictive* of translation phenomena (Hempel, cited in Toury, 1995: 9), its “pure” description of the normative forces in translation practice might entail prescriptive elements by predicting the effects generated by different translation behaviours. In other words, DTS might refrain from prescribing what a good translation *should* be, but nonetheless provides guidelines on how best to translate in a particular social context for achieving the desired effect (Chesterman, 1999).

Another questionable notion in DTS is its claim to objectivity. In its appeal for a disciplinary status as an empirical science, DTS advocates freedom from speculative and prescriptive “value judgments” in both the selection of subject matter and in the presentation of research findings (Toury, 1995: 2). As promising as it sounds, one cannot deny that whilst observing translation activities which take place in a particular system with its normative forces, the translation researcher is situated within a system as well and filters research data through his/her personal preconceptions (Arrojo, 2013: 124-126).

Scholars have already postulated that as translation activities are norm-governed, they cannot be value-free (Hermans, 1999b: 58). To liberate translators from the constant suspicion of inadequacy, DTS scholars have declared once and for all that translation is by default a transformative activity. Hermans famously wrote, “All translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose” (1985: 11), while Toury believes translation to be “a teleological activity *par excellence*” (1985: 19, italics in original). Because of similar claims among DTS scholars, DTS is also known as the Manipulation School (Hermans, 1999a: 8). This stance poses an epistemological paradox to DTS – if translators, who for centuries have been striving for a romanticised idea of neutrality and transparency, have come to accept that being a traitor is the *sine qua non* of translation as a form of *rewriting* (Lefevere, 1992: 13), then translation research is none other than another form of translation and rewriting, imbued with the researcher’s value judgements (Hermans, 1999b: 65-66).

Since Holmes proposed the initial framework with its neatly organised divisions in TS, Toury has already clarified that the product, process and function-oriented approaches should not stand in autonomy, but in a complimentary and interdependent relationship with each other (1995: 11). The same is applicable to the interaction between the descriptive and the theoretical branch (ibid.: 15). Yet, Toury’s tolerance for the confluence of the original divisions by Holmes seems to have stopped here, for he clearly states that although the applied extensions of TS can draw insights from its “pure” branch, the task is “up to the *practitioners*, not the scholars” (1995: 17, italics in original). Hopefully, by discussing the problematics in the source and target, theory and practice, objective and subjective dichotomies, this study has posed a challenge to the essential opposition between prescriptive and descriptive approaches as well.

This strict division is not without challenges. Since the Cultural Turn of the 90s, there has been a “politically motivated revival of prescriptive approaches towards translation” (Brownlie, 2009: 79), represented by studies borrowing from Postcolonial and Feminist perspectives. This resurgence of PTS has been coined the “committed approach” (Brownlie, 2010), or the “interventionist approach” (Cheung, 2016: 22-23). This approach has undergone two developmental stages, including the early theories espoused by a particular political commitment and the latter ones recognising the inevitability of political engagement in general.

Accompanying this revival of PTS is “the return to ethics”, for like “prescriptivism”, the concept of “ethics” was rendered a taboo by the fervent resistance of DTS against the traditional equivalence paradigm. As Pym puts it, it “was an unhappy word in those days of over-reaction” (2001: 129). The return to ethics and its attempt at connecting translation theory and practice has cast prescriptivism in a different light. In the following segment, the relationship between the committed or interventionist approach and the ethical issues in translation is explained.

Among the translation theorists identified with the Cultural School, Lawrence Venuti is one of the most influential scholars. As mentioned in Section 1.1, he inherited the legacy of Schleiermacher and devised the dichotomous terms of domestication and foreignisation. Just like Schleiermacher, his preference lies firmly in the latter. Instead of searching for universals and probabilistic laws of translation applicable to the translation phenomenon in general (Baker, 1993: 243; Toury, 1995: 259-280), Venuti formulated his theories with a very specific agenda in mind (1995; 1998). Faced with the marginality of translation in both elite and popular circles, i.e. in both educational institutions and the publishing industry, he dedicated himself to improving the visibility of translation and translators by correcting the tradition of fluent and transparent translations in Anglophone, especially American, literary translation practice.

Although the designation of “domesticating” and “foreignising” translation methods or ethical attitudes is yet to break away from the assumed correspondence between the dichotomies of source vs. target and foreign vs. domestic, Venuti recognises the fundamental decontextualising and domesticating nature, or the “ethnocentric violence” of the translating act (1995: 310). Therefore, his *foreignisation* does not equate to a literal or formal correspondence with the "source text" subscribed to the belief in an ideal equivalence. Instead, it is a rather calculated recontextualisation that introduces linguistic and cultural differences (2013: 34-36). As compared to the source-oriented approach of PTS or the target-oriented approach of DTS, Venuti decisively places the translating subject in an *intercultural* space.

Apart from overcoming the division between the target and source-oriented approaches, Venuti has also bridged the rift between theory and practice, objective and subjective as well as description and prescription. Rather than shunning association with translation practice, Venuti aims for his theories to "carry practical consequences" (1998: 3), and shares his own experiences in literary translation practice to argue his case (ibid. 13-20). Undeterred by DTS' insistence on an objective and value-free stance, Venuti has no qualms about passing judgements on the definition of "good" and "bad" translations, evaluated against the "ethics of difference", which is the translation's ability to minimise ethnocentrism and reveal the heterogeneity of foreign text (ibid.: 81). Also, he did not refrain from dictating what translators and translation should do, but elevated his preference for a foreignising strategy to the ethical level and titled his last chapter of *The Translator's Invisibility* "Call to Action". In this chapter, he offers rather prescriptive instructions demanding that contemporary translators "need to", "should" and "must" work within the target culture codes and also enforce a revision of them in order to improve translators' social status (1995: 311-312). His advocacy for foreignising translation intends to guide translators in bringing about cultural changes in the domestic culture and resisting against the hegemony of English on the global scale.

Similar to Venuti, feminist translators also developed their translation theories on the basis of their own translation practice (Godard, 1990; Lotbinière-Harwood, 1991), which was carried out with the agenda of subverting the patriarchy in their language, literature and society (von Flotow, 1997: 14-34). Therefore, feminist translation theories are also characterised as a committed approach with a practical focus and a partisan motive.

Analogous to the subordinate position of women in history, translation is culturally held in low regard as a discursive practice. The metaphoric connection between gender politics and authorial recognition is epitomised in the popular adage of “les belles infidèles”. It hints at a “double standard” that only suspects the female or the translation of betrayal and infidelity whilst judging the legitimacy of reproduction solely according to the paternal lineage or the authority of the original (Chamberlain, 1988: 456). Confronted with the power asymmetry between different gender identities and various forms of literary (re)creation, feminist translators and translation theorists also sought to increase the visibility of translation practice by promoting creative intervention over self-effacing modesty, a strategy Godard termed as “*womanhandling* the text” (1990: 94).

Both the postcolonial and feminist translation theories have borrowed from Antoine Berman’s views on ethics (Venuti, 1992: 161; Simon, 1996: 33-36). Although perceived as a “revival of prescriptive approaches”, their take on PTS significantly differs from the traditional equivalence paradigm. While returning to the practical implications of theories, a committed intervention in discussing translation and maybe even prescriptive instructions directed at the actual performance of translators, these “committed approaches” reinterpreted the concept of *fidelity* as oriented towards neither the source texts nor the target norms, neither the author nor the readers. Instead, it is interpreted as a concept illustrated by the translator’ commitment to a translation *project* with its specific goals (Berman and von Flotow, 1995: 22-26). These goals are, in turn, defined by the translator’s respect towards both the author and the readers, a respect that can manifest in both dialogue and confrontation, compliance and challenge (ibid.: 42-44). As compared to the atomic categories of source-oriented linguistic approaches, these translation ethics provide holistic guidelines, which can be adapted to the specific context of each translation project.

They allow the employment of a wide range of translation strategies, instead of any predetermined aesthetic standard or translation method. Borrowing Berman's term, the specific translation choices are reserved for the "scriptural autonomy" of the translator (ibid.: 40-41).

The prescriptive component then consists in the requirement that translators remain self-reflective and critical about the effects they aim to achieve. The importance of self-reflexivity has also been stressed by Hermans as a key solution to the "paradoxes and entanglements" of translation description (1999a: 149-150). As committed approaches move into their second stage of theoretical development, self-reflexivity or "critical descriptivism" comes to the fore (Brownlie, 2009: 80). The lack of self-reflexivity is the reason why some of the early committed approaches were criticised for their presuppositions and blind spots.

For instance, on several occasions, Arrojo has commented on the "double standard" of feminist translation theorists in resisting the *manhandling* of texts with an equally biased and violent approach of *womanhandling* (1994, 1995). Far from returning to the traditional belief in translators' neutrality and invisibility, Arrojo highly values the "liberating insights" of feminist theories, but only seeks to problematise the masking of such explicit interventions with yet another claim over their "respect" to the original or another "new" interpretation of fidelity. Tymoczko's widely quoted article "Ideology and the Position of the Translator" targeted the trope of "in-betweenness" in TS, arguing that there is no interstitial space between "source" and "target" culture, or indeed any cultural vacuum. Instead, translation is a political action that is necessarily affiliated with a diversity of ideological engagements (Tymoczko, 2003). The ethics of translation *and* translation research is then exemplified by the self-reflexivity of one's own ideological engagements (Tymoczko, 2007: 139). The attention paid to power relations and ideological engagements in both translation practice and theory has brought about a “power turn” or “ideological turn” in TS (Tymoczko and Gentzler, 2002).

To illustrate the possible integration of descriptive and prescriptive approaches, this study attempts to underscore the potential significance in studying translation errors. The focus of previous research on translation errors has been very limited. Most of the studies have been strictly conducted for the purpose of the applied branch of TS, namely facilitating language teaching, informing translator training, improving translation aids or assisting translation criticism (Wilss, 1982; Pym, 1992a; Bazlik, 2009; Hansen, 2010; Popovic and Ney, 2011). This is reasonable to a certain extent, for DTS sets out to correct previous assumptions of translation as “a second-hand and generally second-rate, *error-prone* and inadequate reproduction” (Rosa, 2010: 96, italics added). This study argues that despite the prescriptive tone inherent in the discussion of “error”, it is an intrinsic feature of translation activities with its own causes and effects. Hence, it deserves the due attention of researchers as any other textual features produced through translation.

Attempts at describing error as a part of real-life translation practice with its own logical explanations are not entirely absent (Kussmaul, 1995: 34-37; Malmkjær, 2004: 141-156; Venuti, 2013: 32-56). However, there are only a few such studies. Besides, there is a lack of a clear definition for “error”, which leads to confusion between the types that prescriptive approaches aim to eliminate and those that descriptive approaches try to justify as conscious strategies. Such a straw man fallacy can be seen in Aveling’s defence of his “deliberate mistakes” as opposed to what he terms as “dumb mistakes” (2002: 2). Therefore, this study seeks to narrow down the range of translation decisions previously classified as errors, substituting the reprehension of translation inadequacies with a relatively objective and focused understanding of translators’ motivation and decision-making process through the lens of errors.

Moreover, this study does not aim to define translation errors, or “wrong translations”, against an ideal “right translation”, but argues that a reasonable consensus can be reached on ascertaining if a translation decision produced an error without prescribing *one* correct answer. Just as errors can take many forms, “right” translations also do not need to follow a pre-existent standard of correctness. In other words, judgments on translation errors should not be confounded with claims about good or bad translations. To demonstrate this stance, the gloss translation provided for the Chinese versions in the textual analysis are labelled as “alternative version” (AV), emphasizing the fact that there is no “closest”, “most literal” or “most adequate” rendition to start with.

A detailed literature review of previous models of error analysis is reserved till the end of Chapter 2, wherein a more refined definition of translation errors is proposed for the purpose of this study. This is done by adopting an empirical, descriptive and explanatory approach to the discussion of translation errors to overcome the dismissive, accusatory and evasive attitude in the field towards error analysis.

## 1.4 Translation vs. Non-translation

The precise definition of translation remains an unsolved case to this day. Attempts at defining translation during the 60s and 70s largely relied on the concept of “equivalence” and the dichotomous relationship between source and target factors. Nida and Taber describe translation as the “reproduction” of the “closest natural equivalent” of the source-language message in the receptor language (1969: 12); Catford interprets it as the “replacement” of source-language textual material with “the equivalent material” in the target language (1965: 20).

Since the concept of “equivalence” is perceived as relative rather than definitive and its interpretation itself encountered discord (Koller, 1995), the definition of translation has shifted its centre to the “target” side. Consequently, the act of translation is not as much a “*re*production” or “*re*placement” but a production in its own right. For instance, Vermeer’s account of the meaning of translation is “to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances” (1987: 29); Nord phrases it in similar terms, stating that translation is “the production of a functional target text” with a relationship to the source text that is stipulated by the *skopos*, a term for the “intended or demanded function of the target text” (2005: 32).

Going beyond the texts, Roman Jakobson has significantly enriched the field of TS, by delineating the object of investigation from the perspective of Semiotics (1959). He stated that translation denotes three types of verbal sign interpretation – interpreting into other signs of the same language, into other languages, or into other nonverbal sign systems. Due to this elucidation by Jakobson, translation scholars are now justified in including into their research focus cinematic and theatrical adaptations (Upton, 2000; Zatlin, 2005; Wilson and Maher, 2012; Bigliazzi, Kofler and Ambrosi, 2013), book cover designs (Sonzogni, 2011), musical representations (Gorlée, 2005), and many more areas that remain to be explored.

Curiously, despite the open-endness of his “translation” process, Jakobson seems to restrict the starting point of a translating endeavour to “verbal signs”. If translation operates on the semiotic level rather than strictly linguistic systems, then there is no reason why the standard shouldn’t be applied both ways, incorporating any form of symbolic action, from performing a piece of music to valuing a painting. This is precisely the position adopted by Millán-Varela when she ascribed the “source” of advertising and localisation to “a specific product” (2004: 265, cf. Section 1.3). Moreover, if language is merely an example of human sign systems, it is scarcely necessary to label “interlingual translation” as *translation proper*, the way Jakobson did when providing his definitions. What could possibly justify interlingual translation as more *proper* than any other type of semiotic translation, once translation moves beyond the realm of language?

Although the term “translation” generally entails both the product and the process (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 1997: 181), the translated product can be designated a secondary concept, portrayed as the outcome of the translating process. The connotation of “translation” as first and foremost an action, which might or might not lead to an end product, can possibly explain why the above attempts at defining the term fixated on its processual aspect. This focus on the initiative action rather than the resulting object has been demonstrated by many other definitions depicting “translation” as transfer (Newmark, 1991: 27), substitution (Grutman 2009a: 182), quotation (Gutt, 1991: 209), recreation (Maher, 2011), representation (Tymoczko, 2007: 111-113), deverbalising and reverbalising (Wilss, 1982: 62), decontextualisation and recontextualisation (House, 2014: 142) etc.

Elsewhere, translation has also been portrayed as a product, most notably in Toury’s proposal of “assumed translation” (1995: 31-35). Acknowledging that translation is a concept characterised by its own variability and mutability as it travels across space and time, Toury objects to a non-cultural and ahistorical definition of translation. He cautions against the potential pitfalls of circular reasoning caused by such a fixed definition, which limits the scope of translation research and closes itself to future revision by choosing objects of study that only serve to reaffirm the established definition. Instead, Toury insists that the concept of translation should stay open to “any target-language utterance which is presented or regarded as such within the target culture, on whatever grounds” (1985:20).

Toury’s understanding of translation also comes with three postulates – the source-text, transfer and relationship postulates (1995: 33-35). Specifically, these postulates posit that what is accepted as a translation is presumed to have a preceding and primary text in another language and culture, certain features of which are preserved in the translated text, now identified with it via some discernible relationship. It is vital that these postulates are not treated as preconditions, which means that a text does not need to be explicitly evaluated against these criteria before being endorsed as a translation. However, a text presented as a translation is assumed to possess these qualities until proven otherwise. In other words, their relevance to real-life translation phenomena is not their verification or even their verifiability, but implications of their hypothesis.

To illustrate his argument, Toury employed the example of pseudotranslation, texts that are presented as translations but nonetheless never underwent any "transfer operations" and bore no corresponding relationship with any identifiable source text (1995: 40-52). They are included in translation research not because they are still recognised as "*genuine* translations" today (ibid.: 40, italics in original), but because the false assumptions invested in them can shed light on translation's general position in a cultural context.

As one celebrates the expanding disciplinary purview enabled by this perspective, there are several doubts regarding Toury's definition. His relativised version of translation has provoked plenty of criticisms (Halverson, 2008: 344). It is suspected of inspiring a tautological debate – if "translation" equals whatever is accepted as translation in the target culture, "on whatever grounds", then no claims can be safely made on the correspondence between various terms for "translation" in different languages (Hermans, 1997: 19). After all, without a relatively enduring consensus of what translation is, it becomes nearly impossible to determine whether the target-language utterance is presented or regarded as a piece of *translation* within the target culture when it does not go by the English term "translation".

Moreover, what is accepted as "translation" in an English-speaking culture can be further problematised by the polysemous nature of the term itself. The wide range of meanings embodied by the word "translation" allows it to be used in expressions such as "the translation of words into action", "the translation of the relics of St Cuthbert", "the translation of RNA into protein" and many more, the scope of which is hardly imaginable given its commonly deemed equivalent term in Chinese – *fanyi*.

It is worth noting that whilst handing over the definition of translation to each cultural context and including objects of study that might otherwise be rejected by previous equivalence-based definitions, Toury also acknowledges studies into what “could have *plausibly* been regarded as translations but which were not” (1995: 32, italics added). This then prompts the question of what criteria are consulted in order to make the judgement on a *plausible* translation that is otherwise not recognised in the target culture.

When Toury introduced his seemingly liberating perception of translation, it is doubtful whether he truly relinquished the ideal type of translation as conceived by early linguistic approaches. It is debatable whether there could be a double standard that bestows translation status to “any target-language utterance which is presented or regarded as such within the target culture, on whatever grounds” (Toury, 1985:20) but somehow questions the target culture’s judgement on any target-language utterance presented or regarded as *non-translation*. Similar to Jakobson’s decision in portraying interlingual translation as *translation proper*, Toury also seems to harbour remnants of a commonsensical and universalising perception of translation.

In comparison to previous definitions, Toury’s *assumed translation* cannot be easily summarised by a pithy dictionary entry, but his approach to the definition of translation has raised one thorny question – what does it mean to define translation? To address the question, it is perhaps essential to first clarify what it means to *define*, or what the definition of “definition” is. It is then useful to analyse what the object of definition is: a *thing*, a *word* or a *concept* (Robinson, 1950: 7).

In the philosophical tradition of Aristotle’s metaphysics, the act of definition aims at capturing the “essence of that *thing*” (Code, 1999: 52-53, italics added). This is further elaborated by John Milton, who sees definition as “that which refines the pure essence of *things* from the circumstance” (1738: 227, italics added). Such an approach conceives the object of definition as *things* located in an objective reality, and the purpose of a definition is to uncover its “essence” or the “truth”. This belief has inspired early-day definitions of translation based on the ideal of equivalence, posing translation against what is inadequate and non-equivalent transfer, typically represented by Nida and Taber’s adherence to the “closest natural equivalent” (1969: 12).

At this stage, debates over what translation *is* seek to identify the distinction between *translation* and its adjacent concepts, such as adaptation, annotation and imitation. Borrowing Milton’s words, it is about the refinement of the pure essence of *translation* from its circumstance. Besides claiming to extract the essential from the inessential in real-life translation activities, these definitions present a binary opposition between the *equivalent* reproduction and all that is *non-equivalent*, thus implying the discrete categorisation of a process or a product as either *translation* or *non-translation*. This perspective on defining translation has been described as “objectivism”, “positivism”, or “essentialism” (Halverson, 2010: 378; Chesterman and Arrojo, 2000: 151). The most urgent matter in essentialist approaches is to determine what the “essence” of translation is, the form or the content, the message or the expression, the meaning or the style. Therefore, this definitional approach has contributed to the dichotomous division between word and sense.

However, these definitions were eventually discarded by TS, not just because consensus could not be reached regarding what the “essence” is, but also due to the fact that advocates of such definitions are confronted with the obvious question of how to handle discrepancies between the theory and the practice – those exceptions that fail to fulfil the *a priori* standard of equivalence, but nonetheless still function as translations in society. According to Toury, their solution was to justify the incorporation of such cases into TS “by means of ‘semantic games’ around the word ‘translation’ (such as ‘literal translation’, ‘interlinear translation’, etc.)” (1980: 40).

These “non-equivalents” have been incorporated into the functionalist approach towards defining *translation*, as it substitutes the prescriptive criteria of “equivalence” with the conventions of particular *text-types* and the fulfilment of specific *skopos* (Reiss, 1971; Reiss and Vermeer, 2013). Although the functionalist approach rejects the notion of an “essence” within the “source text”, it nonetheless perceives *translation* as *things* anchored in the objective reality, as products or processes essentially characterised by a target orientation. These definitions are confronted with the same dilemma of reconciling theory with practice, which can potentially involve translation processes executed in a source setting for a source purpose or translation products that strive for objectives beyond the communication with target addressees in target circumstances. The exclusive fixation and overemphasis on the target factors have further reinforced the source vs. target dichotomy.

Proposing another definition of “definition”, Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote, “Definitions are rules for the translation of one language into another” (1922: 59). His contemporary German philosopher Rudolf Carnap holds that “a definition is a rule for mutual transformation of words in the same language” (Carnap and Black, 1934: 39). The exercise of defining a term is thus closely linked to its translatability across languages and within a language. The act of establishing a definition can also be highly prescriptive in dictating the use of a word, akin to that of instituting a rule.

The challenge in pinning down what translation is probably lies in the fact that the understanding of *translation* itself is inevitably entangled with issues of translatability and knowability. As Sandra Halverson explained, discussions over the definition of translation are immediately relevant to the “fundamental issues concerning how one views the world and things in it, the feasibility or appropriate means of knowing anything about that world” (2010: 378). In a way, *translation* bears considerable similarities to *definition*: neither is involved in the “*primary* activity of using symbols”, but participates in the “subsequent process that reflects on the use of symbols” (Robinson, 1950: 13, italics in original). Once metaphorically aligned with definitional behaviours or general cognitive and symbolic activities, the connotations of *translation* exponentially increased. This has been illustrated by Jakobson’s extension of what translation is to include paraphrasing and multimedia adaptations. Such a perspective was extraordinary considering the humble origins of translation theorisation.

Following Jakobson’s seminal article, many scholars have committed themselves to widening the scope of translation research, with Susanne Göpferich being an exemplar (2007). She has appealed for the integration of Transfer Studies into Translation Studies by including any form of mediated offers of information into the concept of *translation*, such as text optimisation and adaptation. However, the readers are still left unconvinced as regards to why the understanding of what *translation* is should assimilate phenomena previously designated as “editing” and “rewriting”, rather than the other way around as suggested by Lefevere, or why Translation Studies should incorporate the emerging field of Transfer Studies instead of being subsumed under what appears to be the hypernym of *translation*.

The prospect of Jakobson’s definitional approach seems to be dangerously broad. If TS were to completely break free from its textual constraints and linguistic boundaries by embracing Jakobson’s definition, then it is no longer simply an interdisciplinary inquiry, but an all-encompassing field. If *translation* applies to any intralingual interpretation, then any form of cognitive processing should be considered as a type of *translation*, starting from the initial formulation of a thought. If *translation* also bears on any intersemiotic interpretation, then soon it may develop in such a diffused manner that scholars tend to branch out into Film Studies, Drama and Theatre Studies, Music Studies and Graphic Designs, risking the disintegration of a still rather underdeveloped academic discipline. In a word, once the subject of investigation becomes potentially everything, there would be little ground for the maintenance of an independent discipline. Nonetheless, to correct the narrow definition of *translation* by previous essentialist approaches, the Jakobsonian approach promises infinite potential for stretching the term *translation* and successfully diverts attention away from the discussion of *non-translations*.

The Jakobsonian definition has moved away from the perception of *translation* as a *thing* located in the material world and approached the object of definition as a *word*, or more precisely as a *sign*. Influenced by Saussure's Structuralist perspective on language, Jakobson asserts that the meaning of a word is not attached to the *thing* but the *sign*. In Saussure's terms, there is no *signified* without the *signifier*. Therefore, Jakobson concludes that "the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further alternative sign" (1959: 232). The same statement can be applied to the definition of "definition", the way mathematicians and philosophers Alfred Whitehead and Bertrand Russell did, when interpreting *definition* as "a declaration that a certain newly-introduced symbol […] is to mean the same as a certain other combination of symbols of which the meaning is already known" (1997: 11).

Once the project of defining *translation* designates the word "translation" as the object of investigation, an inevitable challenge arises – how does the polysemy survive when uprooted from its etymological soil? As seen in Section 1.2, the terms for "translation" in non-Indo-European languages significantly vary in their connotations. Could a *word*-based definition of *translation* reveal the term itself to be untranslatable? Translation Studies' alliance with Transfer Studies (Göpferich, 2007) and Metaphor Studies (Shuttleworth, 2014) largely depends on the term's Latin and Greek roots among Standard Average European (SAE) languages, which are *transferre* and *metapherein* respectively (Chesterman, 2006a: 5). Therefore, the extensive definition of *translation* as a metonymy for any human activity involving sign conversion and symbolic transformation can potentially widen the rift between Western and non-Western thoughts about *translation* (Tymoczko, 2006a).

The awareness of exploiting the word's etymological potential is possibly what prompted Jakobson to designate "interlingual translation" as *translation proper*, a gesture acknowledging the gap between the popular usage of the word in practice and the scope delineated by the theory. Toury's solution for the terminological asymmetry between different languages was to append the three postulates to his *assumed translation*. Toury's definition is considered by Pym as one of the most noteworthy "formal conceptualisations of translation" in the history of translation theories (2007). Pym believes that in order to guarantee the consistency of terminologies for "translation" in different languages, one has to carry at least vague assumptions about what translation is before selecting any object of study. According to Pym, this "preliminary opening to the concept" is termed "a conceptualisation" (ibid.: 153). Pym holds that an inductive approach towards defining translation, such as Halverson's *prototypes* (1998; 2000; 2002), suggests "an ontology without epistemology", in comparison to "formal conceptualisations" adopting a deductive approach.

According to the English philosopher John Stuart Mill, definition can be approached from two perspectives – either the commonly invested meaning in the word in popular usage or the meaning attached to it by the writer or the speaker for the purpose of a particular discourse (1858: 91). Seen from this perspective, *translation* is treated more as a *concept*, an idea that is invested with meaning when being perceived by the general public or a particular author in a certain way. Therefore, instead of a pre-existing understanding of what *translation* is, this type of definition is highly contextualised.

Toury stresses that the three postulates are not objective criteria for certifying the status of a translation but necessary assumptions in readers' minds for perceiving a text as translation. Similarly, Ernst-August Gutt also underlines the receiving subjects of translation, who gave translation its identity by willingly subscribing to a discursive illusion or "a presumption of complete interpretative resemblance" (1991: 186). However, unlike Toury's intention to include *plausible* translation that is *not* essentially labelled as such into TS, Gutt is only interested in what he calls “direct translations”, those explicitly identified as translations.

Pym has also offered one such “formal conceptualisation”. His concept of *translation* consists of two maxims – translational quantity and first-person displacement, which refers to the comparable length of a translated work when juxtaposed with an anterior text and the consistent reference of the first-person pronoun “I” in both the anterior and the current text (2007). Pym intends for the maxims to function in a similar manner as the Grice’s Maxims, in the sense that they do not demand absolute conformity. However, the expectations of them allow specific meanings or *implicatures* to emerge whenever they are violated. To demonstrate the revelatory significance of behaviours deviating from the maxims, Pym offers the example of translators usurping the first-person pronoun to increase their visibility.

Without regarding *translation* as a *thing* or a *word*, the above formal conceptualisations have outlined presumptive ideas associated with the *concept* of *translation*, instead of striving to distinguish *translations* from *non-translations*. The purpose of the proposed assumptions is *not* to certify or disqualify the translation status of a real-life phenomenon, but to identify the key issues of concern in the existing knowledge of translation. In other words, the focus is not on ontology, but epistemology.

Also seeking an alternative to a predetermined definition of translation, Tymoczko has borrowed from Wittgenstein’s theorisation of open concepts such as *game* and categorised these terms as *cluster concepts* (2005; 2007: 83-90). For Tymoczko, *translation* is a typical example of a *cluster concept*. Rather than identifying common features weaving throughout varied types of translation, the relationships between different translations is that of overlapping and crisscrossing similarities. Employing the metaphor of thread-spinning, such *cluster concepts* are bound together not by one fibre that “runs through its whole length”, but by the intertwining of many fibres (Wittgenstein, cited in Tymoczko, 2007: 85).

As for how *translation* is distinguished from any other *cluster concept*, Tymoczko holds that the solution lies in pragmatics (2007: 86). To further explain her argument, Tymoczko cited the obscure examples of “cluster bombs or potato peels” for illustrating that in reality there should be no overlap between terms for *translation* and those for bombs or potato peels in any language in the world. In other words, she has resorted to *common sense* as assistance in differentiating various *cluster concepts* from each other. This again raises epistemological questions regarding the grounds for identifying different terms for *translation* in other languages, similar to the criticisms directed at Toury’s definitional approach as discussed above (Tyulenev, 2014a: 187).

When it comes to actual observation and analysis of the data gathered through the lens of a *cluster concept*, Tymoczko proposes that scholars borrow frames and superordinate categories from other disciplines. By framing translational data, these superordinate categories can lend an interpretive angle to the theoretical analysis and guide researchers to reach insightful conclusions on a previously undefined concept (Tymoczko, 2005: 1090-1091). Hence, what actually enriches the understanding of translation is *a posteriori* revelation instead of *a priori* exposition (Tymoczko, 2007: 86).

Correspondingly, this study does not seek to acquire a one-line definition of *translation* and remains sceptical that such a definitional approach is necessary or advantageous to the intellectual inquiries of TS. Nor does it claim that the concept of *translation* should be applied purely through an inductive model of investigation, without any pre-conceptualisation. In order to move away from binarism in defining *translation*, the focus is shifted from identifying *non-translations* to highlighting the contextual elements of *translation*. Instead of refining translation from its circumstances, as suggested by Milton, the aim of the current definitional approach is to return *translation* to its circumstances.

Whilst acknowledging that the understanding of *translation* varies across languages and cultures, this study argues that there are universal elements in the cross-cultural interpretation of the *concept*, i.e. the concept of *translation* though contextualised is not absolutely relativised. The acknowledgement of universal aspects of worldwide translation phenomenon helps explain the remnants of commonsensical and universalising perceptions of *translation* that are commonly found in previous definitional approaches. This prompted Jakobson to designate a translation *proper*, Toury to distinguish *pseudo*-translation from *genuine* translation, Halverson to design a translation *prototype* and Tymoczko to argue on the basis of common sense.

This universal perspective is firmly grounded in the historical origin of translation activities, arising out of the social demand for overcoming linguistic differences and bridging communicative channels. This universal aspect of *translation* can hopefully provide a rationale for identifying relevant terms in different languages. Therefore, it can be postulated that *translation*, or other terms describing activities initiating from a similar social demand, activates assumptions of linguistic expertise and verbal processing, whether it is written or oral text.

This study is aware of the challenges posed to the definition of *translation* in today's global age, as translation activities become intricately involved with international and real-time news broadcast, film dubbing and subtitling, website localisation and advertising campaigns (O'Hagan and Ashworth, 2002; Cronin, 2003 and 2013; Bassnett, 2014: 125-145), in addition to many interpreting-related issues that this study has not touched upon. However, the evolution of translation practice, its crosscutting with other industries and the increasing demand on versatile translators need *not* directly reflect on the conceptualisation of *translation* itself. In real-life translational events, *translation* only characterises part of the social activities translators are engaged in. In other words, the understanding of what translation *is* should not be dependent on what translators *do*, although the theory and practice of translation share an interdependent relationship.

In an attempt to resolve the binary opposition between translation and non-translation, as well as the previously elaborated dichotomies of word vs. sense, source vs. target and prescriptive vs. descriptive, this study follows Chesterman's initiative in establishing Transla*tor* Studies by adopting a sociological perspective focusing on the agents involved in a translating process (Chesterman, 2009). This is because *entirely* automated machine translation remains to emerge as a pertinent research area within the discipline and concerns altogether different research questions and methods. In the succeeding chapter, a translator-oriented theoretical framework is developed by borrowing from sociological theories.

# Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

## 2.1 Parsons' Theory of Action

### 2.1.1 A Voluntaristic Theory of Action

In his first monograph, *The Structure of Social Action*, Talcott Parsons conducted a critical review of the theoretical trends observed in the historical development of Sociology, namely utilitarianism, positivism and idealism (1968). Parsons has inherited Max Weber's legacy in defining Sociology and outlining its subject matter, by professing that "Sociology… is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of *social action*" (Weber, Roth and Wittich, 1978: 4, italics added). According to Parsons, any one of the three schools of thought alone is insufficient for describing, explaining and predicting social action, although each of them accounts for certain aspects of the social phenomenon.

To begin with, utilitarianism, typically represented by economic theories, positions rationality and free will as the foundation of human behaviour. Consequently, any decision that deviates from the optimal realisation of goals is deemed irrational and thereby only explainable through ignorance or error, attributable to hereditary and environmental factors. However, the individualistic pursuit after self-interest fails to provide reasons for social order, the relatively stable integration of a collective of social beings. The presence of external deterrents and sanctions is an unsatisfactory answer, for explicit laws and regulations can hardly be all-encompassing and the complete reliance on external forces as constraints of free will is impractically resource-consuming. Therefore, Parsons asserts that social action also features non-economic factors, which provides the larger background for the individually calculated action.

In TS, Jiří Levý explicitly portrays translation as a decision-making process, by borrowing from game theory and analogising translational behaviours to strategic moves in a game of chess. What guides translators' decisions at each point of the translating process is the *minimax strategy*, an attempt to achieve "a maximum of effect with a minimum of effort"

(Levý, 1967: 1179). The strategy is then informed by the translators' "*knowledge* of previous decisions" and "the situation which resulted from them" (ibid.: 1172, italics added).

Similar to the utilitarian perspective on social action, the depiction of translation as a strategic decision-making process on the basis of translator's knowledge ignores an important aspect – the norms and values the translators introduce into the situation of their action. Levý's theorisation of translation then allows him to employ "mathematical methods to compute" the translator's decision-making process (ibid.: 1179). It is easy to imagine that such a perspective towards translation would dismiss deviation from the logical solution as *irrational*, and hence inexplicable through action-related determinants.

Parsons cited Vilfredo Pareto's discussion on logical and non-logical actions for illustrating the fact that non-logical or non-rational behaviour does not need to be irrational. This means that even though the means used to achieve the end are not perfectly logical, the behaviour can still be motivated and intelligible (Parsons, 1968: 185-196). This distinction between nonrationality and irrationality allows further exploration into the motivated and intelligible explanations of translation errors, explanations that go beyond simple incompetence or accidental negligence of the translator.

Furthermore, Parsons cautions against the tradition of radical positivism, the assertion that any social phenomenon is explicable by conducting scientific observations and accumulating objective facts. Without a voluntary and subjective component, action becomes merely *behaviour*, governed by the stimulus-response mechanism and determinable by causal relationships in the heredity or the environment. While all actions are behaviours, not all behaviours count as actions. Automatic responses triggered by external stimuli, such as blinking in response to a rapidly approaching object, are simply mechanical processes that are deemed irrelevant to the investigation of Sociology. The disposal of subjective and voluntary elements in social action risks committing reductionism, where the whole is seen as the equivalent of the sum of the parts. Consequently, human motivation is reduced to physiological drives, which are further reduced to mechanisms of organs and cells. To correct this reductionist perspective, Parsons highlights the significance of the *emergence* postulate, implying that social phenomenon cannot be reduced to its individual components, and new systems *emerge* at different levels of the interactive network.

Early linguistic approaches adopting an atomic and isolating view towards translational materials are similarly in danger of reductionism. Analytical methods such as *componential analysis* that break up a lexical item into sense components with corresponding target language equivalents (Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1981), and debates over translation units, i.e. the smallest divisible segment of a text that can be identified with an equivalent in the target language (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958; Bennett, 1994), are attempts at scientific analysis of translation behaviour that have grossly neglected the integrity of human discourse and the agency behind its construction. This viewpoint might have contributed to the low social status of translators, who were frequently portrayed as a conduit or a craftsman credited with little creative efforts in their works. The scepticism directed against radical positivism does not attempt to discredit the grounding of social action in the physiological basis or the objective world altogether. Provided that a new-born baby is driven by purely physiological needs, an adult social being cannot entirely dispense with the physical constraints imposed by either hereditary or environmental factor.

Finally, Parsons turns his attention to German idealism, a philosophical tradition that enshrines human ideas, whose integration in a society is attributed to logico-meaningful coherence rather than causal relationships or random assemblage. Compared to positivism, idealism leaves more room for humane factors in the conceptualisation of social action; in contrast with utilitarianism, which is essentially interested in the means-end relationship, idealism centres on the meaning-expression patterns. However, its overly subjective focus might appear free-floating without an anchor in concrete situations.

To Parsons, idealism's focus on the *Geist*, or the spirit and the mind, can potentially venture into historicism, which overemphasizes the temporal and spatial context of cultural values and disregards the universal elements in their origination and structuring, whilst Sociology aims to achieve a cross-cultural and widely-applicable understanding of social phenomenon. Moreover, the fixation on the coherence of values and ideas may overlook their articulation in real-life situations, which is inevitably confronted with the particularities of the specific settings and potentially self-contradictory in their manifestation.

Likewise, such a paradox can be found in the concept of the *norm* in TS, a term elaborated by Toury to bridge the gap between *competence* and *performance*, or what translators could have done and what translators actually did (Baker, 2009: 190). Norm thus becomes the key to an interpretative understanding of translators' actions. Following Toury, norm-oriented translation research flourished in the 80s and 90s, dedicated to identifying regular patterns in translators' behaviour and explaining them via the target cultural conventions. These norms can vary from the definition of translations as against non-translations (also known as *constitutive translational conventions*) to those that guide micro-level translation choices (also known as *regulative translational conventions*) (Nord, 1991).

As extensively discussed in Section 1.4, such a target-oriented approach towards defining translation downplays the universal elements in people's conceptualisation of what translation is. Meanwhile, the norm-governed perspective towards discourse analysis is suspected of cherry-picking textual clues that support a certain interpretation of target norms, while disregarding contradictory evidence. As proposed by Chesterman, a norm itself does not suffice to fill the gap between hypothesized and actualised translation decisions, for there are other plausible explanations for an observed translational pattern, or causes that *emerged* out of the interaction between the translator and the situation, such as “cognitive constraints, time and task constraints, or factors concerning the translator’s background knowledge and proficiency – and of course chance” (Chesterman, 2006b: 16).

The awareness of the biases in utilitarianism, positivism and idealism, as well as the acknowledgement of their respective insights, assisted Parsons in establishing his *voluntaristic* theory of action. By portraying social action as neither involuntary nor voluntary, but *voluntaristic* in nature, Parsons has taken into consideration individual agency endorsed by utilitarian traditions, physical constraints envisioned by the positivist perspective and cultural values upheld by idealist beliefs.

### 2.1.2 Interdependent and Interpenetrating Systems

Based on the above analysis, Parsons developed four subsystems for the systematic examination of action, namely the biological organism, the personality system, the social system and the cultural system (Parsons, 1952: 3-23; 1966: 24-29; 1971: 4-8; Parsons and Toby, 1977: 4-6). Among them, the biological organism merely acts as the physical container of personality and therefore remains least relevant to sociological inquiries. However, the relationship between the organism and the personality serves as an illuminating example of how Parsons intends to portray the interaction among the other three systems – as one characterised by *interdependence* and *interpenetration*.

The premise of interdependence is *independence*, which means that although the biological organism and the personality of an individual carry implications for each other, they are nevertheless not dependent upon each other. This is because if they are, the changes occurring in one of the dependent variables will invariably incur proportionate modifications in the other. The independence of human organism and personality signifies that biological features do not determine one’s personality, nor should any modulation in one’s bodily functions directly affect one’s personality. The same applies to personality’s impact on the biological organism. Both should be able to maintain their own equilibrium despite fluctuations in the other.

However, the two are not completely closed to each other either, for independence without *interdependence* reduces the correlation between two variables to sheer chance. Instead, biological organism and personality system stand in an interpenetrating relationship, which means that there is a constant flow of energy and information between them. The biological organism provides the necessary energy, perceptual and processing capacities for the manifestation of personality traits. Conversely, personality system assumes the executive function of supplying information and feedback to the organism, managing the distribution, conservation and restoration of energy, regulating the gratification, postponement and repression of physiological drives in compliance with the goal of action.

Moreover, it is indisputable that the personality of one individual resides in his/her biological organism. Therefore, Parsons distinguishes between organism and personality systems for the purpose of analytical convenience and efficiency rather than treating them as empirically separable entities. Similarly, all the subsystems, as well as Parsons' other theoretical concepts, should be considered as abstract *analytical categories* that do not necessarily correspond to concrete entities in reality. In the following, the three subsystems of relevance to social action are discussed in detail.

As clarified above, biological features do not determine personality system, nor can it be reduced to the mechanism of physiological processes. In fact, personality is not intrinsic to human beings but formulated through the socialisation process as an individual moves from infancy into adulthood. To a certain extent, personality system is the product of social and cultural systems. At the initial stage of infancy in an individual’s lifespan, the new-born baby experiences only primitive physiological drives, such as the need for food, water, warmth and sleep. Gradually, via the infant’s interaction with the significant social beings in its life, most likely parents or parental figures, he/she starts to identify a pattern in the correlation between the attitudes of these social beings and the end result of gratifying or depriving his/her own needs. Consequently, the infant begins to form an emotional attachment to these significant others, thereby developing *social-relational* needs in addition to their *viscerogenic* needs.

Over time, the social-relational needs override the child's basic viscerogenic needs, as he/she acquires the ability to predict others' reaction to his/her own actions. This is when the child realises that not only do the adults' actions have an effect on his/her need-gratification, but the child's own actions also affect their *re*actions towards himself/herself. This is what Parsons terms a *double contingency*. Henceforth, the child becomes *disposed* to act in a certain way in order to guarantee the gratification of his/her needs. Simple viscerogenic needs for survival and social-relational needs for attention thereby evolve into *need-dispositions* in the child's personality system. Personality system can be seen as the product of social system because of its origin in this network of interactions on the basis of double contingency, which has emerged from the simple causal relationship between action and consequence.

The ability to predict other social beings' reactions is a critical milestone in the child's developmental progress. At this point, an individual's innate or constitutional capacities of emotional expression, such as joy, anger, fear and disgust, in spontaneous response to need gratification or deprivation, acquire a temporal aspect, allowing the development of optimism, aggression, anxiety and scepticism, which are more tuned-in to the anticipation of future need gratification or deprivation. Moreover, as the individual learns more about the continuous chain of action-reaction in social encounters, including the likely reactions of others to his/her reactions in face of gratified or deprived needs, he/she is able to construct an even more elaborate repertoire of need-dispositions, such as keeping one's calm while angry, acting amiable when disgusted etc. The more experienced a social being is, the more complicated this network of need-disposition becomes. Essentially, every event can potentially trigger more than one need-disposition and the alternatives for the individual’s choice of action consequently multiply.

The future orientation and the anticipatory aspect of personality system are plausible due to the individual’s learning mechanism, which inevitably involves both generalisation and differentiation. Differentiation constitutes the first step to any form of knowledge; generalisation is essential because no situation is exactly the same as the last one and learning is only possible if situations are categorised on the basis of approximation. This generalisation and differentiation are built upon a symbolic system, and language is one such type. This conception of symbolic or sign systems resonates with the Saussurean perspective on human languages, conceived as an arbitrary division of reality and a discrete categorisation of otherwise continuous variables. Once social encounters have been invested with symbolic meanings, their knowledge can be transferred onto future events and converted into experience, thereby enabling the development of an anticipatory aspect of need-dispositions. This symbolisation allows individuals to make sense of their actions and communicate their understanding to others.

When a symbolic system is shared between two or more social beings, the most elementary form of cultural system emerges. Culture, therefore, is characterised by being learned, transmitted and shared. Due to these features, cultural traditions are maintained with reasonable stability across time and space. By acquiring, reproducing and reinforcing the symbolic meanings in human behaviour, individuals learn to justify the motivation and value of their actions. It is in this sense that personality system is also the product of cultural system.

Through repeated social practice and established social routines, an individual’s personality system becomes imbued with stability, coherence and consistency so that others can also safely invest expectations in him/her, trusting that he/she will conform to a propensity to a certain line of action in a given situation. Eventually, a personality system with its own equilibrium has emerged, which is relatively autonomous and independent from the influence of either social or cultural system.

When two or more personality systems come into contact, a social system is formed. The dynamic of multiple personality systems enables the emergence of an interactive network that cannot be simply reduced to the sum of its constitutive personality systems. Accordingly, the basic unit of a social system is not individual organisms, nor individual personalities, but *roles*. As demonstrated above, an individual learns to develop expectations of a behavioural pattern in other social beings. The sustenance of these patterns depends on both the consistency of the others' personality systems and the individual's own conformity to their expectations. When the individual manages to extract a recurring pattern of expectations from many other social beings, he/she learns about his/her role. Therefore, an individual's personality is only loosely linked with his/her role in the social system and any social being is presumably undertaking multiple roles in different social arenas.

Similarly, when two or more individuals engage in an interactive relationship, there is a *complementarity* in their role expectations, which means that wherever a person is entitled to expect certain patterns of behaviour from another, he/she is simultaneously obliged to accommodate the counterpart's expectations. The effectiveness of a role expectation from another is determined by the person's significance in terms of need-gratification and the rigour of his/her sanctions in case of non-conformance or deviation. This is the normative aspect of a social system.

Social system remains relatively independent from both personality and cultural systems, as it spontaneously emerges out of an interactive situation. Distinct from the other two subsystems, social system does not predate any social action. However, it cannot be conceptualised without the penetrating influence of the other two systems either. For instance, a new social system is formed when a particular couple gets married and establishes a family, but the role-expectations they introduce into the marriage can be traced back to norms of gender roles, parental responsibilities or marital obligations, partly found in their respective preconceptions, and partly in generally accepted cultural traditions.

Social system embodies emergent features that are distinguished from its constitutive personality systems, as patterns of complementary role-expectations persist beyond the limit of individual lifespan. In other words, there should be certain aspects of a role specification that apply to any individual who occupies a particular position. In cases where a particular individual is replaced, the operation of social system should not experience any significant disruption. Meanwhile, the equilibrium of a social system should not be perceived as static and enclosed either, but dynamic and fluid, contingent on the interactive relationship between the specific individuals involved. What lends stability, coherence and consistency to social system whilst allowing room for situational particularities is the structuring function of cultural system.

Cultural system further consists of system of ideas and beliefs, expressive symbols and value orientations. It operates on a different plane in comparison to the other two systems, due to the fact that cultural system does not directly participate in the action process. While cultural system enjoys relative autonomy from either personality or social system, to the extent that any one individual or any one interactive situation is incapable of altering the landscape of a society's cultural constructs, it can also cross over into both personality and social systems, especially when it comes to its system of value orientations.

Essentially, the process of incorporating cultural aspects into personality system is termed *internalisation*. This occurs when the cultural patterns are not merely reflected in one's knowledge of their existence, but more prominently in the individual's willing subscription to them. Once internalised, the violation of these cultural values not only induces fear of consequences but also instigates the feelings of guilt directed at self or indignation targeted at others. When two or more such social beings with internalised cultural patterns engage in an interactive event, cultural system helps legitimise their complementary and normative role-expectations. Empirically speaking, cultural system cannot be investigated without involving personality and social systems. Situated at the structuring level of social action, the maintenance of cultural system is only possible through its articulation in social interaction and its preservation in individual internalisation.

Borrowing from Parsons' elucidation of inter-systemic relationships, this study argues that the leap from translators' competence to their actual performance cannot be explained by strategic assessment of the situation, interpersonal dynamic within a project or cultural norms in the wider society alone. Instead, the three subsystems governing individual's choice of action are interdependent and interpenetrating. Consequently, the end result of translators' decisions, whether they are erroneous, deliberate, instinctive or calculated, are most likely mediated by personal, social and cultural factors, rather than being a direct reflection of their translation competence.

### 2.1.3 The Action Frame of Reference

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Parsons posits *social action* as the point of reference for his sociological theories. For Parsons, social action is a type of behaviour that at once exemplifies individual agency, social norms and cultural values. When isolating an episode in this process of action for analysis, the object of investigation can be termed a *unit act* (Parsons and Shils, 1962: 3-29; Parsons, 1968: 43-51). Yet, however small this unit is, it invariably involves an *actor* and a *situation*.

In Parsons' model, the *actor* or the agent of action can be an individual or a collectivity, be it a company or a community. However, strictly speaking, the *motivation* of action can only be applied to individuals. It is worth noting that although the term "actor" implies the concrete entity of an individual, it is only an analytical category focusing on the agency of the acting subject. The concept of the actor is believed to be independent and autonomous of the physical makeup of the individual, similar to how personality system stands apart from the biological organism, with the latter largely determined by hereditary and environmental factors.

As for the *situation* the actor is in, it can be conceptualised in terms of *means* and *conditions*. The former refers to resources that can be utilised to facilitate the acting process, while the latter indicates situational constraints that limit the available options for action. Therefore, an actor should be able to exercise control over the use of means but not over the conditions in a situation. While the biological organism is excluded from the concept of the actor, it forms part of the situation of action, providing the actor with the means and conditions for employing his/her own physical capacities.

Similar to Parsons' other theoretical constructs, the means and conditions of a situation can be embodied by the same concrete entity, and most objects in the real world at once possess enabling and restricting properties. For instance, a car is a *means* of transport in the sense that it can significantly shorten the time of travel, saving a considerable amount of physical exertion and providing shelter from the environmental elements throughout the journey. However, it also imposes *conditions* on the situation of action, because it can only run within a certain limit of speed and along some permitted routes, powered by a constant supply of fuel, in addition to the frustration caused by traffic jam and road works.

Besides an actor or a plurality of actors and a situation, the action frame of reference also includes among its referents an *end* and a *normative orientation*. An end can be understood as the goal of the action, a concept that necessarily entails a future reference. In the concrete sense, the end is represented by "the total anticipated future state of affairs", while in the analytical sense, it is the disparity between the total anticipated future state of affairs and the predicted alternative results that would have naturally ensued from the initial situation had the actor refrained from interfering (Parsons, 1968: 48-49). In other words, the analytical category of the end designates the differences the actor can create in a situation in reference to the commencement of the acting process. These differences introduced by the actor through active engagement in a social action are undeniable evidence of individual agency.

Despite being phrased as the “end”, the concept is not equivalent to the *outcome* of the action, but merely describes the *anticipated* or intended result. In fact, the actual outcome often deviates from the envisioned end, sometimes known as an *error*, precisely because social actions are voluntaristic and the actor does not possess absolute control over the situation. The *voluntaristic* nature of the social action is demonstrated by the fact that social actors can exercise their agency in selecting an end, but the formulation of a goal itself is regulated by social norms and cultural values. Additionally, the actor can choose his/her preferred means that are available in a situation to achieve his/her goal, but simultaneously, the actor has to evaluate the situation according to available cultural patterns.

Since it has already been established that for Parsons, the actor’s choice of action is not random or entirely dependent upon the conditions in a situation as utilitarianism and positivism would suggest, a theoretical gap is left between the potential alternatives of action and the actualised decisions of the actor, given the available means and the necessary conditions of a situation. According to Parsons, the actor’s choice of action is subsequently steered by his/her *normative orientation*.

An actor’s orientation stems from the symbolic meaning associated with the action in relation to his/her goal. As explained in the previous subsection, the meaningful interpretation of action is acquired by the individual during the socialisation process, via the mechanism of learning and through the internalisation of cultural patterns. It is *normative* because the selection of means to achieve the end becomes more than merely a utilitarian concern, but is evaluated against role-expectations and cultural traditions, both of which are shared among social members and thereby binding through their correlation with rewards and sanctions.

To *orient* assumes both the availability of choice and the offer of directions. Therefore, orientation at once provides alternative possibilities to and imposes restrictions on the actor's behaviours. The actor's agency in organising his/her orientations in a particular situation is contingent on the *objects of orientation* in that situation, which can be classified as either means or conditions. It should be clarified that Parsons' term "object" does not equate to the word's everyday usage for denoting non-human entities, but includes both social and non-social factors relevant to the action in question.

The *social objects* in a situation are comprised of other social actors, so for the sake of analytical convenience, the actor whose action is set as the point of reference is called *ego*, while other individuals positioned as objects in the actor's situation are termed *alters*. As for *non-social objects*, they refer to *physical objects* as well as *cultural objects* that have *not* been internalised by the actor or the social objects. The distinctive property of social objects as compared to non-social objects lies in the mutual recognition and double contingency between ego and alters, which means that while physical and cultural objects do not interact with ego or change according to the action of ego, the social objects choose their behaviours depending on ego's action.

Due to the diversity of means and ends left to the liberty of the actor, combined with the normative force of the actor's orientations, social action is characterised by a *probabilistic* quality, undeterminable by individual free will or situational constraints. Therefore, there is the probability of *error* as well, which is defined by Parsons as "the failure to attain ends or to make the 'right' choice of means" (1968: 45-46). Applied to the social action of translation, this indicates that when confronted with a translation decision, translators always have a multiplicity of alternatives available. It is a widely acknowledged fact that for most language pairs, it is highly unlikely for two individual translators who are working separately to produce two identical translation products, as long as the text to be translated is of meaningful length (Bellos, 2012: 5). This is sufficient evidence to suggest that translators often have to select one line of action in the necessary exclusion of other options, and individual translators usually end up making different choices.

However, the diversity in translators' decision-making results should not be attributed to random idiosyncrasies. Whatever freedom the individual translators enjoy in selecting their goal and the means to achieve that goal in their translation endeavours, they inevitably evaluate their options to a certain extent against what they anticipate in terms of author's approval, publisher's acceptance, critics' recognition and readers' preferences, as well as what they have learned about professional ethics or even a commonsensical understanding of what translators do and how they should do it. Whether to conform or deviate from them is subject to the translator's choice, but the acknowledgement of the alters' expectations from the translator as well as the shared cultural values places a normative orientation on the translator's informed decision-making.

On account of both the enabling and restricting properties of the normative orientation in a translational situation, the translator is susceptible to committing errors, not simply because they are incompetent in identifying the "optimal" solution to a translation problem, but because they are constantly confronted with the tension between possibilities and limitations. Translation errors are thus not merely the temporary absence or deficiency of knowledge or skill, but the product of concurrent and potentially conflicting forces derived from the motivation to attain a personal goal that also complies with the shared understanding of the implications of that goal in the wider social and cultural systems.

### 2.1.4 Modes and Levels of Normative Orientation

Parsons' main concern in devising his sociological theories is the explanation of order, or the *equilibrium* in systems (Black, 1961: 11-12, 19; Rocher, 1975: 33-34; Hamilton, 1983: 61-69). As argued at the beginning of this chapter, utilitarianism cannot resolve the issue of why individuals pursuing self-interest can coexist in reasonable peace and stability. If a social system is formed when a plurality of actors engage in an interactive relationship, then there must be mechanisms in place to ensure that one actor's actions are reasonably compatible with those of the others. Similarly, within a personality system, the actor's different actions performed in his/her capacity in various roles should also be integrated with each other in order to maintain the integrity of his/her personality (Parsons and Shils, 1962: 55). To strive towards such equilibrium in both personality and social systems, it is essential to manage the potentially conflicting motivations, whether it is of one individual or many.

Within the personality system, the *motivational orientation* of the actor helps optimise the gratification of need-dispositions (Parsons, 1952: 7-8). It can be categorised into three modes – cognitive, cathectic and evaluative orientations. Among them, the cathectic mode determines what significance the objects of orientation carry in terms of gratifying or depriving ego's needs, thereby regulating ego's personal attachment to these objects. Meanwhile, the cognitive mode discriminates between objects that assist and those that obstruct the gratification of needs, therefore treating them as means and conditions of action. Lastly, the evaluative mode adjusts the allocation of energy and resources in order to optimise gratification, by prioritising different need-dispositions activated in a situation and adopting a more long-term perspective in designing a plan for action.

Therefore, cathectic orientation most likely influences the actor's selection of a goal, while cognitive orientation informs his/her choice of means to reach that goal and evaluative orientation introduces an element of *discipline* that reconciles the actor's different actions in view of goal-attainment. Simply put, cathexis decides what ego wants, cognition how ego gets what he/she wants and evaluation the coordination between the different things ego wants and the different things ego does to get what he/she wants.

Besides the three types of *motivational orientation*, personality system also incorporates cultural patterns that have been internalised by the individual. Among the three subsystems of cultural system – system of ideas and beliefs, system of expressive symbols and system of value orientations, value orientations are the most susceptible to internalisation and most likely to cross over into the personality and social systems. During the individual's socialisation process, the internalised cultural patterns become *value-orientations* in the actor's personality system.

Once internalised, these value-orientations prompt the actor to observe the norms, values and standards shared in society as part of their need-dispositions. In other words, instead of acting as cultural objects in a situation, these value-orientations are no longer means and conditions in relation to goal-attainment, but are embedded in the actor's understanding of his/her goal and the motivation to pursue it. For instance, the implementation of self-censorship can indicate the actor's acknowledgement of political correctness as a condition in the situation for his/her goal attainment, or it is possible that the actor observes the standard of political correctness because he/she firmly believes that it bespeaks the "right" values.

Parallel to the three modes of motivational orientation, value-orientation also manifests in three modes – cognitive, appreciative and moral orientations (Parsons, 1952: 12-15). The cognitive mode is related to the actor's commitment to standards of cognitive judgements; the appreciate mode is associated with the actor's aesthetic and affective preferences; the moral mode contributes to the actor's sense of responsibility, both towards himself/herself and towards others. Accordingly, a writer's choice of action can be guided by internalised cultural standards of logical coherence, sophisticated style and moral integrity.

The property of value-orientation as structured by cultural system and internalised following a top-down approach does *not* exclude the element of individual agency. Similar to other forms of normative orientation, value-orientation at once enables and limits the alternatives of action. Although individual actors seem to be restricted by these internalised standards, they nonetheless are theoretically free to choose the standards they subscribe to. As regards to motivational orientations, the crux of equilibrium is how potentially conflicting motivations can be integrated through the evaluation of their importance and feasibility. When it comes to value-orientations, equilibrium is maintained by selecting cultural standards that are consistent and compatible with each other, for the integration of cultural patterns is governed by logico-meaningful coherence.

The familial setting as a social system can be used to illustrate the relationship between motivational orientations and value-orientations. In prototypical cases, parents are the most significant objects of orientation in a child's developmental stage, so the child's cathectic orientation would dictate that parents' approval is paramount to his/her need gratification. This constitutes a large part of the child's early social-relational needs, but the child is simultaneously motivated by other needs that can be fulfilled by other social and non-social objects in the situation, needs that might come into conflict with the parents' approval, such as eating sweets, playing games, spending time with friends or being lured by strangers. The child's cognitive mode of motivational orientation will then help him/her decide what type of behaviour can gain or lose the parents' approval. Lastly, the child's evaluative orientation should strive to prioritise these conflicting needs and plan his/her actions in a manner that can optimise the gratification of the child's overall needs.

During the process of socialisation, the child is expected to acquire a more meaningful understanding of his/her actions and their consequences through social learning. To make better sense of why his/her own actions elicit corresponding reactions from the parents, the child needs to internalise the cultural patterns that help legitimise the parents' expectations. It is through this learning process that the child's value-orientations develop. When the child has fully subscribed to the values shared across the society regarding how cognitively speaking the risk in trusting a stranger outweighs the enticements the stranger offers, how affectively speaking nobody loves a child more than his/her parents and how morally speaking it is commendable to respect parents' wishes, the child will then be able to construct a coherent and consistent set of value-orientations that provide a culturally acceptable interpretation of his/her motivations.

Therefore, motivational orientations identify problems of interest for the actor, such as what the significant objects are in the situation, how the actor can capitalise on the means and conditions of a situation to achieve the goal and why certain need-dispositions come before others. These problems of interest generate motivation for action, while value-orientations offer meaningful solutions for the identified problems. When a motivation is supported by a value, the value justifies the actions inspired by the motivation.

Correspondingly, Parsons derived three types of action on the basis of the convergence of motivational and value orientations, which he terms *action-orientations* (1952: 48-51). These include instrumental action, expressive action and moral action. According to Parsons, when a cognitive motivation that treats objects in the situation mainly as means and conditions for goal-attainment is endorsed by shared standards of cognitive judgements, the type of action generated is of an *instrumental orientation.* Similarly, when a cathectic motivation focusing on the actor's attachment to social and non-social objects in the situation is approved by appreciative standards in cultural traditions, the type of action that emerges is of *expressive orientation*. When an evaluative motivation coordinating the actor's different need-dispositions is supported by standards of moral virtues, the type of action that ensued would be characterised with a *moral orientation*.

Parsons' three action-orientations are significantly reminiscent of Weber's four *ideal types* of social action. Weber classified social action into goal-rational, value-rational, affective and traditional types of action (Weber, Parsons and Henderson, 1947: 115-118). It is reasonable to deduce that Parsons generally retained Weber's classification and intended for *instrumental orientation* to replace *goal-rational* actions, actions that can be rationalised in terms of the most efficient use of means to achieve a goal. As for Parsons' *expressive orientation*, it is probably closest to Weber's *affective* actions, behaviours spurred on by an outburst of emotions and aiming at the instant gratification of need-dispositions. Finally, actions with a *moral orientation* can be analogised with Weber's *value-rational* actions. Although these actions disregard economic efficiency, they can nevertheless be rationalised in view of an overarching ethical value. Parsons seems to deem it unnecessary to preserve Weber's *traditional* type of action, defined as actions that are performed simply because an established customary practice dictates so, perhaps because when one traces such social actions back to their origins before they became taken for granted as traditions, they can be discovered to fall into one of the other three types of action.

The interpretation of social action as having instrumental, expressive and moral orientations can be seen as another attempt on Parsons' part to integrate the insights of utilitarianism, positivism and idealism. Similar to Weber's emphasis on these classifications being "*ideal* types", Parsons' action-orientations are not designed as a realistic reflection of actual social practice either. They are presented as analytical categories that streamline real-life social phenomenon into theoretically significant distinctions. Consequently, the categorisation of different action-orientations also recognises that social actions, in reality, probably embody a mixture of instrumental, expressive and moral orientations, and sociological investigations at best can identify the dominant orientation in individual cases.

Considering the homage Parsons paid to Weber's *ideal types*, this study argues that Parsons' three types of action orientations also serve to complement his conceptualisation of errors in social action. Previously, economic theories or the utilitarian tradition would claim that "the failure to attain ends or to make the 'right' choice of means" automatically renders the action in question as *irrational* (Parsons, 1968: 45-46). Yet "goal-*rational*" action or instrumental orientation is only one of the three types according to Weber and Parsons. Actions motivated and supported by cultural values are termed "value-*rational*" action by Weber and moral orientation by Parsons, hence just as rational as the efficient utilisation of means for goal-attainment. Even actions focused on instant gratification and affective expression are directed at specific objects of orientation in a particular situation and therefore justly motivated and intelligible through sociological inquiries.

Returning to the social action of translation, translational behaviours can also be analysed through these different modes of orientations on various levels. On the level of motivational orientation, translators have to employ their linguistic, cultural, topical and practical knowledge in assessing their situations, but they may also develop a particular attachment to one or more of the objects in the situation. For instance, two translators of similar translation competence with equal access to translation aids could still make vastly different choices of action depending on whether they identify with a specific character in the novel or whether they value the opinions of a particular critic. Sometimes, when the cathectic orientation of a translator overpowers his/her cognitive orientation, there is the possibility of errors, which *cannot* be simply attributed to the cognitive abilities of the translator.

In addition to the potentially conflicting need-dispositions within a situation, translators are social beings simultaneously undertaking multiple roles in various social arenas. Hence, they are constantly coordinating their other social activities with their translation endeavours through the renunciation of certain needs for the sake of others.

This evaluative orientation becomes specifically relevant when it comes to literary translators, who are seldom exclusively defined by their literary translation activities.

Besides, translation activities, like other types of social actions, are continuous processes spanning over a certain period of time, and the products of these processes subsequently participate in further social interaction, events that can potentially involve the translators as well. Therefore, the translators' actions almost always have a future reference and take into consideration potential objects of orientation beyond the immediate context of decision-making, such as readers, critics, scholars, journalists and bookstore owners, all of whom have no access to the translating process. The translators' evaluative orientation allows them to factor in the anticipated future gratification or deprivation of their need-dispositions and apply discipline to their long-term plan of action.

Yet, the standards translators use to evaluate their situations are not random or idiosyncratic but are acquired through the internalisation of cultural values shared in the society. Apart from the ideas, beliefs and symbols available in the situation as means or conditions for their actions, translators have also committed themselves to certain cognitive, appreciative and moral standards to the extent that disobeying these normative criteria feels like going against their own nature. For literary translators, the aesthetic standards they subscribe to might dissuade them from translating a particular style of writing, even if taking on the project can earn them prestige and profits; their moral principles can also preclude an alternative translation solution, not primarily because they fear it might lead to punitive consequences but because they believe it to be unethical conduct.

While acknowledging that empirically speaking, all types of social action most likely activate all three modes of motivational and value-orientation, it is also theoretically significant to distinguish between actions that are identified with instrumental primacy, expressive primacy and moral primacy, depending on the dominant motivation and value-pattern the actor applies to the implementation of the action. The three different types of action-orientation are not formulated for the definition of social actions *per se*, but the description of actors’ conceptualisation of their own role in a particular situational setting.

To take translational action as an example, what motivates the translator to commence a translation project in combination with what value standards he/she consults during the translating process, can shed light on the translator’s understanding of his/her role-expectations. The translators’ interpretation of their actions in terms of being primarily instrumentally, expressively or morally oriented reveals the social role they carved out for themselves, instead of directly contributing to a universal definition of what translation is or how translators should translate. This conceptualisation of translator’s role can, in turn, conform to or deviate from the expectations of alters in the immediate social interaction or the institutionalised definition of professional ethics. Not limited to the spectrum of conformance and deviation, translators can also modify and create anew their own role-definitions.

In summary, Parsons’ elaborate theoretical model has much to offer to TS, and yet it remains an undiscovered territory in the field. It has been referenced by this study because of its sociological interpretation and extensive discussion of errors. Parsons’ key concepts such as voluntaristic action, interdependent systems and normative orientation can also provide invaluable guidance out of the binary models found in many translation theories, due to their multidisciplinary nature, borrowing from economic and political theories, psychoanalysis, cybernetics and many more, as well as their multidimensional constellation operating on different levels and in various theoretical spaces.

## 2.2 Giddens’ Theory of Structuration

### 2.2.1 The Duality of Structure

Aiming to resolve the binarism between human agency and social structure featured in previous sociological debates and to bridge the chasm between voluntarism and determinism, between subjectivism and objectivism, Anthony Giddens developed the concept of *structuration*, replacing the agency-structure *dualism* with what he terms “the *duality* of structure” (1979: 81-85; 1984: 25-28, 297-304; Giddens and Dallmayr, 1982: 36-39, italics added). Specifically, the notion of *duality* implies that structure embodies a double identity – it is simultaneously the means and outcome of the human action, consisting of *rules* and *resources* drawn upon and reproduced by individual actors in their social practice. Therefore, structure and agency are no longer portrayed as an irreconcilable dichotomy in their struggle for the ultimate control over social action. Instead, the conception of one necessarily entails the other (Giddens, 1979: 53).

Giddens seeks to overcome the perception of structure as tangible patterns of social relationship that exist outside particular instances of social action (Giddens and Dallmayr, 1982: 33). Instead, he holds that structure can only be conceptualised in terms of *structural properties*, or more precisely as *structuring properties*, which characterise day-to-day social practices (Giddens, 1984: 17). From this perspective, structure is an abstraction and a “virtual existence” that does not possess any *presence* in form (Giddens, 1979: 63), but is comprised of *absences* that are rendered temporally present in specific instantiations of social practice. This is similar to the way that mass and velocity have no form except for the embodiment and manifestation of their properties in a particular object.

According to Giddens, the terms *structure* and *system* have been employed interchangeably in various schools of social thought and their distinction still remains to be clarified (Giddens, 1977: 134; 1979: 61-62; Giddens and Dallmayr, 1982: 34-35). Giddens believes that *structure* can only be perceived through the structuring properties of the *system*, which in turn is constituted by instances of social practice regulated by the *structure*. In other words, the structure is observable via the organisation of structured social practice into systems.

Consequently, there are two aspects to structure – the synchronic patterning of social interactions and its diachronic continuity in time. Structure serves to identify the connection between different instances of social practice across time and space and to bind them in a systemic form. As for *structuration*, it is a process that enables the continuance and transformation of structure as well as the reproduction of social systems through regular and regulated social action (Giddens, 1979: 66; 1984: 25).

The duality of structure can be illustrated by human languages (Giddens and Pierson, 1998: 76-77). Languages, like other social structures, do not exist independent of their application by social beings. Linguistic elements constitute the means speakers and writers utilise for communication and expression purposes. Meanwhile, they are also the result of specific language use. Languages are carried on and constantly transformed through social practice, as archaic expressions become obscure and sanctioned in daily use while new words and grammar rules are established through popular adoption. As an example of social structure, languages do not have any external form of existence but remain internal to the social practice of linguistic activities.

Even dictionaries documenting existing vocabularies or grammar books endorsing the correct construction of sentences are merely descriptions of the structure of language, the "codified interpretations" of linguistic rules and resources (Giddens, 1984: 21). This is evidenced by the fact that any tangible form revealing the structural properties of language has undergone and continues to undergo revisions in order to keep pace with the actual language conventions and innovations established by social actors. Hence, it follows that authoritative dictionaries and grammar books are the institutionalised form of their respective language systems.

Furthermore, structure consists of *rules* and *resources*, carrying both constraining and enabling effects on social action (Giddens, 1979: 69). Linguistic rules impose limits on the possible combinations of lexical elements by sanctioning nonsensical verbal constructs.

However, at the same time, the very same rules are what make semantic meanings possible. Each language predisposes its speakers to adopt a certain worldview, but the acquisition of a language and its extensive vocabulary heralds the expansion of knowledge, skills, emotions and experiences.

Giddens rejects the distinction between constitutive and regulative rules (1979: 66-67). This is a Kantian differentiation that was also applied by Christiane Nord to her discussion on constitutive and regulative translational conventions (1991, cf. Section 2.1.1). Giddens convincingly argues that all rules are both constitutive and regulative in nature. In Nord's case, a constitutive translational convention, which defines *translation* against *adaptation* or *version*, undeniably also sanctions translation choices that are more aptly identified as adaptation or version, and therefore clearly perform regulative functions. Similarly, a regulative translational convention outlines the acceptable solutions to translation problems such as "proper names, culture-bound realities or realia, quotations, etc.", which inevitably suggests that deviation from the conventional translation solutions likely amounts to a non-translation (ibid.: 100).

For Giddens, rule-following in social activities contributes to meaningful action, because learning to evaluate the propriety of behaviours in a certain context always carries two implications – knowing the signification of a particular action and the normative sanction that accompanies it (1977: 129-130). This is the simultaneously constitutive and regulative nature of rules. For instance, sufficient social knowledge regarding translation practice should inform the translator of what a translation request entails as well as what responses he/she can expect by committing to a certain line of translation decisions. Hence, being able to follow the social rules of translation practice reflects the knowledgeability on the part of the translator to make sense of his/her actions in terms of their meaning and legitimation. This echoes Parsons' elucidation of the socialisation process, when individuals acquire and reproduce the shared symbols in the cultural system, whereupon developing a meaningful interpretation of their own actions.

Giddens further contends that social rules should *not* be analogised to rules of a game. This is because social rules are constantly disputed and negotiated by the social actors rather than acting as preconditions that players have to accept before participating in a game (1977: 131; 1979: 67). In the light of Giddens' insights, the definition of translation should be akin to social rules, as it is shared to a certain extent among those engaged in a translation project and those involved in the identification of a product as "assumed translation", but it would never be fixed and closed as the rules defining a game of chess (cf. Section 1.4). The negotiating power a social actor has depends on his/her knowledge of the facilities and resources available in the specific context of action. The knowledgeability of social actors and their agency in reproducing social structure will become the primary subject in the next subsection.

After conducting a critical review of economic theories upholding rational decision-making as the only legitimate explanation of human behaviours, Giddens states that such theoretical claims can be attributed to a binary perspective of the past and the present (1979: 70). It is by framing the past as fixed, closed and isolated from the present that economic theories can portray the present situation of action as open to all possibilities and free from any constraint. Meanwhile, the process of structuration and the duality of structure rest on the basis that the structuring properties of social practice join time and space together into social systems, connecting the past and the present.

Besides correcting the binary perception of the past and the present, Giddens also deems the dichotomous distinction between parts and the whole and between microscopic and macroscopic sociology to be largely redundant (1984: 139). Due to the fact that structure directly participates in the process of social action, featuring as its means and outcome, every instance of social practice now has the power to reproduce and modify its own structuring properties, thereby revising the macro social landscape from the micro social actions, irrespective of the minuteness of the scale. Borrowing the previous example of language evolution, every utterance produced that conforms to the established linguistic rules should be able to make its modest contribution to the reinforcement of the very rules. Correspondingly, every challenge posed to the existing linguistic norms should also be able to shake their foundations and question their legitimacy, pushing them a little bit closer towards being obsolete.

To address some of the concerns regarding the compatibility between Giddens' theory of structuration and Parsons' theory of action, it is perhaps necessary to clarify the connection this study establishes between the two models. Despite the fact that Giddens proposed his theory of structuration as a "*non-functionalist manifesto*" (1979: 7), explicitly posed in opposition to what sociologists typically labelled as "structural-functionalists", including Talcott Parsons (ibid.: 5, 51-52), this study does not deem it self-contradictory to borrow from both theorists' conceptualisation of social action and integrate their theoretical models. The functionalist features in Parsons' model (primarily represented by his AGIL paradigm) have been deliberately omitted in the introduction to his theories in Section 2.1, because they are less relevant to the current case study and hardly determine the value and interpretation of all of Parsons' theoretical constructs. In fact, most of the theoretical concepts presented in the last section can find their continuance and refined interpretation in Giddens' model.

Similar to Giddens' efforts in reconciling the longstanding division between determinism and voluntarism, Parsons intended for his conceptualisation of social action to be neither involuntary nor voluntary, but *voluntaristic* in nature. This is in line with Giddens' design for a structure to include both rules and resources, thereby demonstrating both restricting and enabling qualities. Parsons devised his central concept of *orientation* with the same premises. In fact, even Giddens' idea of "duality" is *not* incompatible with Parsons' presentation of cultural system as contributing to the formation of personality and social system whilst being articulated through personality and social systems. The most significant advancement in Gidden's theory in comparison to Parsons' probably lies in its emphasis on human agency, which will be discussed at length in the following subsection.

### 2.2.2 The Knowledgeability of Agent

Giddens remains sceptical about the concept of *internalisation* that Parsons employed in his attempt to account for social order. He is concerned that the internalisation of value-orientations eventually obliterates the agency of social actors and misleadingly portrays them as "cultural dopes" (Giddens, 1979: 52; Giddens and Dallmayr, 1982: 30, 199). Rather, Giddens expressly recognises the *knowledgeability* of social actors, or who he terms social *agents* (1984: 41-64).

Knowledgeability can be understood as what social agents know about what they do and why they do it. The reason why there is the prevalent impression that social agents are largely unaware of the nature and the grounds of their actions is attributed to the false assumption that the limits of social agents' knowledge are defined by what they can say on the matter (Giddens and Pierson, 1998: 83). Instead, Giddens asserts that what agents can articulate in verbal forms only constitutes a minuscule part of their knowledge, while a larger part of their knowledge is demonstrated by what they can do, i.e. their *ability* to apply the knowledge to their actual social practice. This double connotation is implied in the word *knowledge-ability*.

To further illustrate that social knowledge does not operate under the dichotomy of consciousness vs. unconscious, as depicted in psychoanalytic theories, Giddens proposed the pyramid model of discursive consciousness, practical consciousness and unconscious (Giddens and Dallmayr, 1982: 31-32; Giddens, 1984: 41-45). Among them, *practical consciousness* is the key concept, defined as the implicit and tacit knowledge of social agents informing their social practice, which Giddens believes is the main component of social agents' knowledgeability.

Despite the fact that practical consciousness is not formulated in discursive terms, it does not mean that social agents execute their daily affairs with no intention or without any reason, nor does it indicate that the practical component of actors' social knowledge can never be articulated in words. In fact, the intentions and reasons for action are regarded as discrete forms of *accountability* – the ability to account for one's actions (Giddens, 1979: 57). They usually surface as a necessary demonstration of social knowledge on the rare occasions when the legitimacy of social action is questioned, either by the actor himself/herself or by others in the situation of action. For instance, a speaker or a writer is normally requested to justify their choice of a word only when that word seems out of place, and a public servant explicitly reflects on his/her administrative duties only when the implications of their activities come into conflict with other principles. Except for these *a*typical situations, most of social actors' intentions and reasons for their action remain unarticulated throughout their day-to-day life.

Furthermore, the boundary between practical and discursive consciousness is fluid and porous, one that can frequently be crossed with more experience in social learning (Giddens, 1984: 4). Returning to the case of language use, native speakers of English may not be able to dissect their sentences into subjects, predicates, adverbs and conjunctions etc. or indeed explain why a certain sentence is grammatically incorrect, though being completely capable of using perfect English. This discrepancy between their discursive and practical knowledge is easily bridgeable if they are provided with adequate training in Linguistics.

Giddens' three levels of consciousness also serve to complement the conceptualisation of rational decision-making in economic theories, by claiming that the *rationalisation* of action operates primarily on the level of practical consciousness during the process of social action (ibid.: 281). Rationalisation performed by social actors is interpreted as "a continuing ‘theoretical understanding’ of the grounds of their activity” (ibid.: 5). This “theoretical understanding” thus does not necessitate verbal formulation of the reasons for action, nor does it entail the ability to produce a logical explanation for the action. Rationality is, therefore, more closely related to an awareness of the process and the context of action rather than a calculated plan to achieve the optimal means-end relationship. However, it should be noted that the understanding of *awareness* and *consciousness* ought not to be stretched to the broad sense of being awake and alert, or being able to register stimuli in the environment in order to give responses to them (ibid.: 44-45). The type of awareness and consciousness concerned in the discussion of rationalisation stresses the recognition of the relationship between ego’s actions and their effect on the context of action, hence necessarily involving social knowledge.

Meanwhile, although it might seem like a commonsensical caution, the discursive reasons provided by social actors do *not* always match with the actual practical knowledge applied to their course of action (Giddens, 1979: 57-58). As social actors rarely provide discursive reasons for their actions during the actual acting process, their discursive consciousness is likely to experience interference from factors other than those directly participating in the original process of action. This point can be evidenced by the criticisms directed at the process-oriented research method of think-aloud protocol (TAP) in TS, which is based on the reliability of translators’ discursive consciousness rather than their practical consciousness (Tyulenev, 2014b: 186-187). While practical consciousness directly concerns the rationale for action, discursive consciousness constructs an interpretation of that rationale.

Applied to the social action of translation, Giddens’ theorisation of practical consciousness is pertinent to the reconciliation of the theory vs. practice dichotomy in the translation industry and to some extent in academic circles (cf. Section 1.3). The objections to translation theories expressed by a large number of practising translators does not indicate a lack of theoretical understanding on their part regarding the activities they are engaged in. Instead, any competent translator, as a knowledgeable social actor in his/her professional sphere, is by default “a social theorist on the level of discursive consciousness and a ‘methodological specialist’ on the levels of both discursive and practical consciousness” (Giddens, 1984: 18). Hence, it follows that most translation decisions that feel instinctive and unmeditated in the immediate situation of action can still be attributed to the stock of social knowledge held by the translator and thereby can potentially be rationalised and even verbalised into theories, including translation errors, or the decisions that went “wrong” in this process.

Taking the knowledgeability of social agents a step further, Giddens proposed the idea of *double hermeneutic* in social sciences, whereby a process of interpenetration takes place between lay actors in various social arenas and social scientists studying them as a profession (Giddens and Dallmayr, 1982: 11-14). Unlike natural sciences, social sciences are arguably engaging with subjects of study that participate in a dialogue with social researchers (Giddens, 1987: 17-21).

Specifically, double hermeneutic signifies that not only would the knowledge applied by social actors, either in practice or in discourse, be collected as empirical data for sociological analysis, but the metalanguage employed by social scientists in their systematic investigation into social action would also feeds back into its real-life practice and participate in the popularisation of specialist jargons. Classical sociological terminologies such as *division of labour*, *alienation* and *class struggles* have notably been incorporated into public discourse and significantly informed lay actors’ understanding of their action and the context in which they act. The knowledge shared between the sociologists and the lay actors is termed *mutual knowledge*, which is crucial for assisting researchers with their informed interpretation of social actors’ behaviours (Giddens, 1977: 130).

Seen from this perspective, the boundary between translation practice and translation theorisation should also be permeable, allowing frequent crossover between them. This could manifest in the translation theorists' description and explanation of real-life translation practice, as well as their treatment of practising translators' discursive formulation of their own decisions as a form of theoretical engagement with translation. More significantly, this involves recognising the influence of the metalanguage employed in TS on the translation industry.

In comparison, the gate between practical consciousness and unconscious is not open and acts as a repressive bar guarding consciousness from the chaos of the unconscious (Giddens, 1984: 7). This segregation of the unconscious from daily social life is developed during infancy when the child learns to anticipate the return of the caretaker, typically the mother, even when she is absent. Henceforth, the child acquires the ability to distinguish absence from abandonment and to control his/her incapacitating sense of anxiety. This gradually establishes a sense of trust and security in his/her relationship to others, which is then closely associated with his/her own confidence and self-esteem. The successful completion of this developmental stage helps achieve what Giddens calls *ontological security* (ibid.: 50). Ontological security, in turn, is essential for the stable and consistent manifestation of actors' personality.

In this process, what generates confidence on the inside and trust invested in others is a repeated, recursive and predictable pattern of social relationships, the knowledge of which is stored in the social actor's *memory*. Yet, the mechanism of memory does not follow a simple archiving-and-retrieval paradigm. As argued in the previous subsection, the past is *not* fixed or closed, nor is it isolated from the present. Similarly, the present does not consist of individual segments of time, but is better conceptualised as a process of *presencing* (ibid.: 45). This depicts how every present readily fades into the past. Therefore, there is no definable boundary between the past and the present. Consequently, memory is not a retrieval of past experiences for application to the present but manifests itself in the process of presencing.

In fact, memory is closely bound up with *perception* (ibid. 46-48). A social actor's perception of various situations invariably triggers his/her memory in slightly different ways. Perception, in turn, is an actively selective process, focusing on relevant objects in the context whilst letting redundant information fade into the background. The criteria for selection operate within the *anticipatory schemata*, cognitive frameworks established by the actor's preconceptions, which then regulate the processing of old information and the anticipation of incoming information. The anticipatory schemata are, therefore "the medium whereby the past affects the future", the same mechanism that memory operates on (Giddens, 1984: 46). This binding of the past with the future gives rise to the duality of structure and the only physical form of structure is retained in the *memory traces* of social actors (Giddens and Dallmayr, 1982: 9). The selective perception enabled by the anticipatory schemata significantly facilitates the actor's process of action by bypassing the potentially overwhelming information available in any given situation. However, because such schemata directly participate in most naturally occurring scenarios of social interaction, they might occasionally filter out important information indispensable to a well-informed decision. This typically induces error.

On the topic of error, Giddens conducted a critical review of the Freudian concept – a *slip of the tongue* (1984: 93-104). Giddens' discussion on the repressive bar separating the unconscious from different levels of consciousness has borrowed from psychoanalytic theories, but he hesitates to agree with Freud's attribution of all slips of the tongue to unconscious motives. Instead, he asserts that the unconscious is rarely involved in day-to-day social activities, where ontological security is largely sustained and anxieties kept under control. The errors in routine social practice are therefore *not* traceable to unconscious motives.

It is only in *critical situations* where established routines in social life are thrown into turmoil that unconscious motives emerge and interfere with social action (Giddens, 1979: 123-128; 1984: 60-61). On a grand scale, a critical situation could be times of war, when predictable patterns of social interaction are no longer reliable and threats to ontological security are ever-present. On a smaller scale, a situation can be identified as critical if it puts explicit pressure on the actor to avoid mistakes. Giddens provided the example of TV announcers who are fed lines through a script, which they are expected to deviate very little from (1984: 103-104). Such critical situations heighten their anxiety regarding the deliverance of a “correct” speech. Especially when it comes to proper names, the type of words that more immediately impinges upon the actor’s source of anxiety, the actor’s unconscious is more likely to disrupt the continuity of social action.

In light of the above analysis of the unconscious and its relation to Freudian slips, this study argues that most translation errors, especially those found in written translations, are less relevant to psychoanalysis and the actor’s unconscious motives than to sociological analysis and the actor’s practical or even discursive consciousness. This is because compared to interpreters, translators work at a relatively reasonable pace following some form of a routine, not to mention that they generally tend to proofread and revise their translations afterwards. In such a situation of action, there should be few factors that are likely to pose threat to the translator’s ontological security. In contrast, the preconceptions translators bring into the situation through their anticipatory schemata as well as the presencing effects of their memory are more applicable to the analysis of translation errors.

Giddens’ elaboration on social agents’ knowledgeability and their different levels of consciousness aim to highlight their agency in social practice. He defines *agency* as the capability to have done otherwise, suggesting that agency entails the presumption of choice. This does not lead to the conclusion that a social actor is always explicitly weighing out a plurality of options, the evaluation of which is more closely linked to discursive consciousness (Giddens and Dallmayr, 1982: 9). The dominance of practical consciousness in the action process implies that social actors believe that most of their decisions are reached almost “naturally” and “instinctively”, with very limited deliberation.

Giddens subsequently moves on to argue that social agents always have a choice, even in situations where they feel like they are left without one. The constraint they experience is grounded in their own motives and interests. For instance, someone who is “forced” to do something at gunpoint does not lose his or her agency but chooses to obey the imposed demand due to their interest in self-preservation (Giddens and Pierson, 1998: 84-85). If the party being “forced” has no interest in preserving his/her own life, then even the threat of death will not be able to dictate his/her actions. However, Giddens’ accentuation of social actors’ agency does not lead to the denial of social influence. Instead, he believes that norms and values can only influence social action through the actors’ attitude towards them. In other words, social influence does not generate impact through causal relationships as found in the physical laws of the natural sciences (ibid.: 79-80).

To Giddens, the agency social actors demonstrate in face of social influence evinces *power*, and power classifies as one of the most elemental properties of human action. Here, power is *not* narrowly defined as “the chance of an agent to secure his will even against the resistance of others” (Giddens, 1979: 256), often interpreted as an origin of class conflict and oppression, or an apparatus for sectional interest and division. Although “power struggles” do constitute one aspect of the differential distribution of power, the foundation of power is grounded in the social actor’s *transformative capacity* to attain his/her goal and to “make a difference”, therefore primarily serving as an enabling means of action rather than an impingement on other individuals’ freedom (Giddens, 1979: 88; 1984: 257; 1995: 214).

Power is not a zero-sum game either, but an inherent asset possessed by all social actors (Giddens, 1995: 199-200). It operates on the *dialectic of control*, which means that the influence of power is not merely imposed on social actors situated at the lower social ranks by those higher up the power hierarchy (Giddens, 1979: 145-150; Giddens and Dallmayr, 1982: 197-199). Instead, even the most deprived have access to resources and facilities that enable the implementation of their action and thereby the generation of impact on others. The resources mobilised by social actors in their context of action can be classified into two types – *allocative* and *authoritative* resources, with the former exerting control over the material means in the situation, and representing the actor's *domination* over environmental factors, and the latter wielding influence over alters' actions in the situation, exhibiting the actor's *domination* over other social beings (Giddens, 1979: 100-101; 1984: 258).

This categorisation is reminiscent of Parsons' *objects of orientation* in the situation of action, roughly corresponding with his classification of physical and social objects. In Giddens' theory, Parsons' concept of the cultural object has been conceptualised as actor's knowledge regarding social rules, in terms of both *signification* (symbolic meanings) and *legitimation* (normative sanctions) (1979: 107; 1984: 29). These three analytical categories – signification, domination and legitimation comprise different aspects of social structure, which is then reproduced through actors' social practice (Giddens, 1977: 132-133).

### 2.2.3 The Routinisation of Social Life

The previous two sections have expounded on Giddens' understanding of structure and agency. According to the theory of structuration, these two formerly binary concepts in Sociology converge in the instances of *social practice*. Giddens believes that the subject of investigation for social sciences should *not* be individual experiences or societal totalities, but "social practices ordered across time and space" (1984: 2). Hence, the following discussion examines the topic of social practice.

Having placed individual agency at the paramount importance in his theorisation of human actions, Giddens is confronted with the problem of social order and integration. It has been previously stated that social order is guaranteed by the continuance and dissemination of structure across time and space, which is perceived through the structural properties of social practice and retained in the memory traces of social agents. Yet there remains the question regarding individuals' *motivation* in reproducing the rules and resources they mobilise in their implementation of the action. Having dispensed with Parsons' belief in the internalisation of cultural values, Giddens now needs to address the gap between social actors' knowledgeability and their motivation in the process of structuration (Giddens, 1979: 59).

It has already been illustrated that during an individual's socialisation process, his/her engagement with repeated, recursive and predictable patterns of social interaction helps develop a sense of ontological security (cf. Section 2.2.2). The recursive nature of social practice is the key to building trust and confidence for actors' psychological maturation and their effective social learning. In other words, the *routinisation* of social life is crucial to the construction of social knowledge and its autonomy from unconscious motives (Giddens, 1984: 60). This is *not* dissimilar to Parsons' depiction of the socialisation process, which involves extracting action-reaction patterns from repeated social interaction and generalising situations based on approximation. To put it plainly, the ability to anticipate regular patterns in social practice is seen as an important indication of social actors' competence.

Whilst participating in the routines of social life, actors draw upon the familiar patterns of rules and resources activated in their memory, which are generally identified as norms, conventions or traditions. Human language is an illuminating example of such conventions, and they demand a significant degree of conformance to be deemed intelligible by others. Conversely, insanity is identified with an abnormal proportion of deviant behaviours to the extent of being deemed unintelligible and nonsensical. Mutual intelligibility lies at the core of actors' practical consciousness – their tacit social knowledge, which is largely "taken for granted" (Giddens, 1979: 219). This is why most of the time social actors do not feel compelled to supply explicit reasons and intentions for their choice of action.

Yet the most tacit and informal norms in society are also the most intensively applied ones (Giddens, 1984: 22-23). Compared with codified laws, which are discursively formulated and formally sanctioned, the habits of language use seep much deeper into social actors' daily life. As they are taken for granted, any deviation from language habits, even if trivial in its consequences, is more likely to meet with immediate resistance, due to the breakdown of mutual intelligibility and the disturbance of ontological security.

It is worth clarifying that the deviation from habitual language use is not equated with grammatical mistakes or imprecise dictions, but signifies more serious threats to the assumption of mutual intelligibility. For instance, a non-native speaker's imperfect English is generally tolerated, but disregarding contextual clues in conversations and taking other people's words too literally can expressively frustrate communication. The significance of such seemingly trivial social norms in daily conversation is demonstrated by Harold Garfinkel's "breaching experiment" (cited in Giddens, 1984: 23), where participants in the study were frequently asked to request clarification of taken-for-granted expressions when engaging in normal conversations with family and friends. The defence mechanisms instantaneously implemented by their counterparts in the conversation reflect the threats experienced to their ontological security, the unexpected and unwelcome realisation that mutual intelligibility in communication has broken down.

Just as most language users are not directly motivated to reproduce existing language features by uttering the "correct" speech, social actions, in general, are *not* explicitly motivated either. The more effective the individual's development of ontological security, the stronger the faith he/she has in conventions and the less intrusive his/her unconscious motives are during the process of action (Giddens, 1979: 219). Therefore, Giddens' answer to social agents' motivation in reproducing social structure is the replacement of explicit motivation with largely unmotivated routine practices sustained by ontological security. However, this claim does *not* deny purpose in social action but asserts that actors have vested interest in the continuance of social routines, without consciously using them to attain any particular end. In the case of reproducing language structures, social actors can be effectively and efficiently understood by others when conforming to established linguistic rules, which might have been the reason why they keep up the practice, despite not being directly motivated to reinforce existing linguistic norms. In Giddens' words, there is a "generalised *motivational commitment* to the integration of habitual practices" (1984: 64, italics added).

By underscoring the routinised character of social life, Giddens' model sheds light on the theorisation of "translating as a teleological activity *par excellence*" (Toury, 1985: 19, italics in original). In light of Giddens' theory, translation, like any other social action, is purposive and intentional but not necessarily directly motivated by an agenda. Instead, it is a largely routine practice. The more experienced a translator is, the more knowledgeable he/she becomes regarding the translational action and the more routinised the translation task seems. The recognition of routine aspects in translation does not equate its practice with "mechanical" linguistic transfer but highlights the fact that there are certain "rules" in professional ethics and practical guidelines and that there is a pattern that can be detected in the employed "creative" solutions to solve frequently occurring translation problems. These solutions then become resources available in the structural properties of translation practice, retained in the translator's memory traces.

By emphasizing the recursive and routine aspects of social life, Giddens does not mean to discount the potential for social change. Contrarily, by placing the conception of structure entirely in the instances of social practice rather than letting it assume any external form, Giddens recognises “the closeness of everyday life to chaos” in the event of disrupted routines (Giddens and Pierson, 1998: 85). Accordingly, Giddens proposed three modes of de-routinisation that serve to challenge and undermine established conventions (1979: 220-222). One of them is imposed by external circumstances, such as natural disasters or foreign invasions; the second is when divergent interpretations of existing norms emerge to discredit the currently dominant practice; lastly is the impetus commonly found in industrialised and modernised societies, where there is a conscious commitment to innovation and reformation of traditions.

When applied to translation activities, the different modes of de-routinisation as outlined by Giddens imply that under certain circumstances, translators can deliberately depart from routine practice to generate a specific impact. Such decision can be attributed to external circumstances like time pressure, resource constraints, or on a bigger scale, it can be prompted by foreign invasion, in either military or cultural terms. Besides, different interpretations of translation conventions by either practising translators or translation theorists can also disrupt the taken-for-granted routine practice of a translator. Finally, when the context demands a disavowal of conventional practice as a legitimate form of innovation and improvement, there might arise more explicitly motivated translation activities and choices of translation strategies, as seen in Ezra Pound’s translation of classical Chinese poetry as a project to rejuvenate English poetry in the early decades of the 20th century (Xie, 1999: 1).

Structure is constantly implicated in social practices, whether they are recursive or de-routinised. Albeit being the means and outcome of social agents’ actions, the reproduction of structural properties in social practice is beyond individuals’ initial intention. In other words, the structuration effect is the *unintended consequence* of human action. Giddens perceives social action *not* as an aggregate of individual and independent acts, but as a *durée*, or “a continuous flow of conduct” (Giddens, 1979: 55; 1984: 3). This flow is only occasionally disrupted by the emergence of the actor’s unconscious motives, but mostly it is sustained through the consistent rationalisation of action on the level of practical consciousness.

In addition to the underlying rationale of action, the process and the context of action are also reflexively monitored by the actor through the presencing effect of his/her memory, taking into account not only the immediate surroundings but also what has come before and what is to be expected. This aspect of reflexivity demonstrates the purposive and intentional character of human actions, keeping the ongoing process of social practice in accordance with the general motivational commitment of the actor (Giddens, 1979: 56; Giddens and Dallmayr, 1982: 31).

The continuous *rationalisation* and *reflexive monitoring* of action produce an accordion effect in the flow of social life. What is generated as the unintended consequences of action then feed back into the *unacknowledged conditions* of action. This means that any individual decision in the ongoing process of action is heavily embedded in the network of cause and effect for further actions. Even a deliberated and explicitly intentional choice can carry implications unforeseen by the actor and affect his/her subsequent decisions in unexpected ways.

The unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions of action, together with the social actors’ unconscious, lie outside the realm of their knowledgeability (Giddens and Dallmayr, 1982: 10, 32). These unplanned factors in the process of informed social actions are highly pertinent in illuminating the relationship between strategies and errors in translation activities. The pair of the concept is portrayed in this study *not* as an antagonistic dichotomy, but mutually informed translation decisions that are engaged in the interplay of agency and structure through translation practice.

### 2.2.4 Applications of Structuration Theory to TS

In contrast to the lack of attention to Parsons' theory of action, scholars in TS have made some initial attempts at adopting Giddens' theoretical model in their research. However, an in-depth investigation into the significance of the structuration theory for translation research is yet to be conducted. By the time Michaela Wolf and Alexandra Fukari published their edited volume – *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*, it had been observed that Giddens' sociology "has so far not been explored in translation studies" (2007: 25). Marlie van Rooyen later affirmed that "Giddens' structuration theory as a whole has not been applied in translation studies" (2013: 496). In fact, until recently, Giddens' model still "awaits its application to translator agency" (Tyulenev, 2014b: 188).

So far, Giddens' theory has been partly applied to studying the translation of news (Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009: 21-22, 32-33; Rooyen, 2013). It has been briefly mentioned in *Translation in Global News* by Esperança Bielsa and Susan Bassnett, but primarily in terms of its discussion on *time-space distanciation* and "the disembedding of social systems in modernity" (2009: 21). This aspect of the structuration theory primarily involves Giddens' interpretation of *system*, seen as the stretch or *distanciation* of time and space through the reproduction and dissemination of structure in recursively instantiated social practices. This "disembedding" is then defined as "the 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space" (Giddens, 1991: 21).

By introducing Giddens' conception of the system and its relation to time and space, Bielsa and Bassnett aim to demonstrate that modernity is inherently globalising, due to its divorce of time from space via instant communication technologies and mechanisms enabling social interaction with those absent in the same time-space (2009: 21 and 32). More importantly, due to the globalising effect of modernity, distant events portrayed by news and media can now result in shaping the consciousness of social actors situated outside the local context (ibid.: 33).

This, in turn, is highly constructive in reconceptualising social and cultural systems in the contemporary world. Giddens has specifically targeted "the assumption that societies are always homogeneous, unified systems", and instead proposed that social systems are "widely variable" in their "systemness" and rarely have the internal unity as exhibited by the physical and biological system (1984: 376-377). Consequently, a society as demarcated by geographical and political boundaries can integrate multiple systems, while a social system, depending on the criteria defining its "systemness", can incorporate different societies. In other words, social systems can be wholly internal to a particular society or cross-cut a plurality of societies to form *intersocietal systems* (ibid.: 164).

In comparison, Marlie van Rooyen's research into news production at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has borrowed more widely from the concepts Giddens developed for the theory of structuration (2013). In particular, Rooyen focused on the relationship between agency and structure as delineated by Giddens. Through her case study, she has discovered that while the translators at SABC follow internalised procedures when it comes to transediting news, they nonetheless have the power to challenge and transform established practices. These choices of action will then produce an impact on a specific sector and contribute to the social changes in the "entire developing society".

Meanwhile, these agents' decisions about what to transedit are largely dictated by an "inculcated […] feel" and their work is constituted by automatic or semi-automatic processes. Therefore, news transediting is identified as a routine practice. Though it is taken for granted, it involves continuous rationalisation and practical consciousness regarding the profession. Considering the gap between practical and discursive consciousness as well as the difficulties in interrupting the flow of action to obtain discursive formulations of agents' intentions, Rooyen has combined interview data with the research methods of observation and shadowing in her case study.

Rooyen claims that Giddens' theory involving multiple agents, structures, systems and structuration processes helps the casting of translational action as a lot more than merely linguistic transfer (ibid.: 499). The current study argues that not only research topics like news translation can challenge traditional perceptions of translation and benefit from Giddens' theoretical concepts, but longstanding practices like literary translation can also be examined through the prism of structuration theory. Although literary translation is typically showcased as a more creative practice than news transediting, Giddens' model helps to recognise its routine aspects.

Before embarking on the case study of literary translators chosen for this research project, it is vital to construct a theoretical framework for analysing translation errors. In the subsequent section, Parsons' theory of action and Giddens' theory of structuration will be framed in their relevance to the study of translation errors.

## 2.3 Towards a Theorisation of Translation Errors

### 2.3.1 Previous Studies on Translation Errors

It has been briefly explained towards the end of Section 1.3 that translation error remains a largely understudied topic in the field, as its connotations sit uncomfortably with the paradigm shift from the prescriptive approaches to DTS. This is partly because most errors' erratic and transient nature makes them difficult to define against *objective* criteria and makes it almost impossible to assess their effect on the "*target* readers" and thereby their correlation with "*target* system" norms. It might also be attributed to the fact that most of them are seen as "simply" and "plainly" wrong, and it is deemed "senseless" to evaluate them purely for diagnostic purposes without remedial aspirations (Wilss, 1982: 213; Pym, 1992a: 5). Such a *practical* orientation then threatens the newly acquired status of TS as an academic discipline rather than a corrective measure that serves the purposes of language learning or translator training. Moreover, some might claim that errors are indicators of deficiency in translators' competence and the focus on them as the object of investigation reinforces the impression of translation as being "second-hand", "second-rate", "error-prone" and "inadequate" (Rosa, 2010: 96).

However, it is difficult to deny that translation errors feature in various translation works regardless of the translator's competence, or as Isaac Bashevis Singer cynically puts it, "The best translators make the worst mistakes" (cited in Bloom, 2012). In fact, translation errors characterise translation activities as a persistent phenomenon and logically deserves no less acknowledgement from researchers than other textual features produced by the translational action. Therefore, the investigation into translation errors constitutes one of the foci of this study and is designed to feature as one of the main contributions this research has to offer to the field of TS. It is used to exemplify the possible integration of descriptive and prescriptive approaches to translation, by resolving the binary opposition between objective and subjective standards, target and source systems as well as translation theory and practice.

The following discussion first conducts a literature review of the previous publications on translation error, before incorporating Parsons and Giddens' theory in devising a working definition of error, including the criteria for discerning translation error from other textual features. The classification of different types of translation errors will be proposed in Part II, along with detailed examples of error analysis.

In the *Handbook of Translation Studies*, Gyde Hansen contributed an entry on "translation 'errors'" (2010), where she offered a cursory categorisation of errors in written texts, including pragmatic, semantic, idiomatic, orthographic, linguistic and stylistic errors. She also distinguished *translation errors* from these errors committed in writing, on the basis of the definition of translation "as the production of a Target Text (TT) which is based on a Source Text (ST)” (ibid.: 385). Translation error is therefore identified based on the relationship between the two texts and is believed to be primarily caused by *interlingual interference*.

Hansen argues that the understanding of what constitutes translation errors differs depending on the definition of translation adopted in particular theoretical models. For instance, corresponding to the definition of translation founded on an assumption of equivalence, non-equivalents are seen as errors. Alternatively, complying with a functionalist approach to translation, errors are regarded as a failure to fulfil the *skopos* outlined in the translation brief or readers’ expectations. Consequently, Hansen acknowledges that it is “a difficult balancing act” to differentiate translation errors from other translation changes, for their identification will vary with the society’s expectations of translation.

This study employs a *translator*-oriented approach to define translation and borrows from sociological models to analyse translational action, thereby discussing translation errors in relation to translators’ orientation and consciousness, rather than defining them against an idealised “ST-TT relationship”. Yet the concept of *linguistic interference* recurs in other literatures on translation errors, and it will be further developed in the theoretical framework designed for this study.

Kirsten Malmkjær has also recognised the difficulty in drawing a distinction “between choice and error in translation”, due to the “liberalism” advocated by the emerging trend of DTS (2004: 141). According to her, a target-oriented perspective implies that no translation decision can be defined as “simply wrong” any more, as it can always find justification in some target norm, whether the relationship between the two is indeed causal or purely coincidental (ibid.: 142).

Malmkjær’s definition of error is “the kind of choice that the translator believes is correct but which is […] simply wrong in a ‘binary’ (yes-no) way” (ibid.: 143). It is then posed against "choices which may be considered more or less suitable than other choices for a variety of reasons" (ibid.). This echoes the point made in Section 1.3, where it has been clarified that the identification of "wrong translations" does not lead to the assumption of an ideal translation that is "right". Instead, "right" translations can take varied forms, just as DTS suggests. Thus, the prescriptive judgement on translation errors does not exclude the plurality of alternatives available in a situation that are potentially justifiable via "target system" norms. In other words, it need not renounce the research culture established by DTS.

The concept of binary errors as against non-binary errors is proposed by Pym (1992a), referring to the rationalisation process undertaken by the tutor when assessing students' translation works in the foreign language teaching or translator training classroom. Pym suggests that binary errors warrant the simple and decisive verdict of "It's wrong!", while non-binary errors merit the benefit of doubt with the rationalisation process more accurately phrased as "It's correct, but…" (ibid.: 5). In other words, non-binary errors are in fact less adequate translation solutions that are nonetheless viable and legitimate alternatives.

However, it is debatable whether errors can truly be divided into binary and non-binary types as claimed by Pym. After all, if a translation choice can be rationalised and evaluated in terms of "It's *correct*, but…", then what could possibly justify the definition of it as *error* in the first place? In the present field of TS, in order to forestall the accusation of the subjectivity of error definitions, it is perhaps vital to restore the concept of error to its original association with being "wrong", rather than allowing it to act as the umbrella term for all translation choices deemed undesirable or less desirable. Similarly, the designation of a certain translation error as a "binary" error can also be misleading. As has been argued beforehand, the diagnosis of a certain translation decision as wrong and misinformed does not necessitate the inference of a wrong vs. right binary opposition or the automatic supposition of one *correct* alternative.

Regarding the identification of translation errors among other “motivated” translation choices, Malmkjær has proposed a linguistically oriented distinction between *semantic patterning* and *formal patterning*, with the former explicable through semantic associations and translator intentions and the latter intelligible only through the graphemic or phonemic similarities between the textual segments. In other words, the presence of formal resemblance between the two textual segments in different languages evidences *linguistic interference* and provides support for the diagnosis of that particular translation decision as an error. This formal patterning is one of the criteria adopted by the current study for discerning translation errors from other textual features produced by a translational action.

Malmkjær further categorised translation choices into manipulation, motivated choices and error, with manipulation representing a regular pattern of translation changes motivated by *explicitly articulated* principles and beliefs. This conceptualisation revolving the ability to formulate discursive reasons for one’s action is reminiscent of the discursive consciousness proposed by Giddens. In comparison with manipulation, Malmkjær holds that other motivated translation choices are *unlikely* to produce perceptible patterns, since they are motivated by one-off considerations, on grounds of comprehensibility, acceptability or aesthetics, and the interaction between them is too intricate and subtle to be guided by any explicit strategy. In contrast to the potential explanations for manipulation and other motivated translation choices, Malmkjær holds that errors are “never functionally or thematically motivated, because of course, they are *not* motivated, but, rather, incidental results of what the translator happens not to know about the languages involved” (2004: 154, italics in original).

However, this study argues otherwise and aims to demonstrate that errors and their manifestation in a specific translation context by a particular translator are at least intelligible through the translator’s general motivational commitment. Also, although errors might signal what the translator does not know about the languages involved, they are almost always more than “incidental”.

After identifying what error is, it is also helpful for a researcher of social action to explore the reasons behind its occurrence. Malmkjær asserts that while confronting the translator during interviews is an obvious option, it is also feasible to surmise the explanations based on “historical, cultural and even personal knowledge” regarding the translator and the situation of his/her actions (ibid.: 143). This study primarily adopts the latter research method, considering the limited resources available in the form of interview data and the general difficulties involved in directly addressing the issue of error in conversations with practising translators. While striving for a working definition of translation errors that is reasonably objective, empirical, descriptive and explanatory, this study argues that when viewing translation as a social action, all conclusions can only be *probabilistic* rather than definitive as found in natural sciences, because the subject of action is human beings with their subjective, complex and opaque processes of consciousness and unconscious (Bruce, 1999: 9-10).

The TS scholar who initially attempted to discuss translation errors in reference to translator’s conscious and unconscious processes is Lawrence Venuti (2013: 32-56). By applying psychoanalytic approaches to the study of translation errors, Venuti distinguishes unconscious from *preconscious*, for the latter specifies knowledge or skills acquired by the translator that can be articulated in words when required to do so, albeit being automatically applied during the translation process (ibid.: 54). The psychoanalytical concept of preconscious is perhaps the term closest to Giddens’ practical consciousness.

However, Venuti believes that translation errors should be attributed to translators’ unconscious. By quoting William Weaver’s comments on his own translating experience, stating that translation is mostly “unconscious” and “instinctive”, Venuti portrays translational action as “a largely *unreflective* process”, motivated by repressed yet active wishes and desires (ibid. 32-33, italics added). This is a rather radical proposition, as compared to Giddens’ theorisation of any social action as involving reflexive monitoring and rationalisation.

Despite the debatable claim crediting translational action to unconscious processes, Venuti’s “symptomatic reading” of translation errors marks a significant progress in TS scholars’ theorisation on the matter. Venuti’s initiative moves beyond Malmkjær’s attempt to distinguish errors from other choices and calls for an interpretation of the reasons behind those specific manifestations of error. Venuti further cites Freud to explain the occurrence of errors in translation, referring to “the reader’s preparedness that alters the text and reads into it something which he is expecting or with which he is occupied”. With such a strong preconception and susceptibility to misreading, the only nudge needed from the text is “some sort of resemblance in the verbal image” (Freud, cited in Venuti, 2013: 39). This “resemblance in the verbal image” echoes what Malmkjær terms “formal patterning” and what Hansen calls “interlingual interference”.

Venuti raises a very valid point when he analyses the diagnostic value of such “resemblances” and insists that it is instructive to consider their relationship to the whole text, for the decision to “mistranslate” the linguistic item with something similar in form might be a deliberate and well-informed choice, intended to be “the translator’s implicit commentary on that text” (ibid.: 47). This suggests that the presence of linguistic interference alone might not be sufficient in identifying translation errors, and the evaluation of a potential error against the larger context is necessary.

What is problematic in Venuti’s psychoanalytic approach to translation errors is his assertion that translator’s unconscious motivations are not necessarily personal, but can be “transindividual” and “political” as well, and “informed by the theory and practice of translation” (ibid.: 41). This ambition in connecting the translator’s unconscious with the immediate context of action and “the larger cultural and social situation” directly contradicts his own intention of separating the unconscious from the preconscious (ibid.: 55). By including social knowledge into the theorisation of the unconscious, Venuti confounds the two concepts of practical consciousness and unconscious, consequently portraying what is more aptly depicted as a routine practice by Giddens as an unreflective process.

Venuti is very cautious about selecting examples from highly accomplished translators, for he believes that only errors committed by translators with high proficiency, rich experience and great control over the text carry significance beyond mere oversight. Nevertheless, Venuti’s concern primarily lies with the potential pitfall of *faux amis* for beginner translators (although he used the wrong term “false cognates” in his book), as the formal similarity between the source and target languages may constitute direct linguistic interference with the translator’s interpretation and construction of texts, before any preconception can participate in the process (ibid.: 47). This problem rarely exists in language pairs as distant as Chinese and English, so even in the case of a relatively less experienced Chinese-English translator, translation errors can still reveal something beyond mere oversight. The significance of them can be measured against other parameters, such as frequency of occurrence, susceptibility to misreading, the effect on textual coherence, etc.

Besides Venuti, Paul Kussmaul also proposed hypothetical explanations of translation errors, borrowing from psycholinguistic approaches (1995: 15-37). Although Kussmaul’s study was primarily conducted for pedagogical purposes, his theorisation of error is illuminating for both novice and advanced translators (ibid.: 17). Kussmaul rejects the simplistic explanation often accorded to translation errors, which he terms *carelessness hypothesis*. Instead, he proposes the *hypothesis of misuse of top-down knowledge* (ibid.: 34-35). There are two types of scenarios where translators may misuse top-down knowledge and incur an imbalance between top-down and bottom-up thought processes. While the first type occurs when one meaning of a word is so predominant in the translator’s memory that the translator disregards information from the context, the second type ensues when the translator’s personal experience of the context is so strong that he/she fails to activate the appropriate understanding of a word’s meaning. The first type has been addressed by Giddens’ elaboration on the presencing effect of memory and the actors’ selective perception shaped by their anticipatory schemata. Borrowing Parsons’ terms, the second type of misuse of top-down knowledge is attributed to the overshadowing of translator’s cathectic orientation and consequently the undermining of his/her cognitive orientation.

Kussmaul subsequently prescribed the “desirable attitudes” for error avoidance, namely self-confidence and self-awareness (ibid.: 31-32). Between them, self-confidence refers to the ability to rely on world knowledge in making translation judgements, while self-awareness signifies the professional competence of practising translators in gaining a reflective understanding of the more or less automatic cognitive processing involved in their translational actions. Through social learning or professional training characterised by the recognition of recursive and generalisable patterns, self-confidence eventually replaces the convoluted and laborious monitoring performed by translators who were insecure and tentative in making decisions. However, a proportionate level of self-confidence can only be achieved through the build-up of self-awareness.

Kussmaul’s conception of self-awareness and self-confidence as aspects of translators’ professional competence can be well complemented by Giddens’ theoretical concept of ontological security. The acquisition of translation-related social knowledge, i.e. the practical consciousness involved in becoming aware and anticipatory of patterns in one’s action as well as its effect on the situation of action, helps develop in the translator a sense of ontological security. This is closely related to trust and confidence. In the following subsection, Parsons and Giddens' theoretical models will be further integrated with the previous theorisation on translation errors in designing a preliminary framework for the current study.

### 2.3.2 Preliminary Framework for Error Analysis

To begin with, a working definition of *translation error* is urgently required to preclude any misuse of the term for all unfavourably judged translation choices or all translation changes unwarranted by dictionary definitions, as seen in Pym's designation of binary and non-binary errors and Aveling's justification of his "deliberate mistakes" as opposed to "dumb mistakes" (Pym, 1992a; Aveling, 2002: 2, cf. Section 1.3, Section 2.3.1).

In this study, the definition of translation error underscores its resistance to defensive arguments. While translators can defend their other translation choices against criticisms by evoking a variety of discursive reasons for action, translation errors, once spelled out by others, presumably undermine the translators' original grounds for action. Taking into account the complementary attitudes of self-awareness and self-confidence proposed by Kussmaul, it can be said that translation errors typically occur when there is a mismatch between self-awareness and self-confidence, which is why the revelation of such errors potentially poses threat to the translator's ontological security by indicating that the practical knowledge they take for granted has malfunctioned in a certain context.

Borrowing from Parsons' clarification of the concept of error in social action, translation error should apply to situations where the translator did not know certain facts relevant to his or her action and would have acted differently had he or she been made aware of them (Parsons, 1968: 66). In light of Giddens' discussion on the matter, translation error should *not* be evaluated against an idealised model of a "better" or even the "best" version, but instead defined on the assumption or the informed speculation that the translator would retrospectively choose to alter or remedy his or her decision (Giddens, 1984: 101). This study has adopted Parsons' definition of error as "the failure to attain ends or to make the 'right' choice of means" (1968: 45-46). Having established the working definition of translation error for this study, it is perhaps helpful to summarise the important points raised so far in this chapter on the sociological interpretation of error.

Informed by Parsons and Giddens' theories, this study aims to correct the portrayal of error in social actions as *irrational*, *unintentional* and *unconscious*. Hopefully, it has been demonstrated that error is one aspect of the manifestation of practical consciousness applied to routinised social practice, including translation activities. Therefore, like other aspects of social action, it contributes to the intentional and purposive character of human agency. Situated in the continuous flow of action, it would have been rationalised by the actor, however implicitly, on the basis of his/her social knowledge acquired in the socialisation process or the process of being socialised into a certain profession, either through official training or personal experience. Such knowledge is then stored in the actor's memory, which shapes his/her selective perception of a particular context and awaits participation in the actualised social practice through the actor's anticipatory schemata. Well-developed anticipatory schemata bespeak the actor's social experience and significantly facilitate his/her execution of recursive social practice. However, such schemata might also render the actor susceptible to error due to his/her highly selective perception. As each moment of decision-making is embedded in the durée of social practice, actor's actions and his/her context of action are reflexively monitored by the presencing effect of memory. Thus, intentional actions can produce unintended consequences that then feed back into the process of action as unacknowledged conditions, connecting the seemingly "incidental" occurrences of error with what Malmkjær terms "manipulation" and "motivated choices" in a chosen line of action.

Another impression of translation error this study seeks to correct is that error analysis necessarily leads to an indictment of incompetence. Instead, it has been argued that cognitive capabilities alone cannot bridge the gap between an actor’s competence and his/her actualised performance in a specific situation, because the social action is voluntaristic and normatively oriented rather than entirely voluntary. The means and conditions, rules and resources available in a certain situation of action are both restricting and enabling in nature. The tension between these possibilities and limitations imposed on social actors render them susceptible to errors. Moreover, cultural values participate in the formation of personality systems as well as the construction of social systems. Therefore, the need-dispositions and the role expectations activated in any particular situation of action encourage actors to orient towards certain choices among other alternatives. Besides orientations that are cognitively informed and instrumentally dominant, cathectic orientation and evaluative orientation calling upon appreciative and moral standards in one’s cultural traditions can equally factor in the actor’s decisions. These different action orientations can together generate choices that may not be optimal or logical in cognitive terms.

Based on the above hypotheses about translation error, this study proposes two criteria for discerning whether a translation choice is an error, which are related to the cause and effect of the translational action respectively – the presence of *trigger*(s) and the disruption of *coherence*.

The conception of triggers as a judgement criterion for translation error is *not* without precedents in the field. As illustrated in the previous subsection, similar concepts such as linguistic interference, formal patterning and resemblance in the verbal image have already been proposed by other scholars. The meaning of the term *trigger* here is also akin to the psycholinguistic “process of excitation” as cited by Giddens and associated with the actor’s anticipation of the incoming utterance (Giddens, 1984: 94 and 96). Either due to logical associations or emotional identification, the translator might be more willing and ready to accept a certain course of development in the unfolding of the text. If the verbal image of the text turns out to be drastically disparate, then the translator can easily adjust his/her expectations, but if the actual text bears a significant level of similarity to the anticipated formulation, then it acts as a trigger activating or exciting the latent schemata, setting in motion a potentially erroneous interpretation of the text.

Such a trigger can be located inside and outside the utterance itself. When it is situated internal to the utterance, a trigger can take the form of *phonological*, *morphological*, *logographical* or *structural* similarities, which activate a verbalised interpretation that resembles the actual material in sound, lexical components, visual image and structural formation, respectively. Meanwhile, in the presence of an external trigger to the utterance, less demand is placed on the linguistic interference from the text, for now the excitation process primarily derives its rationale from the actor's *preconceptions*. In other words, the more entrenched and the more taken-for-granted a translator's preconceptions are, the more predisposed he/she is to misreading, even if the resemblance in the verbal image is relatively low. Assuming that translators usually have a reasonable amount of time to complete the task and free access to sufficient resources for ensuring the quality of their works, the occurrence of translation errors almost always involves more than one trigger, most likely a combination of both intratextual and extratextual factors.

However, as Venuti cautioned, the presence of trigger(s) alone is not enough to affirm whether a translation choice is an error, and the judgment needs to be checked against the effect of such a translation change in the larger context. Even when the translated result seems to bear a linguistic resemblance to its textual counterpart or resonate with the translator's identified preconceptions, it could still be the outcome of a deliberate strategy that happens to coincide with the text's formal patterning. If there is further evidence to testify that the translation decision ended up disrupting *textual*, *intertextual* and *extratextual* coherence, then it could be more positively ascertained to be a translation error.

Specifically, *textual* coherence refers to how the piece of translated segment in question relates to the rest of the translated text. It can be safely speculated that a predetermined strategy or a manipulation in Malmkjær's words will be followed through in order to ensure consistency throughout the translated product. Also, even an implicitly motivated translation choice should at least be implemented without risking self-contradiction in textual coherence, especially given the necessary self-editing involved during the translating process. Therefore, if the translated result contravenes preceding or following textual content, then it is more likely to be a translation error.

*Intertextual* coherence concerns the relationship between the translated product and other texts. This can potentially include the other language version(s), relevant texts in the same language, as well as paratexts and metatexts. Therefore, the criteria adopted by Hansen for the identification of "ST-TT relationships" and the largely discarded concept of equivalence in transfer feature here as one aspect of the judgement criteria for translation errors. This study argues that the discrepancy between the previous version(s) of the text and the translated version can hardly certify a translation change as an error, but it can contribute to the supporting evidence that helps determine the error probability of a translation choice.

The same is applicable to the criteria based on "target system" norms or "target text" functions. When the translated text significantly deviates from conventional stylistic preferences, the type of scenario is characterised by Pym as non-binary errors. This study does not deem such deviation as a legitimate indication of error, but it might be presented as a sign or a symptom of translation error. In other words, corroborated by other evidence, unwarranted deviation from traditional stylistic standards can lend further support to the identification of a translation choice as an error.

Furthermore, if the translated segment in question contradicts what the translator claims to be his/her intention in the paratexts or metatexts, or if the outcome of the translation decision notably digresses from the envisioned end as discursively formulated by the translator, then the result is more likely to be a manifestation of error. However, it should always be recognised that a translator's discursive reasons might very possibly depart from the actual rationalisation of action during the translating process.

Finally, *extratextual* coherence or contextual coherence involving objects of orientation beyond the textual references can also serve as indicators of a translation error, especially when the text is descriptive of or pertinent to objects in the material world. Typically, when the translated text contradicts historical facts or well-established knowledge in other fields, the result can be more aptly identified as a translation error.

In the subsequent three chapters, this theoretical framework will be applied to the actual case study of translating Chinese Nobel Laureates of Literature by analysing examples of translation errors collected during the research process to demonstrate the implementation of the proposed criteria and to illustrate the sociological interpretation of errors. The classification of various types of translation errors, as well as the interaction between errors and other translation choices, will also be further explained.

# Part II Between Prescriptive and Descriptive

# – Error Analysis as a Case in Point

## Chapter 3 Translating *One Man's Bible*

### 3.1 The "Rigid" Rendition of an Academic

In this chapter, one novel from each writer has been selected for detailed textual analysis, with a special focus on the translation errors identified in their respective English versions, in light of the framework established in the previous section. In order to ensure coherent argument and easy comprehensibility, examples will be grouped on the basis of the books they are drawn from. In this thesis, the Chinese versions quoted include a mixture of Traditional and Simplified Chinese, depending on whether the particular example is drawn from a Taiwanese or Mainland Chinese edition. At the end of Part III, one chapter will be dedicated to the classification of these examples into different types of errors.

Concisely put, the preceding section has identified translation errors as translation choices that are resistant to defensive arguments from the translator, for their revelation presumably undermines the translator's original grounds for action. Errors are thus regarded as the products of a mismatch between translators' self-awareness and self-confidence. These errors are distinguished from other translation choices according to two criteria – the presence of internal or external triggers and the disruption of textual, intertextual or extratextual coherence. The significance of such errors is subsequently evaluated against the frequency of their occurrence and their susceptibility to misinterpretation. The more regularly they recur and the less susceptible they are to misreading, the more informative they become as regards to translator's orientation and consciousness. Finally, errors are inevitably embedded in the continuous process of translational action, thus are almost always engaged in interaction with other translation choices, including deliberated and explicit strategies.

As briefly mentioned in the Introduction, this chapter conducts a textual comparison between the Chinese and English versions of *One Man's Bible* by Gao Xingjian and Mabel Lee. While most of the book reviewers in the English-speaking communities who were clearly unimpressed with *One Man's Bible* directed part of their suspicion to the translation process, they mostly focused on the criticism of its "wooden" (Jenner, 2002) or "tedious" (Krishnaswamy, 2002) style. Nobody picked up on any incongruous textual details that cast doubt on the credibility of the narrative itself. In fact, Richard Eder from *The New York Times* explicitly referred to the translator's "stiffish (*though no doubt accurate*) English" (Eder, 2000; italics added). It was not until a bilingual scholar who read through both the Chinese and the English versions attentively that a notable number of translation errors were unearthed (Fan, 2003).

Since the project of translating *One Man's Bible* into English was commissioned shortly after Gao's success with the Nobel committee in 2000, Fan speculates that the translator Mabel Lee had to finish off her work in a haste in order to publish in the halo of Gao's newly gained fame as a Nobel Laureate (ibid.: 311). However, Lee's own statement during her interviews runs somewhat contradictory to this hypothesis. She claims that she felt a great responsibility in translating Gao's works and refused to rush the translation of *One Man's Bible* (Liu, 2001: 5, 7). In fact, Lee confirms that the publishers never pressurised her either (see Appendix: 338). Undoubtedly, Lee's account of her own work ethics can hardly constitute a convincing refutation against Fan's criticisms, but the discrepancy between the evidence and the testimony does inspire scepticism towards such a simplistic explanation of translation errors.

Fan sees these errors as issues that are far more serious than "stylistic nuance" (Fan, 2003: 309). Consequently, he distrusts the translator so much that he insists on using his own translation when quoting from the novel (ibid.: 308), but the general readers, book reviewers and literary critics seemed to have little problem comprehending, interpreting or discussing the novel. If the consequences of committing these errors are truly so condemnable in their misleading representation of Gao's work, portrayed by Fan as the prime culprit leading to controversies in the work's reception, then there at least appears to be a certain complicity between the translator who produced them and the audience who received them. This is because critics and reviewers exclusively targeted what Fan calls "stylistic nuance" in their criticisms, without ever doubting the translation's accuracy.

Therefore, as Hansen suggested in her *Handbook* entry on the subject (2010, cf. Section 2.3.1), translation errors should be distinguished from other errors commonly found in written texts, involving more than inappropriate idiomatic, orthographic and stylistic choices. This is especially the case when the translator is translating into his/her native tongue, sharing with most of the readers relatively similar judgement criteria in monitoring his/her writing. Errors specifically relevant to the translational action are hence primarily caused by interlingual interference, although their effects can present themselves as inappropriate idiomatic, orthographic or stylistic choices.

In the case of Gao Xingjian's translator Mabel Lee, she is an academic researcher who had already widely published on Chinese history and literature, as well as Gao Xingjian's life and works before her translation endeavours. Such rich intertextual and contextual knowledge also entails strong reader expectations. Once such preconceptions come into conflict with textual clues, the translator's anticipatory schemata predispose her to perceive the incoming information selectively, thereby rendering her susceptible to translation errors.

Furthermore, Lee explicitly stated that her "academic training" urged her to "stick rigidly" to the Chinese version instead of altering the text to make it "more easily digestible for a target readership" (Liu, 2001: 6). Such a claim supports the assumption adopted in this textual analysis that most of the dramatic translation changes in the English version are more likely to be errors rather than deliberated and calculated decisions to transform the narrative, based on the assumed intertextual coherence between translator's metatexts and his/her translation choices (cf. Section 2.3).

Nevertheless, Lee also explained in a Chinese interview with SBS Radio how she translated the title of another book by Gao – "論創作", which is literally "Discussing Creation", into "The Case for Literature", simply because a literal translation "does not sound good" in this instance (Gong, 2013). This serves to prove that practising translators primarily rely on their practical consciousness in the translating process, which is rarely punctuated by the discursive formulation of reasons for action. Their practical consciousness is often manifested in an implicit sense of what feels right rather than explicit rules or guidelines that are consistently applied throughout the duration of their translational action (Orero, Sager and Pontiero, 1997: 22).

However, despite the limit of the translator's discursive consciousness, the translating process is still implicitly rationalised and reflexively monitored by the translator, thereby creating unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions for further translational action. It has been verified in interviews with Lee that her translation, in this case, has been carried out in a linear manner, "from cover to cover" (see Appendix: 329), so the following discussions in this chapter are presented on the basis of that premise.

*One Man's Bible* is widely recognised as a semi-autobiographical novel and a sequel to another novel of Gao's – *Soul Mountain* (Crossette, 2002; Jenner, 2002; Rojas, 2002; Winterton, 2002; Gao and Fong, 2007: xi; Sollars and Jennings, 2008: 585; Lee, 2012: 3). In the book, the narrator employs two different pronouns "you" and "he" as self-reference, with "he" representing the protagonist's earlier life in the PRC's initial 40 years of political turmoil and "you" leading his later life as an exiled playwright touring around the world. The two narratives interweave, as "you" recalls, reflects upon and comments on the past memories.

The main character's experience through the ten years of Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) dominates the "he" narrative, when "he" as an intellectual, acted as both an agitator and a victim of the rapidly changing political climate.  He led a rebel faction of Red Guards while constantly suffering the terror of being targeted, observed and reported. His reminiscence was initiated by Margarethe, a Jewish woman from Germany, who was burdened by memories of the Holocaust. She acts as the spiritual and sexual companion of "you" during his short stay in Hong Kong, to whom the narrator relates his own past. Even though Margarethe physically disappears from the scene quite early on, she remains the only addressee of his quasi-soliloquy (Gao, 1999).

While the Chinese language has no grammatical inflection to indicate tense, the English version adopts past tense for the "he" narrative and present tense for "you", clearly distinguishing the temporal and spatial dimensions of the two narrative threads. This is an arguably deliberated translation decision, possibly motivated by Mabel Lee's emphasis on Gao's narrative design of "critical importance" on the basis of switching pronouns (Lee, 2012: 3). Consequently, the English version further underscores the demarcation between the two diegetic levels. The necessity of reconciling grammatical differences between the Chinese and English languages might heighten the translator's awareness of his/her role in reconstructing a narrative, and thus motivate more explicit translation strategies.

On being requested to provide discursive reasons for her choice in tense, Lee easily recalled her deliberation process. She even remembered one instance where she had to use past tense in *Soul Mountain* (see Appendix: 329). In her interview, Lee referred to the truthful documentation of historical events in *One Man's Bible* as compared to the poetic quality of *Soul Mountain*. According to her, in classical Chinese poetry, there is usually "no temporal or spatial limitations" (see Appendix: 310). Instead, readers are "immediately witness to events that are unfolding" (see Appendix: 314). This prompted her to choose an interchange of past and present tense in the former and a consistently applied present tense in the latter.

## 3.2 Mounting a Defence for the Libertine

In comparison to Lee’s strategic choices in tense, the following examples of translation errors can potentially motivate a retrospective decision to act differently, and to alter or remedy one’s choice, if a discursive breakdown of the translator’s decision-making process was elicited:

> Example 1
>
> CV: 從此，由衷喜愛漂亮女人，而他沒女人的時候，便自己下筆，寫得還相當色情。這方面，他毫不正人君子，甚至羨慕**唐璜**和**喀薩諾瓦**，可沒那艷福，只好把性幻想寫入書中。(Gao, 1999: 218)
>
> AV: Since then, he genuinely liked beautiful women. As for times when he had no woman, he wrote about them himself, and what he wrote was rather pornographic. In this respect, he was not at all an upright gentleman, even envying **Don Juan** and **Casanova**, but he didn’t have that kind of good fortune in love affairs, so he could only write his sexual fantasies into books.
>
> EV: From then on, he deeply appreciated beautiful women. In those times, when he was without a woman, he would write about them, and what he wrote contained a lot of sex; in this respect, he was not a virtuous gentleman. Furthermore, he had great admiration for **Tang Yin** and **Casanova**, but he was never as lucky, so all he could do was to consign his sexual fantasies to his writings. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 213)

The above example contains a most conspicuous manifestation of translation error – the misreading of proper names. The similarity between the verbal image of the Chinese names “唐璜” (pronounced “Tang Huang”, Chinese transliteration of “Don Juan”) and “唐寅” (Tang Yin) definitely played a part, but it will be too simplistic a view treating it as an error any careless reader can commit. For one thing, Don Juan is juxtaposed alongside Casanova, another renowned name synonymous with “womaniser” in western culture.

Also, “唐寅” (Tang Yin) is much better known by his courtesy name “唐伯虎” (Tang Bohu), which means that a regular Chinese reader is most likely to immediately register the Chinese name as “Don Juan”, given the association encouraged by its cultural equivalent – “Casanova”. Moreover, readers will also be discouraged from misreading “Don Juan” as “Tang Yin”, due to the extra cognitive effort required to recognise the slightly more obscure name, not to mention the cognitive leap one needs to make in order to retrieve this rather out-of-place cultural reference from one’s knowledge base.

Therefore, the image of “Tang Yin” in the translator’s mind must be much more accessible as compared to most readers when she approached the Chinese text and ready for association with the author Gao Xingjian. In one of her papers written on Gao Xingjian, Mabel Lee traced his autobiographical fiction to the tradition of Ming literati like Tang Yin, who she believes pioneered the pursuit after individualism among Chinese intellectuals and ushered in “a golden age of autobiography” in Chinese literature (Lee, 2006: 10). Bearing in mind Tang Yin’s strong association with the theme and genre of Gao’s literary works, Lee is prone to this misreading that serves as a confirmation from the author himself.

Moreover, the difference between the two largely romanticised and popularised characters of “Don Juan” and “Tang Yin” is not simply the difference between a “much-celebrated gallant” and “an exotic stranger” as Fan claims in his review (2003: 311). Even though “Tang Yin” is generally perceived as a sentimental romantic, who became well known for his poetry and painting of women (Chang and Owen, 2010: 41), he is first and foremost an accomplished intellectual, who is celebrated as one of the “Four Masters of Ming” (ibid.: 39). A character like him might have been deemed worthier of Gao’s admiration than the Spanish womaniser with a contempt for moral judgment.

Furthermore, *One Man’s Bible* has been frequently criticised for its portrayal of the protagonist’s sexual conquests (Jenner, 2002; Rojas, 2002), detailing his sexual relationships with at least six women, including a middle school student, a university student, a married woman and a medical intern in the army. Considering the scope of the protagonist's autobiographical sexual conquests, this particular translation error can also signal the translator's unwillingness to encounter two analogies of obsessed womanisers in this chapter of Gao's self-examination, which originated from her willing defence of Gao's attitude towards women.

Essentially, the Chinese character "璜" in "唐璜" (Don Juan) is logographically similar to "寅" in "唐寅" (Tang Yin), acting as the textual trigger of this particular translation error. It is then accompanied by the preconceptual trigger in Lee's anticipatory schemata, which readily associates Gao with the celebrated Ming scholar. In addition, Lee's cathectic orientation towards the author she translates and her motivational commitment aiming to paint an image of Gao as an uninhibited intellectual as opposed to a debauched womaniser further supported her selective perception of this cultural reference. The diagnosis of such a translation decision more as a plausible error than a deliberated choice is then verified against its effect in disrupting the textual coherence by inserting a rather isolated reference of Tang Yin, which is not easily relatable to the author's "sexual fantasies" (Gao and Lee, 2002: 213). It has also been previously argued that the name "唐璜" (Don Juan) demonstrates a low susceptibility to being misread as "Tang Yin", acting as a relatively significant signal of the translator's orientation of action.

Lee's defensive stance when it comes to Gao's attitude towards women can also be observed in some of the smaller translation changes in Example 1. For instance, instead of translating "喜愛" in a more straightforward manner, which is literally "to like", "to love", or "to be fond of" in Chinese, the translator went for the verb "appreciated", a word that carries an added connotation of respect and a sense of cherishing for these women rather than a suspicion of sexual objectification. Furthermore, when the Chinese says "而他沒女人的時候" (as for times when he had no woman), which refers to the intervals between his many sexual encounters, it was slightly rephrased as "in those times, when he was without a woman”, which implies that his early life spent in mainland China was mostly without a woman. By inserting “in those times” into the sentence, an expression completely absent from the Chinese version, the translator is to some extent knowingly attributing the author’s erotic depictions to the sexual repression in Chinese society, thus weakening the impression of his sexual obsessions. The same orientation on the translator’s part can also be observed in the following examples:

Example 2

CV: 他也還不會就想到做愛，只覺得這女孩就**夠慷慨**的了。(Gao, 1999: 136)

AV: And he wouldn’t think of making love yet; he only felt that the girl was **generous enough**.

EV: He did not yet know about lust, but he could tell that the girl was **really passionate**. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 131)

Example 3

CV: 他趕緊起身，赤腳踩在冰冷的磚地上，想留住這姑娘，**可立刻又意識到他會做什麼**。 (Gao, 1999: 230)

AV: He hastened to get up, and with bare feet he stepped on the icy-cold tile floor, wanting to retain this girl, **but immediately realised what he would do.**

EV: He quickly got up and went barefoot across the icy-cold brick floor, thinking to stop the girl, **but not knowing what to do.** (Gao and Lee, 2002: 226)

Example 4

CV: ……然後你悄悄溜掉，同剛剛結識**被你打動芳心**的姑娘，在廁所裡站著做愛…… (Gao, 1999: 256)

AV: … then you secretly slip away, and with the girl whom you just met and **who is infatuated with you**, you make love standing in the toilet.

EV: … you quietly slip off with a young woman. You have just met, but **she has won your heart**, and you make love standing up in the lavatory. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 250)

Example 5

> CV: 你想有一個女人，一個和你同樣透徹的女人，一個把這世界上的一切繫絆都解脫的女人，一個不受家庭之累不生孩子的女人，一個不追求虛榮和時髦的女人，一個自然而然充分淫蕩的女人，一個並不想從你身上攫取什麼的女人，只同你此時此刻**行魚水之歡**的女人，但你哪裡去找到這樣一個女人？ (Gao, 1999: 438)
>
> AV: You want to have a woman, a woman who is as transparent as you are, a woman who has freed herself from all fetters of this world, a woman who is not burdened by family and who is not giving birth to children, a woman who is not seeking after vanity or fashion, a women who is naturally and fully lustful, a woman who does not want to extract anything from you, a woman who only **engages in sex with you** at this very moment, but where do you go to look for such a woman?
>
> EV: You want a woman, a woman whose thinking is as lucid as yours, a woman who is free of the bondage of the world. You want a woman who rejects the ties of a home, and does not bear children, a woman who does not follow vanity and fashion, a natural and totally wanton woman. You want a woman who does not want to appropriate anything from your person, a woman who will, at this instant of time, **enjoy with you the joys of being a fish in water**. But where is such a woman to be found? (Gao and Lee, 2002: 439)

Among the above examples, Example 2 records the first time that "he" touched a girl. It was a date with Little Five, arranged by his sexually experienced friend Luo. According to Luo, Little Five was a girl with a reputation for being compliant and perhaps generous in face of men's sexual advances. Based on this prior knowledge, "he" tentatively kissed the girl and fondled her breasts at the end of the date. As Little Five docilely tolerated his behaviours with little resistance, his memory of her was one mixed with regret about not having taken the relationship a step further when he had the chance. While the Chinese version employed the word "慷慨" (generous) to describe his impression of the girl, stressing her passive toleration of his attempts at taking advantage of her, Lee used the word "passionate" with connotations of initiative, returning the choice to the girl rather than portraying her as the suspected victim. The English version also inserted a connective "but" to draw a contrast between his ignorance in the matter and her evident command of experience.

In comparison, Example 3 recalls “his” sexual encounter with Xiao Xiao, a middle school student who had come to his apartment to show him a fresh inch-long scar below her chest, possibly as a cry for help, a gesture of seduction or an appeal for sympathy. After being intimate with him, Xiao Xiao dressed and turned to leave. It has never been clarified as to what had happened to the girl that prompted her to show up at his apartment, for the protagonist eventually allows her to leave without daring to ask about the reasons. The Chinese version implies that his hesitation to keep the girl from leaving lies in his apprehension about what might happen next between the two of them, while the English version attributes his indecision to his gaucheness in front of girls, a want of tact in expressing his true intentions. In a manner, the Chinese version underscores his knowledge and experience when it comes to such delicate situations, as opposed to his lack of them in the English version.

As for Example 4 and 5, they are both figments of the author’s musings about women. In Example 4, the man and woman’s emotional investment in a brief love affair are reversed, with the Chinese version portraying the woman as the infatuated party who might be taken advantage of in a casual relationship and the English version assigning the role of the enamoured lover to the man. Compared to Example 1, it is harder to ascertain whether Example 3 and 4 constitute translation errors or are more deliberated translation choices. This is because the similarity in the verbal image is present but very limited in both instances. Meanwhile, the English version, although quite notably diverging from its Chinese version and the translator’s metatexts, does not generate further incoherence on the textual or contextual levels.

Meanwhile, in Example 5, the translation of a Chinese four-character idiom “魚水之歡” (literally “fish and water’s joys”), a metaphor for sexual pleasures between a man and a woman, only retained the idiom’s images, i.e. the vehicle of the metaphor. When borrowed without explicating the tenor of the metaphor, the image of “a fish in water” can inspire a variety of interpretations, which are probably more closely associated in English with the sense of freedom and ease found in one's own element, again mitigating the sexual connotations in the author's expectations from women. The expression "a fish in water" is not a set phrase in English. However, it has also been used by Howard Goldblatt in one of his translations to render another Chinese idiom "如鱼得水" (literally "like a fish getting water") (Jiang and Goldblatt, 2008: 104). As this expression is then immediately followed by "you fit right in" in Goldblatt's translation, it can be reasonably ascertained that he retained the two images being confident that his readers will be able to deduce the meaning of being in one's element, based on the context as well as the reminiscence of an existing set phrase in English – "to be like a fish out of water". Comparing the two translators' employment of the phrase, it is suspected whether Mabel Lee misread the Chinese text and confused the two idioms.

Given that the translation choice in Example 5 has exactly rendered the verbal "image" in the Chinese version, rather than being triggered by another similar verbal image, it can also be argued that the translation choice could potentially be a strategic decision. Moreover, apart from increasing the ambiguity of the metaphor, the English version did not produce any incoherent effect. In the end, unless such a translation choice is directly addressed in an interview with the translator herself, it is difficult to determine if it is an error based on the framework of this study.

## 3.3 Attaching the Mao Label

The mistranslation of proper names again features in the following two examples, but in slightly more complicated ways than the translation error discussed in Example 1:

Example 6

CV: 就那五斗櫃底下的鞋盒子里，還藏過父親的一位神秘的朋友胡大哥偷偷帶來的一本用**毛邊紙**印的《新民主主義論》…… (Gao, 1999: 38)

AV: In the very shoebox under that chest of drawers was also hidden a copy of *On New Democracy* printed on **writing paper made from bamboo** and brought secretly by a mysterious friend of father's – Big Brother Hu.

EV: This very shoebox under the five-drawer chest had been used to hide a copy of *On the New Democracy*, printed on **the coarse paper used in Mao Zedong's border region**. The book had been smuggled into the city by his father's mysterious friend Big Brother Hu. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 37)

Example 7

CV: 一進屋，寶子從褲袋裡抓出幾張**毛票**和幾個硬幣拍在桌上，又說："我是夜裡爬窗戶跑的，第二天要全校批鬥……" (Gao, 1999: 164-165)

AV: Upon entering the house, Baozi grabbed from his trousers' pocket a few **banknotes of less than one *yuan*** and several coins and slapped them onto the table, and said, "I climbed out of the window to escape at night, the next day I would be criticised and denounced by the whole school…"

EV: As soon as he came into the room, Baozi slapped on the table a few **Mao-head banknotes** and some coins he had taken out of his pockets. He went on to say, "I escaped through the window the day before I was to be denounced by the whole school…" (Gao and Lee, 2002: 160)

The errors in both examples involve translating a common noun in Chinese with the proper name "Mao", the immediate trigger being a logographic cue of the character "毛" (mao) in the two words "毛邊紙" (writing paper made from bamboo) and "毛票" (banknotes of less than one *yuan*). These two translation errors can potentially unveil motivations that are exceedingly more far-reaching than Example 1. This is because first, they occur on two separate occasions quite far apart in the English text, one on page 37 and the other on page 160. Hence, they are unlikely to be explained by the translator's state of mind in one particular sitting, since Lee has affirmed that the translation was done in a linear manner. Second, as compared to the semantically more isolated names of "Don Juan" or "Tang Yin", these two words are more embedded in the narrative, and the mistranslated terms in English cause more significant disruption in the narrative coherence, in addition to the fact that their association with Mao is rather farfetched.

For the general readers native in Chinese, the noun "毛票" (pronounced as "mao piao") in Example 7 can almost only mean one thing – banknotes with face value of less than one *yuan*. The character "mao" is the colloquial expression of "*jiao*", a monetary unit equivalent to one tenth of *yuan* in the system of Chinese currency. The reason why Mabel Lee may find it difficult to recognise such a commonplace Chinese word is not entirely inexplicable. The usage of "mao" as a substitute for "*jiao*" is only prevalent in Northern and Central China, but Lee was born into a family of Cantonese origin in Australia, where she spent all her life as a third-generation Chinese immigrant whose native tongues were English and Cantonese (Ouyang and Lee, 2014: 65, see Appendix: 301). Therefore, if she ever learned the colloquial expression for "*jiao*", it would more likely be the Cantonese version – "毫" (pronounced as "hou"). Lee also confirmed in her interview that her Chinese speaking skills were lagging behind compared to her solid training in reading Classical Chinese texts, and Mandarin speakers were scarce back in her days, when only "various strands of Cantonese dialects" could be heard in the streets (see Appendix: 305).

Nevertheless, it does not fully explain why she would interpret the word as "Mao-head banknotes" as such an expression is non-existent in Chinese. In addition, in the previous paragraph, the character in question – Baozi claimed that he had "only got a handful of loose change" (Gao and Lee, 2002: 160), which should be a textual clue sufficient enough for guiding readers to interpret "mao piao" as a recurring reference to the little money Baozi had on him when he escaped. By translating it as "Mao-head banknotes", the translator has exposed herself to suspicions of textual, intertextual as well as contextual incoherence, as banknotes printed with Mao's portrait were not issued until the fifth series of RMB in 1999, long after the leader's demise (Schwartz, 2014).

Therefore, if Lee failed to recognise the word as a familiar concept, there must have been a strong motivational commitment prompting her to take the risk of interpreting it as a reference to Chairman Mao without consulting any other resources. Here again, the translator's intertextual and contextual preconceptions asserted itself in the form of highly selective perception of textual clues. In her paper on Gao Xingjian's works, Lee subscribed to the interpretation of Cultural Revolution as "the wanton megalomaniacal politics of Mao Zedong" and described Gao's autobiographical account as "a powerful indictment of Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution" (Lee, 2006: 20). In her interview, she stated that Mao Zedong "imposed the cruellest dictatorship seen in human history that culminated in the Cultural Revolution" (see Appendix: 342).

It serves the purpose of western political discourse to depict the entire Cultural Revolution as Mao's personal ambition (Branigan, 2013), emphasizing the ludicrous aspect of personal worship that helps analogise the Chinese leader to established icons of ruthless despots, such as Hitler and the Kim dictators (Caramani, 2011: 107; Magstadt, 2013: 131; Mahan and Griset, 2013: 75). This easily digestible narrative of Mao enables the general public and many scholars to divert their attention from the much more complex historical reality of Cultural Revolution, including its social context, its many participants and contributing factors, as well as its positive influence (Kraus, 2012: 117).

The "he" depicted in *One Man's Bible* is only one among the many who were at once an instigator and a victim. That being said, Mabel Lee by no means manipulated the text to any extent that may hinder the readers' understanding of the protagonist's dual role. Undeniably, the effect of such a one-off translation error on the lexical level is relatively minute. The error of translating "mao piao" as "Mao-head banknotes" is probably readily accepted by most readers without any hesitation or doubt over whether Mao actually issued banknotes with his own portrait during his lifetime. This mutual willingness to overlook the incongruity of describing a handful of Mao-head banknotes, a detail that contradicts Baozi’s predicament, is no reason to dismiss the problem as an unwitting mistake. Given another situation, readers will probably frown at the depiction of someone taking out “a few Queen Elizabeth banknotes”, as the expression markedly deviates from English linguistic norms and thus disrupts intertextual coherence in addition to textual coherence.

The complicity between the translator and readers, in this case, is significant and meaningful. The contextual knowledge of Cultural Revolution shared by the readers immediately conjures up images of crowds waving the *Little Red Book* to salute Mao on Tian’anmen Square. With that image in mind, the labelling of the everyday object with a “Mao” modifier seems only natural under the circumstances, even if such a phrase stands against norms of established English expressions. This association with Mao collectibles may have also inspired the misreading of “毛票” (“mao piao”) by the translator, as the *Little Red Book* is an abbreviated and popularised version of *Selected Works of Mao*, which in Chinese is “毛澤東選集” or “毛選” (pronounced as “mao xuan”) for short, a Mao-labelled reference morphologically similar to “毛票” (“mao piao”). Taking this into consideration, the word “毛票” (“mao piao”) not only contains a logographical trigger of “毛” (mao) but also a morphological trigger of Mao-related referents. Despite the fact that such usage of shortened Mao references in Chinese is extremely rare beyond the singular case of “毛選” (“mao xuan”, *Selected Works of Mao*), the powerful image of its dominance during the Cultural Revolution can possibly cancel out any qualm the translator had when approaching the unfamiliar word of “毛票” (“mao piao”).

It is a similar case with Example 6, where “毛邊紙” (pronounced as “mao bian zhi”) refers to a kind of writing paper made from bamboo. Although it literally translates as “mao-edged paper”, it has nothing to do with Mao Zedong. Instead, it is named after the Ming-Dynasty book collector Mao Jin, who popularised this kind of paper through reprinting Song-Dynasty woodblock books (*News and Writing*, 1997: 45). The paper is nicknamed “mao-edged paper" as these reprinted books all carry a stamp of "Mao" on the edge. Besides, even if a reader is completely unaware of the origin or material of such paper, he/she is still inclined to form the general impression of it being a type of cheap paper. This is because most Chinese characters are polysemic and "毛" ("mao") as a frequently-used character carries many other meanings besides functioning as a family name. When used as an adjective, it normally means "rough" and "coarse" (Matthews, 1943: 614), easily leading readers to conclude that "mao bian zhi" is a type of paper that is less refined, even though the textual clue they depend on is entirely incidental.

Curiously enough, the translator seems to have picked up on this common meaning of "毛" ("mao") as well, since she translated the phrase starting with "the coarse paper". However, the following adjective clause "used in Mao Zedong's border region" indicates an interpretation of the phrase as an abbreviated reference to Chairman Mao (Gao and Lee, 2002: 37). The expression of "Mao Zedong's border region", despite being a mistaken understanding of both the character "mao" and "bian" (border or edge), is not nonsensical. On the contrary, it demonstrates the translator's contextual knowledge of modern Chinese history. The border region in question refers to Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region, a military base of Chinese Communist Party before it took power (Apter and Saich, 1994: 184). This is also where Mao delivered his defining speech in 1940 that was later published under the title of "On New Democracy" (Alber, 2002: 137).

Therefore, the deduction that an early copy of *On New Democracy* was "printed on the coarse paper used in Mao Zedong's border region" does not contradict historical facts. However, the reference to Mao is not intended at all in the Chinese version. Since the incoherent effect produced by this translation choice is only limited to the intertextual incoherence between the Chinese and the English versions, without disturbing textual or contextual coherence, the diagnosis of Example 6 as a translation error becomes a more debatable claim as compared to Example 7.

There is also the mystery of why two different interpretations of “mao” were adopted in the English version, which might indicate that one of them is the translator’s addition. Either way, whether the translator misread “mao bian zhi” as the extremely abbreviated form of an elaborate term referring to the paper used in Mao’s revolutionary base, or she decided to insert a piece of historical information and deliberately designated the area as “*Mao Zedong*’s border region”, the motivation behind the recurring references to Mao is clearly not provided by the Chinese version or the author.

In both Example 6 and 7, dramatic translation changes occurred to two common Chinese nouns whose precise definition can be found in most dictionaries. Instead of consulting these easily accessible resources, the translator demonstrated unusual assurance in taking them to be Mao-related items. Her lack of translation experience alone cannot justify the repeated occurrences, nor can the mistranslations be explained simply as ignorance or oversight. As Giddens argued, errors, at times, occur exactly where concentration is most requisite and maybe even invested (cf. Section 2.2.2). In the two instances discussed above, it takes a lot more cognitive effort to read the two simple nouns of “mao piao” and “mao bian zhi” as information-intensive abbreviations. Their low susceptibility to misreading has again served as an important indicator of the translator’s orientation and commitment.

Instead of mere negligence, Lee’s predisposition to the kind of misinterpretation triggered by the Chinese character “mao” may reveal a long-term preoccupation with the political narratives of Cultural Revolution oriented around Chairman Mao. Such a narrative perspective has cultivated an acute sensitivity among the general public that alerts them to the theatricality, violence and destruction of that historical period, while the investigation into its complexities remains the project of few. This belief in Cultural Revolution as an essentially “Maoist terror” (Gao and Lee, 2002: back cover) may have caused the selective reading performed by the collective, similar to how the translator repeatedly selected a particular meaning of “mao” over all others.

There is little dispute among critics that *One Man’s Bible* is “both more personal and more political than its predecessor, ‘Soul Mountain’”, as *The Times Literary Supplement* indicated (ibid.). The English translation dutifully reproduced if not reinforced this impression. The translator’s intensive engagement with the novel’s political theme has been illustrated in the previous two examples, where she readily read political connotations into completely apolitical nouns. While the effect of these translation errors might be deemed fleeting, the following example presents a more deliberated translation addition that has a more powerful impact:

Example 8

CV: 當時人民都造反，正如這之前人民都革命，之後人人又都諱言造反，或乾脆忘掉這段歷史，人人又都成了大災大難的受害者，忘了災難沒落到自己身上之前，也多多少少當過打手，歷史就這樣一再變臉。你最好別去寫什麼歷史，只回顧個人的經驗。(Gao, 1999: 155)

AV: Back then people all rebelled, just as before that people all made revolution; after that everyone avoided talking about rebellion, or altogether forgot about this period of history; everyone became victims of the great calamity, and forgot that before the disaster fell upon them, they also, to some extent, acted as assailants; history thus changed faces again and again. You better not write about this thing called history, but only look back on your personal experiences.

EV: During the **Cultural Revolution**, people were “rebelling”, whereas before that people were “making revolution”. However, after the end of the **Cultural Revolution**, people avoided talking about rebelling, or simply forgot that part of history. Everyone has become a victim of that great catastrophe known as the **Cultural Revolution** and has forgotten that before disaster fell upon their own heads, they, too, were to some extent the assailants. The history of the **Cultural Revolution** is thus being continually revised. It is best that you do not try to write a history, but only to look back upon your own experiences. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 151)

This paragraph was also quoted at the beginning of the concluding chapter in *Mao's Last Revolution* published by Harvard University Press (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006: 450). However, it is questionable if the quotation would still be included in the book if not for its reiteration of the term "Cultural Revolution" in the English version.

The motivation or effect of this addition is not just a clarification of the topic at hand. There is little doubt that Gao is referring to Cultural Revolution here, given the immediate context and the overall setting of the novel. Neither is Lee the type of translator who is hugely concerned about filling in the blanks for readers. This is evident in Example 1, where she translated the name of a Chinese historical figure "Tang Yin" without supplementing any background information, with other similar examples ubiquitous throughout the novel. This rather consistent adherence to her principle of *not* altering the text to assist her "target readers" further highlights this particular instance of translation addition (Liu, 2001: 6). Furthermore, Lee explained in her interview that the repetition of the same word is fine in Chinese but clumsy in English, a language convention that informed her translation choices (ibid.). Taking these factors into consideration, it is safe to assume that she was motivated by other reasons than the clarification for her English readership.

Similar to how the addition of the phrase "in those times" redefines the meaning of "when he was without a woman" in Example 1, "Cultural Revolution" in this instance also serves as a temporal reference that reframes the narrative. The Chinese version, despite being a comment on the historical event of Cultural Revolution, can also be interpreted as a general disillusionment with the mass movement and with anything that identifies an individual with the collective, concepts such as memory, history, truth etc. However, by adding the temporal reference of "the Cultural Revolution", all the frenzy and follies of people are framed by this particular event. The echoing effect of repeating the term is reminiscent of the way that "the night in question" is used as a reference point for everything else in a murder trial, a watershed that changes everything. Hence, the social anomalies that took place are attributed to the corrupting effect of this extraordinary event rather than individual responsibilities. This slightly shifted perspective provided by the English version fits well with MacFarquhar and Schoenhals' approach in *Mao's Last Revolution*, where Cultural Revolution is explicitly treated as a "watershed" in Chinese history (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006: 1, 459), an interpretive angle readily accepted by reviewers, who believed it to be evident that "although innumerable people did awful things, the blame for the chaos falls squarely on Mao" (Pye, 2006: 176).

This paragraph is not a singular instance in its preference of the term "Cultural Revolution" over other more general denotations such as "運動" (the movement) (Gao and Lee, 2002: 155), "那些日子" (those days) (ibid.: 184), or "革命" (revolution) (ibid.: 221) in the English version. These additions or substitutions are probably deliberated translation strategies applied with a relative consistency throughout the book, for strengthening the tone of accusation by directly naming the accused and reconstructing the narrative as an "indictment" as Lee understands it to be (Lee, 2006: 20).

## 3.4 Probably? Definitely!

In addition to such politically motivated proper nouns, there is another lexical item that seems to have repeatedly triggered translation errors. The Chinese modal adverb "沒準" (probably, maybe) is a compound word with two character constituents, namely "沒" (no) and "準" (certainty, reliability). However, as the following examples demonstrate, a tendency can be observed on the part of the translator to render it into a much more affirmative statement:

Example 9

CV: 在河床底連渣子都鏽完了的這隻不存在的槍，**沒準**也還留在這退休的老人的檔案裡呢，他想，沒說出來…… (Gao, 1999: 214)

AV: This nonexistent gun at the bottom of the riverbed whose bits and pieces had all rusted away, was **probably** still left in the file of this retired old man, he thought but didn't say…

EV: This gun at the bottom of the river must have rusted away to nothing and no longer existed, but **undoubtedly** remained on this retired old man's file, he thought but did not say. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 210)

Example 10

CV: 這就是你給他寫的鑑定，以代替在中國**沒準**還保存而他永遠也看不到的那份人事檔案。(Gao, 1999: 218)

AV: This is the evaluation you have written for him, substitute for that personal file in China that is **probably** still retained but which he will never see.

EV: This is the report you have written for him to replace his file in China, which, **no doubt**, still exists, but which he will never see. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 213)

Example 11

CV: ……對種種慘案、槍殺、酷刑的控告，有時還有屍體的照片，這一切災難都似乎都同許倩有關，他覺得**沒準**就已經落在她身上了，不由得喚起切身的痛楚。(Gao, 1999: 257)

AV: …indictments of all kinds of massacres, shootings and brutal tortures, sometimes even with photos of corpses, all these disasters seemed to concern Xu Qian; he felt that they **probably** had already befallen her, and could not help arousing acute pains.

EV: There were reports about massacres, shootings, and brutal tortures, even photographs of corpses, and these all seemed somehow related to Xu Qian. He was **certain** that disaster had already befallen her, and could not help feeling an acute sense of pain. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 252)

Example 12

CV: 他覺得就在監視中，軍代表在清查小組會上說的那沒點名的第三批**沒準**就輪到他了。(Gao, 1999: 290)

AV: He felt he was under surveillance; the third group whose names were not called that the military representative mentioned at the ferret-out team meeting **probably** was his turn.

EV: He felt he was being spied on, **for sure** he would be on that third list, still without names, that the army officer had spoken about at the meeting of the ferret-out teams. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 286)

Example 13

CV: 你不敢開門推窗，不敢有任何響動，別看這靜謐的月夜人都睡了，一張惶失措，周圍埋伏的**沒準**就一擁而上，捉拿你歸案。(Gao, 1999: 342)

AV: You don’t dare open the door or push open the window, don’t dare to make any sound or stir; despite that people are all asleep on this tranquil moonlit night, once you panic and lose your head, those lurking around will **probably** rush forward, arrest you and bring you to justice.

EV: You don’t dare open the door or the window, don’t dare make a sound. Don’t let yourself be tricked by the tranquillity of this moonlit night when everyone is asleep. If you panic and lose control those lying in ambush all around will **for sure** charge forward to arrest you and bring you to trial. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 339)

Example 14

CV: 儘管下鄉前在學校的時候，**沒準**也批鬥過她們的老師，可見到你這麼個從鎮上的中學來的教師，竟如同遇到親人。(Gao, 1999: 365)

AV: Before coming to the countryside, when they were in school, they **probably** also denounced their teachers, but seeing you, a teacher from the middle school in town, surprisingly, they were like meeting their own family.

EV: Before they came to the countryside, while they were at school, they would **certainly** have denounced their teachers. Yet seeing you, a teacher from the middle school in town, was for them just like meeting a member of their family. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 365)

At first sight, this seems to be another translation error committed by Lee, who may have misunderstood the meaning of this perfectly commonplace Chinese word from the very beginning. Yet, it is worth noting that the exact same word has been translated with its closer English equivalents such as “probably”, “maybe” and “likely” in other parts of the novel, preserving its tone of reservation. Therefore, it is safe to assume that Lee was aware of the precise meaning of the original word, but was prompted by other reasons to translate it with a higher level of certainty. Moreover, the above examples are not minor exceptions in the text. Their significance is underlined by the dominance of this translation choice. Among the 35 occurrences of "沒準" (probably, maybe) throughout the whole novel, 20 of them were translated with expressions of conviction involving wordings like "obviously", "sure", "certain", "certainly", "no doubt" and "undoubtedly"; only seven instances preserved the original's degree of probability; the remaining eight either omitted the word altogether or employed other translation solutions that produced no direct correspondence with the word in question.

Furthermore, all the seven instances of "accurate" translation were exclusively concentrated in the first quarter of the novel, indicating an increasing confidence in the flexible interpretation of this one word as the translator progressed through the novel. In short, the translation choice of rendering this particular adverb with an elevated sense of narrative assurance is both strategic and relatively consistent throughout the English version. The above textual evidence suggests that the word "沒準" (probably, maybe) was chosen by the author Gao Xingjian *not* for random and one-off purposes, but contributing to a certain textual effect on a more macro level. Lee's inclination to substitute such an overall effect with her own interpretation is manifested in this translation change on the lexical level.

The six examples offered here provide a general idea of the adverb's implications in its immediate context. Firstly, the events being referred to are historically unverifiable, either because the narrator had no access to the relative facts or because he was speculating about the future. Secondly, the impact produced by these events of various probabilities is not significant in terms of their actual occurrence but the paranoia their possibility induced. However, Lee chose to eliminate the ambiguity in the narrative tone and assumed absolute confidence in depicting a society under the reign of red terror.

Consequently, in Example 9 and 10, the fear of mass surveillance and the suspicion of permanent personal records adopted a tone of condemnation in the English version. Besides substituting “probably” with expressions of certainty such as “undoubtedly” and “no doubt”, Lee also implemented other translation choices to slightly rephrase the sentences. For instance, in Example 9, the addition of the connective “but” highlighted the absurdity of keeping one’s distant past on their personal file so many years later. Similarly, in Example 10, by inserting several commas into the second half of the sentence, the English version slowed down the reading process and again emphasized the shocking and yet unmistakable fact of having his personal record held by a state that he had lost all connection with for almost 10 years. Lee’s understanding of Gao’s intention behind his autobiographical novels has been to write “a truthful testimony” (Lee, 2015: 8), which might explain her urge to unveil the “truth” and to testify to history in a more factual manner.

Meanwhile, in Example 11 and 12, a hunch about potential threats during the Cultural Revolution was rendered into a vivid sense of impending doom. Despite the fact that Gao lived through the Revolution in constant anxiety the way most intellectuals did, he came out of that historical period relatively unscathed. “He” in the novel escaped political persecutions by taking precautions and was fortunately never caught in any real danger, but the English version chose to paint a much less optimistic picture by confirming the many predicaments “he” feared to find himself in. Lee explicitly described Gao’s life back then as “traumatic experiences in China, especially during the Cultural Revolution” in an introduction to one of her translations (Lee, 2015: 9), and such a belief served as a strong motivational commitment to affirm the inevitability of mishaps in her translation of *One Man’s Bible*.

Similarly, in Example 13 and 14, the English version did not hesitate to charge every character around the protagonist with the crime of participation, when the Chinese version only suspected such possibilities. Thus, the guard “he” put up against other people out of wariness was heightened to depict the individual’s absolute isolation, and the author’s sceptical view towards interpersonal relationships is stripped of any benefit of the doubt. Since it has been established that Lee was aware of the exact meaning of “沒準” (probably) in the Chinese version, the translation decisions in the above examples can be interpreted as strategic choices. The deliberated and selective adoption of this strategy on the basis of different textual scenarios is more evident in the next example:

> Example 15
>
> CV: 那位領班和櫃檯小姐聽你這一口北京話似乎頗為困難，可幾個月之後香港迴歸祖國，他們大概也得改說京腔，還**沒準**正在補習。掌握旅客的動向是他們的本分，老闆如今既已轉為官府，你剛才這番赤裸裸做愛的場面，**沒準**就已經錄下來了。(Gao, 1999: 8-9)
>
> AV: The supervisor and the receptionist seemed to find it rather difficult to understand your Beijing dialect, but after a few months when Hong Kong is returned to the motherland, they possibly have to switch to the Beijing accent, and **probably** are taking lessons right now. Keeping track of the trends of tourists is their duty, and now that the boss has changed to government authorities, this scene of your naked lovemaking just now has **probably** already been videotaped.
>
> EV: On hearing your Beijing accent, the supervisor and the girl at the desk looked embarrassed but, in a few months, after Hong Kong is returned to China, they will also have to speak with a Beijing accent, and are **probably** taking lessons right now. It is their duty to keep tabs on what guests are doing, now that the proprietor is the government, so this episode of lovemaking in the nude that you have just indulged in will **certainly** have been videotaped. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 9-10)

Here, in a scene set at least 20 years after the Cultural Revolution, Gao is still haunted by the same paranoia of being watched and monitored, which is caused by the presumed knowledge of staying in a Hong Kong hotel owned by the Chinese government. In this example, “沒準” (probably) is used twice in the Chinese version, but the same words are translated differently in the English version, with the second one rendered into “certainly”. This not only supports the hypothesis that Lee was aware of the different lexical meanings she assigned to the same Chinese word but also puts in contrast the different contexts motivating a “deviant” translation as opposed to a “standard” translation (Frank, 1991: 120). Although both were unverifiable speculations, it was suggested that the hotel staff is *probably* learning Chinese while “your” privacy has *certainly* been violated. Again, the trigger for the translated versions is not simply the Chinese word in isolation, but an urge to accuse and testify against a repressive regime.

The motivational commitment behind such a lexical choice might have produced a certain textual pattern, but they cannot be mapped exactly onto every occurrence of the word. Among the 35 instances of the adverb, there are still a small number of translation choices that remain irregularities and cannot be easily explained by an all-inclusive hypothesis. Furthermore, the explanations offered above fail to address the uniformity in translating “沒準” (probably) with more affirmative adverbs in the latter three-quarters of the novel, regardless of the various textual environments the word is situated in.

Nevertheless, a general tendency can be observed in both the author’s use of the Chinese word and the translator’s rendition. Such complication is the reality of translation practice, as a professional translator rarely has premeditated rules targeted at specific linguistic items before or during the translation process. As the translator needs to simultaneously register multiple situational factors both within and outside a text, irregularities in a general pattern are inevitable. Consequently, even a strategic translation decision is seldom executed with the same persistence and consistency suggested by some translation theories but is heavily implicated in the translator’s interaction with the situation of action.

However, this does not diminish the value of theories in describing and explaining real-life translation activities. On the contrary, the complication of the practice precisely proves that any translated text will inevitably bear traces of its producers, including the translators, commissioners, editors, publishers and even the society at large, holding great potential for research aiming to better understand the phenomenon of translation. This study argues that the investigation into translation errors also promises such research potential. In fact, in comparison to the often irregular manifestations of translation strategies and cultural norms, the negative implications of translation errors may demonstrate more explanatory power when it comes to translator's consciousness.

The same motivational commitment that led to the above strategic lexical choices can also manifest in more blatant translation errors on a sentence level. It has been previously illustrated that rich intertextual and contextual knowledge can create strong reader expectations that subsequently encourage misinterpretation. The following example analysis is going to argue that a relatively consistent translation strategy can also generate or reinforce translator's preconceptions and consequently produce translation errors:

> Example 16
>
> CV: 你當然也記得那冬夜，房裡點的蠟燭，更增添點溫暖，**從樓下望你這窗戶也不清楚有沒有人在**。你終於爭得了這麼個小套間，有個像樣的窩，有了個家，可以抵禦外面的政治風雨。(Gao, 1999: 14)
>
> AV: You of course also remember that winter night; in the room candles are lit, further adding to the warmth, and **looking at your window from downstairs (one) cannot tell whether there was anyone in**. You finally earned such a small apartment, had a decent nest, have a home that can withstand the political storm outside.
>
> EV: You, of course, also remember that winter night, you had candles burning, which added to the warmth, and **you couldn't tell if there was anyone downstairs watching your window**. You had finally obtained a little apartment, a decent **refuge**, a home, and you had a fortress to protect yourself from the political storms outside. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 14)

In this example, a closer look at the texts in juxtaposition will reveal that all the lexical items from the Chinese version seem to have been rendered correctly in the English version, but the semantic meaning and the narrative perspective of the sentences are entirely different. In fact, a back-translation of the English version into Chinese is "也不清楚有沒有

人在樓下望你這窗戶”, which is basically a sentence composed of words that are exactly the same as in the Chinese version but arranged in different orders, except for one preposition “從” (from). The structural trigger of the sentence components might have encouraged such a misinterpretation, but the syntactic rigidity of this specific sentence also determined that the logical relationship between the constituents was hardly disputable. Therefore, Lee’s disposition to error in this particular context is much stronger as compared to other readers, which entails an entrenched expectation of references to the pervasiveness and intensity of mass surveillance, an assumption that required only a few lexical clues to sustain.

The constant presence of political oppression also inspired a few more deliberated lexical choices. For example, “窩” (nest), which is simply an inconspicuous reference to one’s home, was translated as “refuge”, a term with more explicit political connotations. Taking into consideration the current status of Gao Xingjian as a political “refugee”, the lexical choice was most likely deliberated and strategic, which aims to foster a sense of the protagonist’s vulnerability before an autocratic regime. This impression was subsequently reinforced by repetitively employing “refuge” as the translation for a variety of terms in the rest of the novel (Gao and Lee, 2002: 17, 22, 107, 232, 265, 267, 319, 320), none of which is the standard Chinese equivalent of “refuge”. As if the substitution of “nest” with “refuge” was not suggestive enough, addition was also employed by inserting the word “fortress” into the same sentence. Being “a place or source of refuge or support” (*Collins English Dictionary*, 1998: 603), “fortress” again conjures up the image of a vulnerable individual standing against the overwhelming power of a political movement.

Perhaps, it is not entirely a coincidence that this unlikely translation error occurred following Example 15 in the same chapter. After strategically selecting “certainly” over “probably” to invoke the accusation against China’s mass surveillance programme, it seems plausible that the translator would misinterpret Example 16 as the protagonist’s past experience of being constantly spied on during the Cultural Revolution, a detail that can serve as a justification for his current paranoia. However, the translation error does not stop here but extends into another translation error that follows shortly afterward:

> Example 17
>
> CV: “在你那挺舒適暖和的房裡，喝酒，聽窗外寒風呼呼叫……”
>
> “就像這會一樣不真實，外面沒準還有人站崗……”
>
> 你不由得又想起這房裡有可能在錄像。 (Gao, 1999: 15)
>
> AV: “In your rather comfortable and warm home, (we were) drinking, listening to the wind howling outside the window…”
>
> “(It felt) unreal just like now, outside there **were** probably even people on guard…”
>
> You can’t help but think of again the possibility that this room is being videotaped.
>
> EV: “We sat drinking in your warm, cozy apartment as we listened to the howling wind outside.”
>
> “It was unreal, just like it is now, and probably there **are** also people watching…”
>
> You again think that the room is probably being videotaped. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 15)

Despite the fact that the Chinese language does not have temporal inflection, it should not be difficult to deduce from the context that the interlocutors are talking about the past when he and Margarethe first met in his “little apartment” in China, a reference to the same scenario as in Example 16. However, having just described the possibility of being watched in Example 16, the translator was prone to misread this remark as a suspicion of the same surveillance received at the narrative present and consequently understood the comment to be intended with a present tense. If it is not for the previous translation error, it is nearly impossible to interpret this sentence as “there are *also* people watching”, which echoes the possibility of “anyone downstairs watching your window”.

Example 16 has presented a type of error triggered by structural similarities in constructing sentences, while the error in Example 17 was not triggered by any similarity of the verbal image. Rather, the Chinese sentence itself, without the assistance of any explicit tense markers, can be ambiguous when read in isolation, and the alternative interpretation of it would be drawn from contextual clues. This sentence thereby demonstrates a higher susceptibility to misinterpretation as compared to the previous examples of translation errors. Specifically, in order to resolve the differences between Chinese and English in what they *must* convey rather than what they *may* convey (Jakobson, 1959: 236), which in this case is the time reference of events, the translator chose one version of interpretation over another. Arguably, the English version disregarded the context of the conversation between "you" and Margarethe, which is focused on the recollection of their first meeting in Beijing, with "your" suspicions about being videotaped at the present left unsaid. Yet without the evidence of textual triggers or incoherence, the translation error in Example 17 can potentially be contended to be a subjective interpretation.

Nonetheless, the occurrence of either error cannot be solely attributed to the translator's intertextual and contextual knowledge invested into her interpretation of *One Man's Bible*. Instead, the preconceptual trigger involved in bringing about these two translation errors is at least partly attributable to the unintended consequences of previously applied translation strategies. Especially in terms of Example 17, the textual coherence in stating that "there are *also* people watching" is only ensured by the preceding translation error in Example 16. Such a continuous flow in the translator's interpretation of the text further illustrates the interdependent relationship between deliberated translation choices and translation errors.

# Chapter 4 Translating *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*

## 4.1 The Dilemma of Naming

As a representation of Howard Goldblatt's translations of Mo Yan's fictional works, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* (hereinafter referred to as "*Life and Death*") has been chosen for error analysis in this section. It has been selected alongside *One Man's Bible* due to its similar focus on modern China's political history. While *One Man's Bible* covers the period of time from the establishment of PRC in 1949 to the impending handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, *Life and Death* spans an almost identical era of Chinese history marked by the Land Reform in 1950 and the beginning of the new Millennium. It is also the book that helped Mo Yan win the inaugural Newman Prize for Chinese Literature in 2009 (Lee, 2009: 25).

The structural design of the novel has been inspired by the Buddhist belief in the six-path reincarnation (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 6), with the protagonist Ximen Nao being repeatedly reborn as domestic animals, including a donkey, an ox, a pig, a dog and a monkey, before returning to the world as a big-headed, precocious and haemophilic baby boy. Ximen began his journey of transmigration as a landlord, who was executed by Communist militiamen during the Land Reform, after having all his properties confiscated. Insisting on his innocence and obsessed with his grievances, Ximen demanded Lord Yama, ruler of the Underworld, to send him back to the mortal world to seek justice. Although Lord Yama eventually conceded to his request, Ximen was deprived of his human form and language capacities. He was condemned to lead his many lives as enslaved animals amidst the ever-changing political climate in the first 50 years of Communist Party's rule. However, despite his limited faculties in seeking revenge or clearing his name, Ximen was blessed with superior physical strength and mental capacity, which allowed him to become leaders of his species.

When living as various animals, Ximen's fate was entangled with his adopted son and hired hand, Lan Lian, or Blue Face, serving as the loyal companion for three generations in the Lan family, including Lan Lian's son Lan Jiefang (whose name means "liberation") and grandson Lan Kaifang (whose name means "opening-up"), before finally being reborn as Lan Lian's great grandson Lan Qiansui (whose name means "millennium"). The whole book thus consists of stories that five-year-old Lan Qiansui told to his grandfather Lan Jiefang, who in return can also be seen as Lan Qiansui/Ximen Nao's grandson, with Jiefang occasionally taking over the role of narrator.

Besides the two alternating narrative voices, or rather the many voices of different reincarnated animals, the book also features a third narrator, a not-so-implicit self-reference of the author. He is a character named Mo Yan, whom everyone loves to hate. He is loquacious and curious as a child and fairly successful as a writer. In the words of the narrator, Mo Yan is a "lowborn", who "dreamed of becoming rich and famous"; he is "ugly as sin", but he "sought the company of pretty girls"; he is "generally ill-informed", but he "passed himself off as a knowledgeable academic" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 323). Such self-mockery is highly reminiscent of the author's own metatextual statements in interviews and lectures, especially the anecdote about being able to eat dumplings every day as a well-established writer.

From the above introduction to the main characters, it is easy to spot a pattern in Mo Yan's design of character names such as Jiefang (liberation), Kaifang (opening-up) and Qiansui (millennium), most of which reflect the political theme of a particular time in Chinese history. Even without such an explicit reference to the social context, the handling of Chinese names has often been perceived as a challenge in literary translation, due to the inherent semantic meanings of all Chinese characters. Such a widely acknowledged challenge also comes with solutions that can be easily generalised, typically including transliteration, semantic translation, a combination of both or recreation.

This explicit problem might have heightened the awareness of the translator regarding the motivation and effect of his translation choices, especially when it comes to translating Mo Yan, who treats character names as an integral part of the narrative (Mo Yan, 2012: 20). The challenge of translating the names of Mo Yan's characters is so readily recognised that even book reviewers of the English translation have commended Goldblatt on his efforts made to tackle the "troublesome issues such as Mo Yan's naming of people" (Aw, 2014).

Confronted with this challenge, Howard Goldblatt has adopted different strategies with a relatively high level of consistency for each of Mo Yan's fictional works and across Mo Yan's entire body of works. The general tendency, which was observed throughout Goldblatt's ten English translations of Mo Yan's works, is a preference for transliteration on the basis of *pinyin* in most parts of the narrative, with explanations offered for the semantic meanings of characters' names primarily on two occasions – when a group of characters is introduced in a cluster and when there is a word play on the relationship between the character's name and his/her own physical or personality trait.

For example, in *Big Breast and Wide Hips*, when addressing the cultural tradition of preferring sons to daughters in China, Goldblatt transliterated the names of the seven daughters that came before the male protagonist with explanations offered in brackets – "Laidi (Brother Coming), Zhaodi (Brother Hailed), Lingdi (Brother Ushered), Xiangdi (Brother Desired), Pandi (Brother Anticipated), Niandi (Brother Wanted), and Qiudi (Brother Sought)" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2004: 16). Similarly, in *Frog*, whose primary characters originated from a village where children were named after certain body parts, Goldblatt presented their names as "Chen Er (Ears)", "Chen Mei (Brow)", "Chen Bi (Nose)", "Wang Jiao (Foot)", "Wang Gan (Liver)", "Wang Dan (Gallbladder)" etc. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2014: 5-6). Nevertheless, after the initial explanation, the characters are referred to with their transliterated names throughout the novels.

In comparison, the primary characters in *Life and Death* are not introduced altogether at the start of the novel, which may be the reason why there is a relative lack of consistency in Goldblatt's handling of their names. Some of the central characters whose names bear strong political connotations were presented as such, like "Huzhu – Cooperation" and "Hezuo – Collaboration" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 21). Yet other characters that have been named under the same principle only had their names transliterated without any further explanation, examples including Pang Kangmei (whose name means "resistance against U.S. aggression"), Lan Kaifang (whose name means "opening-up") and Ma Gaige (whose name means "reform"), respectively reflecting historical events such as the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea as well as Chairman Deng Xiaoping's economic policy of reform and opening up.

Meanwhile, certain characters who are neither major players in the story nor people named after political movements are given explicitation on their names. For instance, Pang Kangmei's father, a war hero named Pang Hu, is a minor character compared to his daughter, but when introducing his name, Goldblatt chose to phrase it as "Pang Hu, which, interestingly, means Colossal Tiger" (ibid.: 75). Contrarily, the Chinese version did not provide any musing over Pang Hu's name (Mo Yan, 2006: 63). Shortly before the entrance of this character, there is an even more fleeting character – "刘长发" (pronounced as "Liu Changfa" or "Liu Zhangfa"), who is referenced only once in the entire book. His name "Changfa" can be interpreted as "long hair", although a different pronunciation of the name would have ruled out this interpretation. Curiously enough, despite the insignificance and the ambiguity of his name, Goldblatt's English version detailed his name as "Liu Changfa – Long-haired Liu" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 74).

While the above characters are referred to only with their transliterated names after the initial introduction, four characters present an exception. They are the four loyal followers of the village's Red Guard leader. When they entered the scene, their names are introduced together, with explanations attached: “Sun Long – Dragon Sun”, “Sun Hu – Tiger Sun”, “Sun Bao, Panther Sun” and “Sun Biao, Tiger Cub Sun” (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 161). Yet afterwards, these animal symbols were used as their names rather than their transliterations, repeatedly reminding the readers of these characters’ resemblance to ferocious and merciless beasts. The special effect produced by this translation choice can be clearly felt in another scene: “The Sun brothers – Dragon, Tiger, Panther, and Tiger Cub – rushed up; two held Dad’s arms, one grabbed him by the hair, and the last one picked up the brush and covered his face with a thick coat of red paint” (ibid.: 163). Since this translation choice has been implemented throughout the English version with consistency, it can be interpreted as a translation strategy.

In a tale where a human soul is contained in animal bodies and where animal faculties are used to express human emotions, the deliberate intermingling of human and animal qualities as preserved in the four characters’ names further blurs the boundary between the two biological realms. As Mo Yan objects to the “pseudo-humanist ideas” projected onto animals (Zhang, 2010: 369), his narrative design aims to construct a world of anthropo-zoomorphism that transcends anthropocentrism and embodies the Buddhist idea of reciprocal compassion (ibid.: 129). In a way, the English version of *Life and Death* further underscores such a narrative design by singling out these four brothers’ names in its strategic translation decisions and inserting explicit animal analogies where the implications of their names in the Chinese version do not appear particularly conspicuous.

Elsewhere, wordplay on the character’s name again accentuates this specific challenge posed to translation, prompting decisions to explicate the name’s semantic meanings. Examples include the following, with the added explanations italicised: “Ximen Nao, *whose name means West Gate Riot*, is more rioting in your plans?”; “His golden yellow irises sparkled like gold stars. Huang Tong, I said, *Yellow-eyed Huang*, your parents named you well”; “The following spring she gave birth to a boy and a girl, what they call a dragon and phoenix birth. So we named the boy Ximen Jinlong *or Golden Dragon*, and the girl Ximen Baofeng, *Precious Phoenix*"; "His name was Fan Tong, *which sounded just like the words for 'rice bucket'*. He had an astonishing capacity for food" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 3, 8, 14, 110 italics added).

The inconsistency detected in *Life and Death*, a book that was translated and published between *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and *Frog*, could be textual evidence suggesting that once a common translation problem like the handling of Chinese names is scattered across a considerable length of the text, its power in motivating explicit rationalisation of action weakens and the solutions devised to tackle the issue will more likely vary depending upon the immediate situational factors. This further proves that translators primarily operate on the level of practical consciousness rather than discursive consciousness. It also supports the conceptualisation of translation as a process of social action that always involves at least an actor and a situation, rather than an aggregate of individual acts that can be adequately explained in separation. In Goldblatt's own words, "the answers come to the translator during the process, and they're not always the same" (Ge, 2011: 100).

## 4.2 The Challenge in Translating Titles

The interaction between strategies and errors is also manifested in the distributional pattern of translation errors in the book. All the other fictional works of Mo Yan translated by Goldblatt generally use numbers to mark out each chapter, except for *Sandalwood Death* (Mo Yan, 2001; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2013). In contrast, *Life and Death* presented a rather unique and explicit challenge to Goldblatt at that time, given its captioned chapters in imitation of the *zhanghui* style found in traditional Chinese novels. For all the 53 captioned chapters in the book, the gist of the plot is summarised in a couplet, posing explicit challenges to translation including the achievement of parallel structure, equal length and concise phrasing in one pair of verse.

This complex challenge may have elicited deliberated translation choices, either in terms of the work process or specific restrictions placed on word choice and sentence structure. Elsewhere, Goldblatt has testified that he finds immense joy and invests considerable efforts in tackling such challenges presented by the linguistic form, to the point where he spent three days working on an inconsequential poem consisting of four-character pithy sayings when he was translating a late-teen pop work entitled *Beijing Doll* by Chun Sue. He ensured that every line rhymes and that the shape of the final product is a square like the Chinese version (Victorin-Vangerud, 2012). It is, therefore, plausible that Goldblatt regarded the translation of the 53 chapter captions as a more distinctive challenge in reproducing the linguistic form than providing a synopsis.

Among these 53 chapter titles, at least seven of them have been identified with translation errors, which have been primarily diagnosed on the basis of their disruption of textual coherence. For instance, in the Chinese version, Ximen's first three reincarnations as donkey, ox and pig have seen other characters in the novel referring to him as Ximen Donkey, Ximen Ox and Ximen Pig, but when such a naming system was first introduced in chapter three, the English version transliterated the name "西门驴" (Ximen Donkey) as "Ximen Lu" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 20). Such a transliterated name never recurred in the rest of the novel. The same goes for the translation of a boar leader's name as "Torn Ear" in the title of chapter 34 (ibid.: 360), who was afterwards referred to exclusively as "Split Ear" (ibid.: 366-374).

Another instance would be the English title of chapter 20, where "西门牛杀身成仁" (gloss: "Ximen Ox sacrifices his life to preserve his virtue") becomes "Ximen Ox Kills a Man and Dies a Righteous Death" in the English version (ibid.: 206). Throughout the entire novel, not only Ximen Ox, but none of the Ximen reincarnations ever committed the crime of manslaughter. The actual story narrated under this title alone is enough to contradict this summary of the plot, where the ox suffered extreme torture by a hot poker and whips wielded by eight grown men, before being burned to death by his own son from a previous life. During this process, Ximen did not put up any form of retaliation, let alone murdering a man. Therefore, due to the indisputable disruption of textual coherence, this example can be ascertained to be a translation error. The trigger in this case is possibly the phonological similarity between “杀身” (pronounced as “sha shen”, meaning “sacrificing one’s life”) and “杀生” (pronounced as “sha sheng”, meaning “taking a life”).

A similar contradiction between the chapter captions and the actual story can also be found in chapter seven, where “花花畏难背誓约” (gloss: “Huahua fearing difficulties breaks a vow”) is translated into the almost reversed scenario of “Fearing Trouble Huahua Makes a Solemn Vow” (ibid.: 59). The argument for textual incoherence can again be supported by the narrative that follows. As for the possible trigger of such a translation choice, the verb “背” can be argued to mean “to recite” or “to commit to memory” in certain contexts, besides “to break a promise” or “to betray someone”, but analogous to the previous example, this translation error demonstrates a rather low susceptibility to misreading, given its textual and contextual clues.

Despite the examples’ low susceptibility to misreading, they have to yet demonstrate recurrence within the narratives. In other words, these translation errors embedded in the captioned titles are rather isolated cases, indicating a possibility that they might *not* have been translated along with the actual narrative. Instead, they might have been tackled together as a group, as the translator sought to resolve this prominent translation challenge in *Life and Death*. Furthermore, according to Goldblatt himself, he “seldom read(s) a work more than once before starting in on it”, and on several occasions, he had not even read the novel before translating it, in an attempt to preserve the sense of spontaneity as a reader approaching the novel for the first time (Ge, 2011: 101). Considering Goldblatt’s working style, the occasional translation error deemed highly unlikely for someone who has the hindsight of having read the whole novel might *not* seem so improbable.

## 4.3 The Two Overriding Motifs

When discussing his working style, Goldblatt further elaborated that he usually works on two or more translations at the same time, because “focusing only on one novel, often a hefty one, over a period of many months can be stultifying” (Ge, 2011: 101). Therefore, his translation projects frequently overlap, with drafts of various stages being processed at the same time. During the two years between the publication of the Chinese version and the English version of *Life and Death*, Goldblatt was also commissioned by Penguin Group to translate Jiang Rong’s bestseller *Wolf Totem*, which was published in the same year as *Life and Death*.

The two books share some comparable points - both write about the relationship between animals and human, both cover the political turmoil during Cultural Revolution, both feature a stubborn man who acts as the protector of animal life and the defender of the old-fashioned lifestyle (Lan Lian in *Life and Death* and Bilgee in *Wolf Totem*), and both approach the ultimate question of life and death, sin and retribution from a religious perspective (one being the Saṃsāra of Buddhism, the other being the natural balance of the Mongol heaven – Tengger).

Goldblatt has clarified in his interview that he was invited to translate *Wolf Totem* and scanned the first few chapters before agreeing to take it on. He then commenced translating the book before having finished reading it, in order to approach his work with “the same sense of wonder a reader will have” (Kabat, 2008). Working under such a premise further underscores the dominance of practical consciousness in Goldblatt’s translating style, as the project was embarked on without a complete picture of the entire book, let alone a set of predetermined strategies. The overlapping in translation projects allows this study to question whether translation as a social action is a continuous process confined within the production of each individual translation, or perhaps the translator’s anticipatory schemata and his/her motivational commitment crisscross different translation endeavours and incorporate an elaborate intertextual network.

As an example, Jiang Rong's *Wolf Totem* has a central plot running throughout the book's interwoven social documentary and commentary, which is the protagonist's attempt to raise a wolf cub he stole from a den while being perpetually haunted by the fear of vengeance from the mother wolf. Therefore, the word "母狼", which can be understood as both "female wolf" and "mother wolf", is a high-frequency word in the Chinese version, with 60 occurrences throughout the book. Considering the context of the story, Goldblatt translated the word more readily as "mother wolf", a term of reference that seemed fitting to hint at human's cruelty in separating mother and son.

When it comes to translating *Life and Death*, it becomes less relevant to emphasize the biological connection between the reincarnated Ximen animals and their mothers, since Ximen regarded himself as a human trapped in an animal's body and demonstrated no emotional attachment to his animal mothers. However, Goldblatt's preoccupation with the maternal theme in *Wolf Totem* seems to be carried over to the translation of *Life and Death*, which manifested in a translation error as shown below:

> Example 18
>
> CV: 他说他一听到锣鼓点就兴奋，腿脚就颤抖，就像那头黑驴见到**母驴**就弹蹄喷鼻。(Mo Yan, 2006: 132)
>
> AV: He said that whenever he heard the beat of gongs and drums he got excited; with legs and feet shaking, he was just like that black donkey, who would flick his hoof and snort through his nose whenever he sees a **female donkey**.
>
> EV: He said the sound of drums and gongs energized him; his legs quaked, and, like a donkey spotting its **mother**, he stamped his feet and snorted through his nose. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 156)

This example is extracted from the reminiscence of the former County Chief Chen in his memoir on Cultural Revolution, when he was nicknamed "Donkey Chief" due to his special attachment to donkeys and his favourable treatment of Ximen Donkey during the steel-smelting campaign of 1958 to 1962. He was then asked to wear a papier-mâché donkey as a sign of disgrace at the public parades and struggle meetings held during the Cultural Revolution. Despite this outlandish design to humiliate Chen, he embraced the newly assigned identity with glee, willingly adopting the expressions and behaviours of a real donkey, until he completely embodied this theatrical role. The volatile political climate during the Cultural Revolution is a perfect illustration of what Giddens defines as a "critical situation" (1984: 60-64), a drastic deviation from routine life that threatens one's ontological security. While the deprivation of predictability, dignity and agency proved traumatising to most, Chen was an exception who has successfully reconstituted himself by actively identifying with and participating in the farcical display, thereby reclaiming his initiative as a social agent.

In the quoted sentence, the black donkey in question refers to Ximen Donkey, who was orphaned when the mother donkey died immediately after childbirth (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 10-19). Therefore, it should be logical to conclude that "母驴" here signifies "female donkeys" who later became Ximen Donkey's love interest in its adulthood rather than "its mother", and that the feet-stamping and nose-snorting it put on is a courtship display instead of the excitement he experienced at a mother-and-son reunion. The word "母驴" recurred on the following page, where a Red Guard shouted out the comical accusation aimed at this Donkey Chief, who allegedly "had sexual relations" with a female donkey and gave birth to a human-animal hybrid. In the English version, the discordance between what County Chief Chen intended to portray – a little donkey happily reunited with its mother and the outrageous accusation made by the Red Guards produced the effect of heightening the comi-tragic tone of the narrative.

Here, the potential translation error is possibly triggered by the logographical similarity between the Chinese term for "female donkey" and "mother donkey" as well as the morphological similarity between the Chinese term for “mother wolf” and “mother donkey.” The Chinese version of the sentence quoted above echoes later descriptions of Chen’s behaviour towards a female Red Guard, flaring his lips and baring his teeth. According to Jiefang the narrator, his experience of raising a donkey informed him that this means “sexual excitement is on its way” (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 160), an interpretation of Chen’s behaviour that contradicts the image of “a donkey spotting its mother” in the English version.

In comparison with the ambiguity inherent in the Chinese words for “female” and “mother”, the next example is more likely to be a strategic addition. The sentence depicts the escalation of the torture Ximen Ox suffered before his death, when after a round of ruthless flogging he was to be pulled up by the nose ring. The cruelty of animal torture is accentuated in the English version by highlighting the fact that the Mongol Ox used to pull Ximen Ox was his own biological mother.

> Example 19
>
> CV: 老天爷哪，我哥是要用**一牛**之力，牵拉西门牛的鼻子啊。(Mo Yan, 2006: 184)
>
> AV: Good heavens, my brother meant to use the force of **an ox** to pull at the nose of Ximen Ox.
>
> EV: My god, he’s going to pull Ximen Ox by the nose with the strength of **his mother**. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 213)

Besides the theme of maternal love exhibited in the animal realm, another motif running through *Wolf Totem* is revenge, as seen in the deteriorating relationship between the Mongol herdsmen and the highland wolves, with both sides initiating vicious attacks on the other in retaliation of the loss inflicted on them. In contrast, *Life and Death* attests a quite different attitude towards sin and retribution. In this book, the protagonist was put through the wearing cycle of reincarnation not for the purpose of taking vengeance but for the achievement of forgiveness and eventually oblivion.

This was also the intention of Lord Yama when he sent Ximen back to the mortal world as animals incapable of articulating his own grievances. When Lord Yama decided to send Ximen back for a brief life of two years as a monkey before allowing him to reclaim his human form, he stated, “I hope that during those two years you will be able to purge your heart of hatred. When you do that, you will have earned the right to return to the realm of humans” (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 510). The ability to forgive and forget is hence seen as the pass to the peace of mind and the design behind the purging cycle of transmigration. Ximen only gradually came to comprehend this Buddhist precept as he underwent the process of transmigration. Justifiably, when he was first reborn as a donkey, he was filled with resentment and recurrently but vainly attempted to protest. At this stage, a song was quoted from a play written by the character Mo Yan:

Example 20

CV:

身为黑驴魂是人

往事渐远如浮云

六道中众生轮回无量苦

皆因为欲念难断痴妄心

**何不忘却身前事**

做一头快乐的驴子度晨昏

(Mo Yan, 2006: 25)

AV:

As a black donkey he has a human soul

Past events fading away like floating clouds

In six realms of existence, all sentient beings suffer immensely in transmigration
All because of their unquenchable desires and their vain hopes at heart
**Why does he not forget his previous life**
And spend his days as a happy donkey?

EV:

A man's soul in a black donkey's body
Events of the past floating off like clouds
All beings reborn amid the six paths, such bitterness
Desire is unquenchable, fond dreams persist
**How can he not recall his past life**
And pass the days as a contented donkey?
(Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 30)

As a metanarrative commentary, this fictitious play allegedly written by the character Mo Yan is the first time that Ximen's fate as a reincarnated animal is commented on by another narrator. Yet instead of presenting the commentary as an attempt to persuade Ximen into forgetting about the past and accepting his fate, the English version changed the suggestive question into a rhetorical question, which argues that Ximen Donkey must recall his past life and it is impossible for him to simply live on as a contented donkey. If this commentary acts as a guide for readers to interpret the story in a certain way, the Chinese version certainly serves to pave the way for the understanding of Lord Yama's arrangements as a plan to rid Ximen of memories of hatred, while the English version sympathises instead with the narrator himself, consenting that an aggrieved soul cannot so easily let go of its burdens and is bound to struggle in its pursuit of vengeance and justice.

The translation error can itself be attributed to a structural trigger in the sentence, where the question marker "何不" (why not) could have been misread as "如何" (how), with the negative word "不" (not) lost in the process of translating what can be seen as a double negative, turning the negative verb "忘却" (forget) into the positive verb of "recall". It has also ended up disrupting the textual coherence, as this song was quoted to illustrate how the narrator occasionally *did* forget his previous identity as Ximen Nao and truly became a donkey, especially when its masters were attentively caring for him and showering him with love.

The oscillation between human and animal identities is a common experience of all the Ximen animals, although the setting of metempsychosis inevitably leads to a merging of body and soul. As Ximen's episodic memory is taken over by animal experiences, he enters into a hybrid form of life that is capable of compassion for both human and beastly beings. This befuddlement regarding one's own identity is also an experience shared by the wolf cub in *Wolf Totem*, albeit being met with very different results. In the book, Little Wolf has been captured before its eyes could open and raised among dogs with the utmost affection from its human master, fed with the mother dog's milk and the best chunk of their meat supply. He was encouraged to play with his fellow puppies and allowed to roam freely on his regular walks. In other words, Little Wolf should have had little memory of its life as a wolf cub, but he was very much encouraged to identify himself as one of the domesticated dogs.

Yet the cub's wild nature never subsided, constantly reminding itself that the small pen he is confined in is not his home and that the company he keeps are not his peers. Contrary to the direction Ximen is travelling in, the Little Wolf's journey of growing up and interacting with his surroundings eventually reveals to him his true nature as an untameable beast belonging in the wild, with instincts of independence so strong that he would finally choose death over captivity. In a way, the line in the above English version can be adapted to the story of Little Wolf, "How can he not recall his past life, and pass the days as a contented dog?"

## 4.4 A Revolution and a Party Judged by History

While *Wolf Totem* was published with a glossary of the many terms employed in political slogans during the Cultural Revolution, including “capitalist-roaders” and “Four Olds” (Jiang and Goldblatt, 2008: 525), the supply of a glossary is not the norm in Goldblatt’s other translations, with another instance of such practice found in the “very ‘Chinese’ novel” *Sandalwood Death* (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2013: ix). Despite the translator’s primary goal in helping his English readers “enjoy” a work that is made “accessible” to them (Ge, 2011: 100), he does recognise, especially in recent years, that the general public in English-speaking communities need more education when it comes to the Chinese language and culture (Victorin-Vangerud, 2012). This lack of comprehension regarding China is what motivated Goldblatt to leave a series of terms untranslated in the English version of *Sandalwood Death.* The meanings of these terms are subsequently explained in a glossary attached to the end of the book (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2013: 409).

The lack of understanding about Chinese language and culture seemed to also apply to Chinese politics, despite the mass media’s lack of reservation in delivering judgements on the topic. The country’s political history also serves as a constant focus in all the book reviews on contemporary Chinese literature. A reviewer even described Ximen Nao as someone who “lives through successive reincarnations as a donkey, ox, pig, dog and monkey during *a half-century of the Cultural Revolution*, up to the beginning of the new millennium” (*Kirkus Review*, 2008, italics added), an extension of the ten years’ political campaign into a 50-year-long historical period. Likewise, a reviewer from *The New York Times* commented that Mo Yan has said “everything he needs to about the *Cultural Revolution*” with the description of children eating coal in the opening scene of *Frog* (Maslin, 2015, italics added), despite the explicit timeframe allotted to the incident in the novel, which should be sometime between 1960 and 1961 during the Great Famine (Mo Yan, 2009: 12; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2014: 5), years before the onset of the Cultural Revolution.

Compared to Modern China's other national campaigns such as the Land Reform, the Great Leap Forward or Chairman Deng's Reform and Opening-up, the Cultural Revolution is evidently the one that captured the public's fascination outside of China. In *Life and Death*, chapter 17 marks the start of the Cultural Revolution and it has become the longest chapter in the English version (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 155-179), as it stayed intact while other chapters of similar length have undergone significant editing. The following examples have been extracted from this particular chapter:

Example 21

CV: 文化大革命兴起，屯子里人都蠢蠢欲动，但不知道**这命是如何革法**。(Mo Yan, 2006: 137)

AV: Cultural Revolution started, and people in the village were all eager for action, but they didn't know **how to go about this revolution**.

EV: Trouble was brewing in the village when the Cultural Revolution broke out, but no one knew just **how to nip it in the bud**. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 162)

Example 22

CV: 他看到了杀猪人朱九戒那张红光油光光光光的肥脸，全中国人民肚子里缺油水的年代里，只有这些当官的和杀猪的吃得如此油光满面，如此趾高气扬，如此洋洋得意，如此享受着幸福的生活…… (Mo Yan, 2006: 149)

AV: He saw the fat and smooth face of the pig butcher Zhu Jiujie glowing red and looking greasy; in the age when all Chinese people lack fat in their diet, only these officials and pig butchers could eat till their faces were so greasy with fat, only they could hold their heads so high, look so triumphant and enjoy such a happy life…

EV: His gaze moved to the fat, oily face of the pig butcher, Zhu Jiujie. At a time in history when no Chinese had enough oil in their diet, the officials and pig butchers like him not only ate the fattest, oiliest food, but did so with smug self-satisfaction, proudly enjoying the good life **that Communism offered** (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 178).

Example 23

CV: 你不入社，我们也不强求，从来就没有**无产阶级**向**资产阶级**求情的事。(Mo Yan, 2006: 173)

AV: If you don’t join the commune, we are not going to force you either, because the **proletariat** never pleaded with the **bourgeoisie**.

EV: I’m not going to beg you to join the commune, since the **Communist Party** has never begged anything from **capitalist-roaders**. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 204)

The above three examples can well illustrate the distinction between translation error and other more “motivated” translation choices. For instance, Example 21 is more likely to be a translation error due to the presence of the logographical trigger “革” as well as the disruption of textual and potentially contextual coherence. To begin with, the Chinese word “革命”, commonly used to translate “revolution”, originated from *The Book of Changes*. It is an abbreviation of the phrase “革除天命” (to abolish the mandate of heaven). Confucianism believes that emperors rule by divine right endowed by heaven, which then rewards those who rule with benevolence and sagacity and inflicts calamities upon those who prove to be tyrannical or incompetent. Therefore, whenever there is a change of dynasty, it is accompanied by a violent rebellion to demonstrate that the heaven denounces the rule of a particular monarch. Although modern Chinese now associates the character “革” primarily with the concept of “revolution”, when used as a verb it also means “to put an end to something”. This is likely the meaning picked up by Goldblatt when he translated the sentence “这命是如何革法” (how to go about this revolution) as “how to nip it in the bud”.

Furthermore, Goldblatt translated the four-character idiom of “蠢蠢欲动” (ready to stir up trouble or eager for action) without the subject of “people in the village” given in the Chinese version. By substituting the subject of this particular clause with “trouble” as in “trouble was brewing in the village” (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 162), the English version reframes the scenario as people’s reaction to a sense of impending doom. Consequently, the buzzing excitement people held for the dawning of the Cultural Revolution is replaced by a shared premonition among the general public regarding the campaign's disastrous consequences. Although in hindsight, people may wish that the socio-political movement could have been nipped in the bud, the fanatical reactions from the masses, especially in the early stage of the campaign, indicated its popularity. Considering the historical context, it is unlikely that people were chiefly concerned with "how to nip it in the bud" as the country embarked on the Cultural Revolution.

The translated phrase of "no one knew just how to nip it in the bud" is also out of place in the paragraph it is located in. The Chinese version states that while no one else in the village knew how to go about the revolution, Jinlong, the leader of the Red Guard faction in the village, "understood exactly what to do" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 162). Despite their lack of political savvy, people "rose up in response" once Jinlong set up the village branch and raised the red flag (ibid.: 163). In the English version, however, the qualms people held towards the campaign contradict their later enthusiasm in participation. Considering the narrative incoherence, Example 21 is highly plausible to be a translation error.

As for Example 22, it concerns an addition stating that the pig butcher was not simply enjoying *a* good life, but *the* good life "that Communism offered" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 178). The added clause attributes the social injustice as evidenced in the extreme disparity of people's diets to the corruptive political system under Communist Party's rule. Instead of simply presenting the fact that the officials and the butchers enjoyed an unusually extravagant diet thanks to their power and advantage in allocating rations, the English version also underscores the discrepancy between the ideals and the reality of Communism as a political ideology. Addition is usually considered a strategic choice in translational action, on the account that the added text originates *not* out of any textual triggers, be it phonological, logographical, morphological or structural. Instead, it is rationalised by a more explicit belief of what extra information could be introduced to improve the text, either with respect to a higher readability or the achievement of desired effects.

Another case of employing Communism-related terms when there is no corresponding term in the Chinese version is seen in Example 23. Here, words like “proletariat” and “bourgeoisie” are replaced by “Communist Party” and “capitalist-roaders”, references that are much more specific to the historical context of Cultural Revolution. These choices of word highlight not only the class differences in a community but also irreconcilable ideological conflicts. Akin to addition, such decisions are *not* triggered by textual clues either, but between the preferred translation choices and the more readily available alternatives, the translator is informed by preconceptions in terms of comprehensibility, acceptability or aesthetics to develop an orientation towards one line of action as opposed to another.

## 4.5 Between Strategic Editing and Erroneous Translation

Besides his “smooth” language style, Goldblatt is widely known for the editing role he adopts to streamline some of the long-winded narratives (Goldblatt, 2004). In particular, *Life and Death* is one of the frequently quoted examples in criticisms directed against Goldblatt for abridging and simplifying the novels he translates (Huang, 2014). It is true that a significant amount of deleted text can be identified, especially in the second half of the book, where more than 30,000 Chinese characters or over 5% of the Chinese version were omitted by the translator (ibid.: 43).

These substantial deletions must have been carried out with deliberation and perhaps even the discursive formulation of the reasons behind it as justification in front of authors and editors. Moreover, this explicit rationalisation of translational action continues to produce an impact on the occurrence of translation errors. For instance, in chapter 54, where the book has entered into the epilogue and the chapter titles are no longer presented in the form of couplets, the chapter title “太阳颜色” (“the sun’s colour”) is translated into “The Face of the Sun” (Mo Yan, 2006: 513; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 515), a title that fails to match with the discussion of the sun’s colour in the Chinese version.

The effect of this error becomes negligible in the English version, however, as the translator has also omitted the only two paragraphs in the chapter that mentioned the sun’s colour. These two paragraphs made reference to the description of the sun’s colour as a literary device used by Mikhail Sholokhov for portraying grief in his novel *And Quiet Flows the Don*. Having dispensed with this reference, the English version does not contain anything related to the sun anymore. If this editing of the text had been done prior to translation, the translator would have been rendered more susceptible to committing the error of translating “太阳颜色” (“the sun’s colour”) into “The Face of the Sun” (which in Chinese would be written as “太阳之颜”), given the logographical trigger of “颜”. Elsewhere, the strategic choice of deletion has contributed to an error with a much more evidently incoherent effect:

> Example 24
>
> CV: 一个堂堂的副县长，竟然敢**不辞而别与情人私奔**，靠打工卖苦力过活，你是天下独一份儿！ (Mo Yan, 2006: 233)
>
> AV: A formidable deputy county chief should dare to **leave without saying goodbye and elope with his lover**, to make a living by selling his labour: you are one of a kind in the world!
>
> EV: You must be the only deputy county chief in the country who’s willing to **leave his lover without saying good-bye** and make a living by the sweat of his brow. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 260)

This comment is a flash-forward to Lan Jiefang’s later scandal with Pang Chunmiao (whose name means “spring sprout”), a May-December romance with 20 years’ age difference between them. Under the pressure from family and society, the two star-crossed lovers left their homes in order to seek help from the intra-narrative character Mo Yan, who puts them up in a run-down room in Xi'an and finds them low-level jobs to pay the bills. However, while the Chinese version foretells the upcoming affair, the English version depicts a completely different scenario, where Jiefang left his lover instead of his wife.

This translation choice is highly likely to be an error, as there is the structural trigger of "不辞而别与情人私奔" ("leave without saying goodbye and elope with his lover"), which the translator might have misread as "leave his lover without saying goodbye". Nevertheless, the susceptibility to misinterpretation, in this case, should be rather low, considering that the verb "私奔" ("elope") is a word applied very specifically to situations where lovers suddenly and secretively leave their living place together in order to escape external obstructions to their relationship and consummate their love affair. Therefore, to completely overlook this unequivocal reference should require strong preconceptions and highly selective perceptions on the translator's part.

In addition to its structural trigger, this translation error blatantly contradicts the internal coherence of the narrative, as later Goldblatt did not make any attempt at altering the plot to echo this forecast of events. Interestingly, none of the critics has picked up on the disruption of coherence, and a reviewer from *Washington Post* specifically quoted the incident of Jiefang defying convention "by abandoning his legal wife (from an arranged marriage) for a woman he loves, ruining himself in the process" (Moore, 2008). In a word, readers of the English version seem to be little affected by this conspicuous error in translation.

In the Chinese version, immediately before this supra-narrative comment delivered by the big-headed Qiansui on Jiefang's unconventional decision that turned his life around, the intra-diegetic narrator Ximen Pig quoted a ballad from the 90s to playfully allude to the blue face of Jiefang that he inherited from his father. The ballad explicitly referenced the extramarital scandal of Jiefang and his elopement with his lover, phrased in these words: 老婆孩子全不要，县长私奔下长安 (gloss: "abandoning both wife and son, the County

Chief eloped to Xi’an”). However, this ballad has been deleted from the English version. This editing choice is highly likely to have been implemented before the actual translation, a blue-pencil decision that rendered the translator more susceptible to committing the error in the text that followed.

As for the reception of Goldblatt’s translation, he has been widely recognised as a “veteran translator” who is able to produce “fluent and elegant renderings” (Spence, 2008). Apart from the reviewers who generally acknowledge him for staying “faithful to the original” whenever he can (Beijing Review, China Daily, China.org.cn, 2008), academic researchers studying his translation style and analysing his translations of Mo Yan have rarely made note of the above errors or the narrative incoherence they have produced.

Considering the same assumption of “accuracy” attributed to Mabel Lee’s translations by book reviewers (cf. Section 3.1), it is perhaps necessary to re-examine the accusatory attitudes commonly held towards translation errors. As the examples have hopefully demonstrated, translation errors are a commonplace phenomenon in works executed by amateur and veteran translators alike, but their distinctive symptoms as errors do not always impact readers’ interpretation of the text, especially when the translation is read as a substitute for an original composition. In the following section, examples from both *One Man’s Bible* and *Life and Death* will be quoted to illustrate the classification of different types of translation errors as proposed in this study.

# Chapter 5 A Typology of Translation Errors

## 5.1 A Call for the Study of Errors

From the above application of error analysis, it can be concluded that real-life translation activities are surprisingly susceptible to errors, whether it involves novice or veteran translators. Therefore, translation error should not be addressed by research conducted in the applied branch of TS alone, but it should be recognised as a relevant topic of concern from the theoretical and descriptive perspectives as well. As a persistent phenomenon in real-life translation practice, translation errors should logically deserve attention from researchers, equivalent to other manifestations of the translational action.

The discussion of examples that exhibit low susceptibility to misreading has hopefully indicated that the manifestation of errors can be very revealing when it comes to the translator's orientation and consciousness, thereby highly instructive in reconstructing his/her decision-making process. The recurrence of certain errors can potentially refute Malmkjær's claim that errors are merely "incidental" and "never functionally or thematically motivated" (2004: 154). Although errors can be partly attributed to the translator's lack of knowledge as regards to the language or the text they are working with, they are also intelligible through the translator's misuse of the knowledge that they possess (Kussmaul, 1995: 34-35). Since errors can be explained through the knowledge and skills a translator has acquired as a social being and a professional practitioner, they are the products of monitored and rationalised action, however implicitly so. The interaction between errors and other translation choices, including explicit strategies, serves to illustrate the predominance of practical consciousness in translation practice, rather than the "unconscious" or "unreflective" process that Venuti portrays (2013: 32).

Considering the inconsistency shown in the way the translator tackles a similar translation challenge in different situations, it is doubtful whether the concept of "manipulation" as defined by Malmkjær is such a useful category in the classification of translation decisions (2004: 142-143), or indeed whether translational action itself is as manipulative as DTS presents it to be (Lefevere, 1992; Dukāte, 2009). Instead, the actual process of the translator's decision-making often deviates from his/her explicitly articulated grounds for action, further highlighting the voluntaristic and probabilistic nature of the translational action and questioning the reliability of discursive consciousness in the interpretation of translation practice. In an ideal scenario, the translator would be able to employ the most effective means to achieve the optimal outcome, in compliance with the goal he/she established at the outset. However, real-life translation activities encompass more than simply a social actor with his/her anticipated end, but more significantly, a particular situation with its own enabling and restrictive features. Besides the means and conditions in the situation of translational action, the translator is also steered by his/her normative orientation, of which cognitive capabilities constitute merely a single aspect. Consequently, the presence of translation errors does not necessarily reflect upon the competence of the translator in question. Rather, errors can result from a combination of factors ranging from utilitarian concerns to cathectic commitments to the prioritisation of various social roles.

The two types of scenarios conceptualised by Kussmaul regarding the misuse of top-down knowledge — when one meaning of a word in the translator's memory overrides contextual information or when the translator's personal experience of the context overrides the appropriate understanding of a word's meaning are challenging and perhaps fruitless to differentiate (1995: 34-35). This is because the predominant meaning of a word in the translator's memory is almost inevitably invested with his/her personal experience of the word's connotations, be it the political significance of "毛" (Mao) or the thematic preoccupation with "母" (mother) (cf. Section 3.3, Section 4.3). This also validates the argument for the simultaneous presence of textual and preconceptual triggers in most cases of error analysis, for an error purely triggered by the similarity in verbal image without any relation to the expectation or preoccupation on the translator's part can only indicate a lack of linguistic competence, a situation more commonly found in language learning classrooms. For a professional translator, especially an experienced one, the predominant meaning of a word that deviates from his/her personal experience of the context should ideally urge the translator to seek confirmation from other resources before committing to the particular interpretation.

However, there are certain interferences that occur in a real-life translation project, including practical concerns such as deadlines, funding, priority of other social responsibilities, attention spans etc., along with the traditional axiom of translation favouring the directionality of translating from one's second or third language into his/her mother tongue (Pokorn, 2005). Considering these factors, especially when it comes to the translation of literary works and full-length books, errors induced primarily or even purely by textual triggers are not absent either, which challenge the taken-for-granted preference for translating into one's mother tongue. Typical examples of errors caused primarily by textual triggers include Goldblatt's mistranslation of the chapter titles in *Life and Death*, presenting cases of translation errors that demonstrate on one hand low susceptibility to misreading and on the other hand low frequency of recurrence. These isolated instances of error are less intelligible through the translator's motivational orientation or anticipatory schemata than through the insufficiency of the translator's linguistic understanding when it comes to certain words, thereby also less relevant to the sociological interpretation of translation errors.

Meanwhile, when the translator meets textual clues that are drastically disparate from his/her preoccupation with a certain topic or personal experience of the context, his/her initial expectations should be easily rejected and revised. Hence, the translator's cathectic commitment to a specific representation of the text also needs to be supported by a corresponding interpretation of its lexical meanings, one that prevails over other alternatives. In the case where a translator insists on disregarding textual clues and reconstructing a text tinged with strong personal motivations, the translation choice should no longer be diagnosed as an error but is more likely to be a subjective interpretation or a deliberate reframing of the relevant events, such as Mabel Lee's decision to repeatedly insert the temporal reference of Cultural Revolution in Example 7 (cf. Section 3.3). In other words, the second scenario of misusing top-down knowledge as hypothesized by Kussmaul cannot be easily segregated from the first type of situation either.

This study shares the same interest in an interpretive understanding of translation errors as that shown by Kussmaul and Venuti, and has recognised the illuminating insights of their speculation about the causes of translation errors, namely the misuse of top-down knowledge or the reader's preparedness to read something into the text, which is then supported by some sort of similarity in the verbal image. However, both scholars' preliminary investigations into the topic have suffered from a lack of empirical data and systematic analysis, so their hypotheses have only addressed aspects of translation errors that easily lend to a theorisation based on common sense.

For instance, a closer examination of Kussmaul and Venuti's theorisation on errors reveals that their hypotheses have adopted the perspective of the reader, focusing on the types of scenarios that could potentially lead to misreading. Although translators are first and foremost readers of the text, translation errors should *not* be mapped exactly onto reading errors, just as they should be distinguished from common errors committed in other forms of writing as Hansen suggests (2010). This is because the rationalisation process involved in reading for translation should be slightly different in comparison to reading for general comprehension purposes. During this process, the translator would likely be engaged in the simultaneous processing of more than one language. Goldblatt's explanation of his translation methods lends further support to the necessity of distinguishing the two.

He states that he makes notes whenever “the ‘perfect’ translation of a term or a phrase” pops into his mind even as he reads the text for the first time (Ge, 2011: 101).

Consequently, misreading inspired by the formal patterning of lexical items or the similarity of their verbal image in the same language can be further encouraged by cross-linguistic interference, especially when it triggers an association with set phrases. For instance, the word “殺機” in Chinese refers to “murderous intent”, but it is also a word composed of two characters “殺” (to kill) and “機” (a turning point, an opportunity, or a *machine*). Meanwhile, “killing machine” is a common set phrase in English. Although “殺人機器” (a killing machine) is never abbreviated as “殺機” in Chinese, Mabel Lee translated “那暗藏的*殺機*便落到自己頭上” (gloss: “that lurking desire to kill (of the masses) would come down on his own head”) as “the secret *killing machine* would fall on that leader” (Gao, 1999: 220; Gao and Lee, 2002: 215, italics added).

In the case of Howard Goldblatt’s translation, a set phrase “按*劳*分配” (to each according to his *work*) was translated into “to each according to his own *needs*” (written as “按*需*分配” in Chinese) (Mo Yan, 2006: 332; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 350, italics added), a fixed expression closely associated with the doctrines of Communism. The difference between “需” (need) and “劳” (work) is bypassed, despite the very low similarity in the verbal image of the two characters. This cross-linguistic interference is addressed by the criterion of the morphological trigger as proposed by this study, regarding factors beyond the sound-image of *one* word.

Following the framework for error analysis established in Section 2.3, this section proposes a classification of translation errors on the basis of examples collected through the case study. The examples that have been quoted so far in Part II are far from exhaustive, so other examples will also be briefly referenced for illustration purposes when introducing the typology of translation errors. As explained previously, the Chinese versions quoted below include a mixture of Traditional and Simplified Chinese, because the 1999 Chinese edition of *One Man's Bible* was published in Taiwan, while the 2006 Mainland Chinese edition of *Life and Death* is used here. Informed by Parsons' definition of error as "the failure to attain ends or to make the 'right' choice of means" (1968: 45-46), in the following, the classification of translation errors will be developed on the basis of the different anticipated ends envisioned for translation as a social action and the various role expectations invested in translators.

This study has thus identified 12 types of translation errors based on a thorough analysis of the case study examples — *transfer*, *reference*, *selection*, *adaptation*, *contention*, *metaphor*, *exchange*, *displacement*, *explicitation, rearrangement*, *omission* and *annotation* errors. It should be stressed that although translation errors generally have some common origins, the actual manifestation of these initiators can take many forms, very often combining different triggers and displaying dissimilar patterns in various language combinations.

These categories might bear certain resemblance to the early linguistic approaches to the discussion of translation methods or translation procedures (see Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958), but this study does not see a contradiction between the linguistics-based classification of errors and the sociological explanation of their occurrence. In other words, there should not be a conflict between linguistic and sociological research methods, but since the subject under study is the social action of translation, a large part of its manifestation is textual in nature, thereby inevitably involving linguistic analysis. It is by recognising these *textual* features, of which translation error is one type, that regular patterns in their manifestation can be identified and sociological explanations called for.

## 5.2 The Twelve Types of Errors

### 5.2.1 Transfer Error

Firstly, the description of a translating act as “transfer” or “transport” is widely employed in both scholarly and layman discussion of translation (Newmark, 1991: 27; Pym, 1992b; Toury, 1995: 40; Göpferich, 2007; Diaz-Cintas and Anderman, 2009; Stockhorst, 2010; Efthimiatou and Goldblatt, 2012), but the term has been frequently criticised for implying mechanical conversion with standard equivalents. Considering this connotation, the current study uses this term to indicate translation errors in a very narrow sense.

Here, the anticipated end of “transfer” applies to a very limited aspect of translation as a social activity, specifically the preservation of textual elements that can be presented in identical forms across different languages. These textual segments are then assumed to remain unaltered irrespective of how far and wide the text “travels”. A typical example would be numerical values, which presumably should stay unaffected by the translator’s processing of the text for translation purposes. The discrepancies induced in numerical values therefore typically lead to the diagnosis of a translation choice as an error. For example, in *Life and Death*, there are three instances of such *transfer* error:

Example 25

CV: 这样一件半成新的黑山羊皮袄，只要**十**元钱……不是看在老街坊的面子上，十五块我也不卖！ (Mo Yan, 2006: 153)

AV: A half-new fur coat made from black goat skin like this, sold at only **ten** yuan… if it’s not because you are my old neighbour, I wouldn’t sell it for fifteen yuan!

EV: A nearly new black goatskin coat for only **nineteen** yuan… If not for the neighbourhood connection, I wouldn’t sell it for fifteen. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 183)

Example 26

CV: 您望望高密县，望望山东省，望望除了台湾之外的全国二十九个省、市、自治区，全国山河一片红了…… (Mo Yan, 2006: 172)

AV: Look at Gaomi County, look at Shandong Province, look at the **29** provinces, cities and autonomous regions across the country, excluding Taiwan, the whole country is covered in red…

EV: Take a look at Gaomi County, or at Shandong Province, or at all of China's **nineteen** provinces (not counting Taiwan), its metropolitan areas, and its autonomous regions. The whole country, awash in red… (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 203)

Example 27

CV: 估计是二十一点左右的光景，我的等待有了结果。 (Mo Yan, 2006: 358)

AV: At around **21** o'clock, my waiting yielded results.

EV: At around **eleven** o'clock that night, my patience paid off. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 373)

Similar to any other type of translation choice, the alteration of numerical values can also be presented as strategic decisions under certain circumstances, and the above examples are diagnosed as translation errors according to the two criteria established for this study – the presence of triggers and the disruption of narrative coherence. Transfer errors are not necessarily limited to this one type of manifestation either, but given another language combination where both languages involved in the translational action are alphabetically based, the translation of people or place names can also be strictly concerned with the end of "transfer".

### 5.2.2 Reference Error

As explained in Section 4.1, the translation of character names in the case of Chinese-English combination sometimes extends beyond strictly transfer errors. Whether the translator chooses to transliterate it, which already involves the choice between different transliteration systems, including Mandarin *pinyin* and Wade-Giles Romanisation, or to translate the semantic meanings behind the names, the names themselves should be able to act as referents. In other words, whichever form the names are presented in, they should be sufficient in clarifying who, where, what and which these names refer to.

For example, in the case of Lee's mistranslation of "Don Juan" into "Tang Yin", the referent in the real world and in the intertextual network completely changes, leading to the diagnosis of the translation decision as a *reference* error. The same applies to Goldblatt's inconsistent translation of "Ximen Donkey", which is referred to as "Ximen Lu" at the very beginning of the book, as well as his inconsistency in translating "Torn Ear" and "Split Ear", the variation between which defeats the purpose of using this name as a referent to one boar among the sounder.

Another instance of such reference error is seen in one of Goldblatt's mistranslations of the chapter titles, where "庞英雄光临大院" (gloss: "Hero Pang visits the compound") is translated into "A Colossal Hero Arrives at the Estate" (Mo Yan, 2006: 58; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 69). Again, this example could have been interpreted as a strategic choice under different premises. It has been discussed in Section 4.1 that Goldblatt seems to have shown unusual interest in the name of this war hero, who is by no means a primary character or a character with a name that is explicitly significant. However, considering the anticipated end for a character name in a novel, which essentially concerns its reference value, this translation choice in the chapter title has deviated from that end by selecting the meaning of "huge or colossal" signified by the Chinese character "庞" (pronounced as "pang") instead of its other meaning, which is designated as a common surname. In the rest of the novel, the character is referred to as "Pang Hu" rather than the "colossal hero", not to mention the unnatural collocation of "colossal" and "hero", which further disrupts the intertextual coherence between this description of the war hero and the commonly accepted linguistic norm in English. Due to the above reasons, this translation choice has been diagnosed as a translation error in this particular instance.

### 5.2.3 Selection Error

As the translation of Pang Hu's name has demonstrated, translation, when viewed on the miniscule scale of lexical items, at times can be portrayed as a purposeful act aiming to select the "right" or one of the more suitable lexical items in another language to represent the same intended meaning. This is the third type of translation error identified in this study – *selection* error. In a way, the mistranslation of "Hero Pang" as "a colossal hero" is partly a *reference* error and partly a *selection* error.

The anticipated end or role-expectation of translation as "selection" is a perspective frequently adopted in the research into machine translation. The development of computer-based tools to aid human translators is largely characterised by the endeavour to optimise selection, using either rule-based or corpus-based criteria (Trujillo, 1999: 203; Carl and Way, 2003: 240-241; Ping, 2009: 167; Costa-jussà, 2016: 27-29). This expectation invested in translators for selecting the more or even the most appropriate understanding of a word's meaning seems to be the one held by Kussmaul when he proposed the two scenarios of mistranslation, both of which involve the wrong selection of a word's meaning.

There are plenty of examples of such *selection* errors in the case study, and probably the prevalence of these errors applies to many other language combinations as well, because of the inherent phenomenon of polysemy and homonymy in most human languages. The mistranslation of "Mao-edged paper" as "the coarse paper used in Mao Zedong's border region", "banknotes of less than one *yuan*" as "Mao-head banknotes", "breaks a vow" as "makes a solemn vow", "female donkey" as "mother donkey" all belong to this type of error (cf. Section 3.3, Section 4.2, Section 4.3). Also associated with selection error is the translation of "how to go about this revolution" into "how to nip it in the bud", an example where manifestation extends beyond individual lexical items but nonetheless is caused by the selection of one meaning of the word "革" over another, specifically the meaning of “to abolish” over “to revolutionise” (cf. Section 4.4). The example of translating “殺機” (murderous intent) as “killing machine”, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, is also a selection error, involving the selection of the wrong meaning of the character “機” (a turning point, an opportunity, or a machine).

### 5.2.4 Adaptation Error

As already discussed in Section 5.1, the translation error “killing machine” concerns more than just the sound-image of the two individual characters, but also involves the trigger of association with a set phrase in English. This combination of factors is also applicable to the above-mentioned example of translating “how to nip it in the bud”, for the character “革” alone is more likely to trigger the interpretation of “revolution” among the word’s several meanings stored in the translator’s memory. This is evidenced by Goldblatt’s mistranslation of a character’s name from “改革” (Gaige, whose name means “reform”) into “Geming” (written as “革命” in Chinese, which means “revolution”) (Mo Yan, 2006: 361; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 377). The fact that Goldblatt would misread “改革” (reform) as “革命” (revolution) clearly indicates that the character “革” itself is intimately associated with “revolution” in his memory. In the example of translating “how to nip it in the bud”, however, this interpretation of the character’s meaning is overridden by other triggers in the immediate context. The selection of “to abolish” over “to revolutionise” is therefore not simply explainable through the predominance of one meaning of the word in the translator’s memory as suggested by Kussmaul, but the translation choice is further abated by the trigger of Goldblatt’s association with a ready expression in English – “to nip in the bud”.

This extra factor contributing to the introduction of a translation error is termed *adaptation* error. It can be understood against the background of Toury’s proposition of the two laws of translation: the law of standardisation and the law of interference (1995: 259-

280). The search for translation universals has long been a controversial project among scholars (Mauranen and Kujamäki, 2004), but whether there is truly anything universally applicable to the translational action in general, Toury's two laws at least hold some explanatory power when it comes to the analysis of comparable corpora (Pym, 2008). Under the influence of the two "probabilistic" laws, *adaptation* error is likely to occur when there is the combination of at least two triggers – sufficient linguistic interference and inspired association with standardised expressions in the language being translated into, as illustrated by the following example:

> Example 28
>
> CV: 这小子既好奇又懦弱，既无能又执拗，既愚蠢又狡猾，既干不出流芳百世的好事，也干不出惊天动地的坏事，永远是一个惹麻烦、**落埋怨**的角色。 (Mo Yan, 2006: 260)
>
> AV: The boy was curious yet cowardly, incompetent yet stubborn, foolish yet crafty; he cannot do a good deed that helps him leave a good name for generations to come, neither can he commit a bad deed that shocks the world; he was someone forever causing trouble and **getting blamed**.
>
> EV: Curious but cowardly, virtually useless yet pigheaded, stupid and cunning at the same time, he was incapable of doing anything worthwhile and unwilling to do anything spectacularly bad; in other words, someone who was always causing trouble and forever **complaining about his lot**. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 288)

In the English version of this example, the complained becomes the complainer, a translation choice that is possibly an error. A closer rendering of the Chinese phrase "落埋怨" would be "to receive complaints", an expression that does not immediately fit well with the tone and style of the text. Meanwhile, "to complain about one's lot" is a fixed expression that is readily associated with the verb "to complain", and it is even possible that the set phrase is further elicited by the phonological trigger of the Chinese character "落" (to fall into or to receive), which is commonly pronounced as "luo", a sound that is very similar to "lot". This example can be partly interpreted as a *selection* error and partly as *adaptation* error. To summarise, the urge to adapt one's translation to standardised and readily available textual segments in the same language can also help result in translation errors.

### 5.2.5 Contention Error

In a manner, to translate "getting complained about" into "complaining about" is to reverse the roles of the characters involved and to contradict the scenario portrayed in the Chinese version. This, of course, can be argued to be a strategic choice under other circumstances, with which the translator sets out to challenge the narrative alternative presented by the other language version(s). Translation as a social action is by no means short of cases like this, which are presented by scholars as sites of "contention" (Long, 2013: 470-472). This expectation invested in translation, claiming that translational works are inherently contentious and that translators are usurpers of interpretive power, has been prevalent during the Cultural Turn of TS. In the most extreme form of manifestation, the anticipated end of "contention" is to arrive at the opposite conclusion, from centrism to diaspora and from masculinity to feminism. This perspective of viewing translation has inspired the naming of the fifth category of translation error – *contention* error.

Contention errors are most likely to cause disruption in the narrative coherence because they end up reversing the intended meaning expressed by a certain sentence. This usually involves the omission of negative markers such as "not", "nor", "never", "neither", "nothing" etc. In Chinese, these words would typically be "不", "没", "未", "非", "否", "弗", "勿", "毋" etc. Besides these commonly employed negative markers affixed to their respective unmarked forms, there are also words with negative connotations that can be subjected to the same type of mistranslation. As explained in Section 0.2, when a pair of binary opposition is concerned, one of the two opposing concepts typically assumes dominance while the other is generally conceptualised as the subordinate concept. For instance, "to forget" is commonly seen as the failure "to remember" or "to recall".

Therefore, when translating such words with negative connotations, especially when the sentence is compounded with multiple negations, the translator is prone to committing *contention* error, as Example 19 has illustrated, by translating “why does he not forget his previous life” into “how can he not recall his past life” (cf. Section 4.3).

Similar to Goldblatt, Lee has also committed this type of translation error on several occasions, with examples listed in the following. These examples demonstrate particular susceptibility of both translators to misread negatively marked sentences, thereby warranting the recognition of this specific type of error:

Example 29

CV: 這小夥子**想必不是**黑五類分子的子孫，手裡捏住不放的舊軍帽便是他的憑證，否則也不敢上京來告狀。(Gao, 1999: 166)

AV: This young fellow was **presumably not** a descendant of the Five Black Categories, his proof being the old army cap that he clutched in his hands and wouldn’t let go, otherwise he wouldn’t dare come to the capital to file a complaint.

EV: The youth, **almost certainly** a descendant of one of the Five Black Categories, clutched the old army cap as his credential, otherwise he would not have dared come to the capital to report this grievance. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 162)

Example 30

CV: 他不能說他爸**從來沒**革過命，雖也未反對過革命…… (Gao, 1999: 286)

AV: He could not say that his father **had never** participated in the revolution, although he never opposed the revolution either…

EV: He could not say that his father **had been** a revolutionary, although he had never opposed the revolution… (Gao and Lee, 2002: 281)

Example 31

CV: 他這屋現今也**沒有**吆喝一聲便打門進來張望、鬨扯、抽菸、喝茶的…… (Gao, 1999: 340)

AV: There was now **nobody** who would barge into his house to take a look around, to chat, to smoke or to drink tea after just giving a shout.

EV: **People** now came to his house, and, without calling out, just pushed open the door and came in to look around, chat, smoke, and drink tea. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 337)

### 5.2.6 Metaphor Error

Besides negatively marked sentences, another typical initiator of translation errors is metaphor. On account of the two terms' common etymology in SAE languages, translation and metaphor have been closely associated on both epistemological and metalinguistic grounds (St. André, 2010; Guldin, 2015). The expectation for translators to provide a glimpse into the "alien" through the "domestic", or into the tenor through the vehicle via their metaphorical operation on the text has created a dilemma in balancing the introduction of imagery and the clarification of signification (Cronin, 2006: 105).

As demonstrated by Example 4, by translating "鱼水之欢" (referring to "sexual liaisons") into "the joys of being a fish in water", the translator Mabel Lee is suspected of committing *metaphor* errors, due to the simultaneous presence of textual triggers and the introduction of ambiguity into the English version, which is absent in the Chinese version (cf. Section 3.2). However, it has also been argued in the discussion on this example that such translation choices cannot be diagnosed as translation errors beyond any doubt, unless they are directly addressed in interviews with the translators themselves, since they could well be strategic decisions to foreground new imageries or to inspire diverse interpretations. Examples of potential *metaphor* errors found in Goldblatt's translation are listed below:

Example 32

CV: 妙龄女思春芳心动 (Mo Yan, 2006: 118)

AV: A girl of young age longing for love has her heart stolen

EV: A Young Woman's Heart Is Moved as She Dreams of Spring (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 139)

Example 33

CV: 男儿膝下有黄金 (Mo Yan, 2006: 463)

AV: A man's kneeling is as invaluable as gold.

EV: No boy gets down on his knees, not even if there's gold at his feet! (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 466)

As shown in the above examples, the vehicles of "spring" and "gold" signify the budding stage of romantic love and the primary significance of a man's dignity, respectively. Instead of clarifying these allegorical meanings, the English version presents the two symbols as literally a thawing season and a slightly changed synecdoche for material gains. However, in both cases, the translation decisions can be argued to be strategic choices, out of consideration for effects such as aesthetic values, comprehensibility or acceptability.

In Goldblatt's translations, depending on the context and the significance of specific metaphors, he deals with their translation using various strategies after weighing "the necessity of making every alien reference or concept clear" to his readers, and he mostly ends up leaving the images in with no explanation (Sparks and Goldblatt, 2013). He admits that he is "yet to be fully satisfied" with any of the strategies he devised in solving this translation challenge (ibid.). On another occasion, he commented on the fact that Chinese language makes frequent use of popular sayings, which has posed a unique challenge to him as a translator, and he changes the strategies he employs from book to book as to how much of the imagery in Chinese should be kept (Efthimiatou and Goldblatt, 2012). Based on these metatextual clues, both of the examples quoted above can be reasonably argued to be strategic choices.

### 5.2.7 Exchange Error

While translation is often portrayed as a one-way movement from “source” to “target”, it is also frequently described as an “exchange”. This implication is especially notable in the Chinese term for translation – *fanyi*, the second character of which is a homonym of the Chinese word for “exchange”, conducted in either economic trade or personal interaction. Borrowing this image of to-and-fro communication, this study has identified another type of translation errors, specifically applied to the translation of dialogues in the text. These are termed *exchange* errors. The case study of Mabel Lee and Howard Goldblatt has discovered that both translators have demonstrated a peculiar susceptibility to translation errors in terms of distinguishing between the different interlocutors engaged in a dialogue. The manifestation of such translation errors can be illustrated by the following examples:

Example 34

CV: 真是一头好驴，四蹄踏雪！我听到区长说。可以把它弄到畜牧工作站当种驴，我听到那个扛着自行车的警卫员说。你是西门屯的蓝脸吗？陈区长问我的主人。 (Mo Yan, 2006: 31)

AV: What a fine donkey, with four hoofs white as snow! I heard the County Chief say. We can get it to the livestock work station as a stud donkey, I heard the guard carrying the bicycle say. Are you Blue Face from Ximen Village? County Chief Chen asked my master.

EV: “That’s a wonderful donkey,” I heard Chief Chen say. “His hooves look like they’re stepping in snow. He’d be perfect at the livestock work station as a stud.” I heard his bicycle-toting guard ask my master, “Are you Lan Lian from Ximen Village?” (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 37)

Example 35

CV: “總歸不是本地人，從省裡還是地區來的？”老人進一步問。

“原先在北京。”他乾脆說明了。

這回是老人點點頭，不再問了。

> “不走啦，就在這裡落戶啦！”
>
> 他用玩笑的語調，通常田間休息是農民們問起他都這語氣，免得多加解釋，最多加句山清水秀，多好的地方呀！ (Gao, 1999: 321)
>
> AV: “Anyhow you are not a local. Are you from the provincial capital or the local cities?” The old man continued to ask.
>
> “I used to live in Beijing”. He decided to be out-front with it.
>
> This time it was the old man who just nodded his head and asked no more.
>
> “I won’t leave again. I am going to settle down here!”
>
> He said in a joking tone, the tone he usually used when asked by farmers during breaks in the field, so as to avoid further explanation. At most, he would add that with green mountains and clear waters, it was such a nice place.
>
> EV: “You’re not a local, anyway. Are you from the provincial capital or from somewhere else?” the old man went on to ask.
>
> “I am from Beijing,” he said succinctly.
>
> At this, the old man nodded and asked nothing more. “Then don’t leave, just settle here!”
>
> He normally adopted a joking tone when the peasants questioned him during the rest breaks, and he did this without fail, so that he wouldn’t need to explain himself. At most, he would add that the mountains were green, and the rivers clear, and how wonderful it all was! (Gao and Lee, 2002: 319)

In the language combination of Chinese-English translation, the difference between the two languages in terms of punctuation, sentence segmentation and discourse markers when presenting both direct and reported speeches means that the translators who are not especially sensitive to the potential pitfalls in translating dialogues are susceptible to *exchange* errors.

### 5.2.8 Displacement Error

Similar to *exchange* errors, *displacement* error is concerned with the confusion of subjects and the relationship between characters. This type of error is named thus due to

Pym's translation maxim of first-person displacement (cf. Section 1.4), which argues that the referent of the first-person pronoun is presumably displaced in translated works, unless the translator usurps it for strategic purposes, for example, to increase translator's visibility. In this study, displacement error refers to occasions when the translator mistakes the referent of a pronoun for another. Such examples gathered through the case study can be seen in the following:

> Example 36
>
> CV: 你對那時候上過大學的姑娘都心存戒心，她們追求光明，努力表現得像天使一樣純潔。你自知思想陰暗，大學裡那點戀愛的經驗你已經領教了。你私下說的些怪話，要是被**女孩子**向黨、團組織匯報思想時懺悔出來，把你順便也就供奉給祭壇。
>
> **"她們難道就不是女人？"**(Gao, 1999: 85)
>
> AV: You are wary of girls who went to universities back then; they are after the light, striving to appear as pure as angels. You are aware that you have dark thoughts, and you have already learned your lesson from the little dating experience you had in university. If the strange things you said in private were confessed by **girls** to the Party or the Youth League when they reported their thoughts, they would incidentally offer you as sacrifice to the altar.
>
> "Surely it doesn't mean that they were not women?"
>
> EV: You were very wary of women who had been to university, because they all gravitated toward the light and always tried to achieve a sort of angelic purity. You knew that your own thoughts were dark, but you had been taught a lesson by your little experience of love at university. If what you raved on about in private came to be confessed by **the woman** in one of the thought-report sessions set up by the Party or the work unit, you, too, would have been put on the altar for sacrifice.
>
> "But surely there were other women?" (Gao and Lee, 2002: 81-82)

> Example 37
>
> CV: 老人沒有回答，眯眼仰望對面在山風中搖曳的樹林，又似乎在曬太阳。**他想著就是他的歸宿**，學點中醫，也好給鄉裡人看看病，一種生存之道。再娶個

村姑生孩子，老來也有個照應，等做不動農活了就曬曬太阳，看看醫書作為消遣。 (Gao, 1999: 322)

AV: The old man did not reply, squinting his eyes to look up at the forests shaking in the mountain wind opposite him; meanwhile, he seemed to be basking in the sun. **He thought this would be his destiny**, to study Traditional Chinese Medicine so that he could tend to the ill in the village; it could be a way to survive. He could then marry a village girl and give birth to a child, who could take care of him when he got old; when he could no longer work in the field he could bask in the sun, reading medical books as a pastime.

EV: The old man didn’t reply. His half-closed eyes looked across to the forests swaying in the mountain wind, and he seemed to be dozing in the sun. **He thought, this was the old man’s refuge**, and he had studied traditional medicine so that he could treat the villagers if they were sick, it was a means of survival. He had married a village woman to have children so that he would have someone to look after him in his old age, and, now that he was too old to work in the fields, he just sits in the sun reading medical books to pass time.

Example 38

CV: 他點點頭，又鼓起勇氣說：“你要是……我就直說吧，**手頭上一時有困難，週轉不開**，你就開口，我不是什麼大老闆，可……” (Gao, 1999: 285)

AV: He nodded, then built up the courage to say, “If you… I will be frank. **(If you) ever have financial troubles and do not have enough to go around**, just tell me. I am not some big shot, but…”

EV: He nodded, then again worked up the courage to say, “If you… Look, I’ll be frank. **For a time, I was financially constrained and didn’t have the money**, but you need only to say. I’m not some big tycoon but…” (Gao and Lee, 2002: 279)

In all three examples, the referent(s) of the pronoun has been displaced, due to either the multiple referential possibilities of the pronouns “他” (he) and “她們” (they) or the absence of an explicit subject in the sentence as seen in Example 38, a linguistic feature that is allowed in Chinese but is grammatically incorrect in English. The ambiguity is then generated from the gap between what one language does not have to spell out and what the other language needs to specify.

### 5.2.9 Explicitation Error

The necessity to explicitate what is implicit in another language is a common expectation invested in translation activities, and is identified as one of the "translation universals" in Blum-Kulka's Explicitation Hypothesis (1986). This study has thus categorised explicitation as a separate initiator of translation errors, and Example 38 can be interpreted as a combination of *displacement* and *explicitation* error. Following are some of the other errors primarily generated by the need to explicitate in translation:

Example 39

CV: 老人平時訓導青年雖不像那些老幹部，**開口閉口我們黨我們國家如何如何**，可好歹也是有一番革命資歷的名人…… (Gao, 1999: 74)

AV: Although when the old man lectured the young people, he was usually not like those old cadres, **(who talked about) our Party and our nation so and so whenever they spoke**, but he was after all a famous person with revolutionary credentials…

EV: The old man was not like the old cadres; nevertheless, when he instructed young people, **he was forever saying our Party this and our Nation that**. He was, after all, a famous person with revolutionary credentials. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 71)

Example 40

CV: 幾分鐘后她回到辦公室，收拾好桌上的校樣，**望著一屋子的人面無表情**，說她丈夫在家放煤氣自殺了，她回去處理一下。(Gao, 1999: 81)

AV: After a few minutes she returned to the office, tidied the proofs on the desk, **looked at a roomful of people with no expression on (her) face**, said that her husband at home had turned on the gas and committed suicide, that she would go home to handle it.

EV: She returned some minutes later to the office, tidied the proofs on her desk, and, **looking at the expressionless faces in the office**, announced that her husband had gassed himself and that she was going home to attend to things. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 78)

Besides the designation of pronouns, this type of error can also involve any explicitation of information that has been left implicit in the other language version(s), due to the ambiguity allowed by its grammar. For instance, tense is such a grammatical category, as shown in Example 17 (cf. Section 3.4); so are plurality and articles, as presented in Example 36, where an indefinite reference to “girls” is translated into a definite and singular reference to “the woman”. When translating from Chinese into English, the multiple possibilities promised by the ambiguity of these grammatical features open up more potentiality for committing translation errors.

### 5.2.10 Rearrangement Error

In Section 3.4, a translation error primarily induced by structural trigger has been discussed in detail, where “looking at your window from downstairs” was translated into “(anyone) downstairs watching your window” (Gao and Lee, 2002: 14). It has been explained that all lexical items in the sentence have been translated, except for the preposition “from”, without which the translator could rearrange the sentence into something entirely different. Similarly, in Example 4, the omission of the preposition “被” (by) in “被你打動芳心的姑娘” (a girl who is made to fall in love by you) makes it possible to rearrange the sentence as “a girl who makes you fall in love” (cf. Section 3.2). For Goldblatt, translating “leaving without saying goodbye and elope with his lover” into “leaving his lover without saying good-bye” (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 260) in Example 24 indicates a similar type of error caused by rearranged sentence components (cf. Section 4.5). Such errors are termed *rearrangement* errors in this study. This is because translation is generally expected to rephrase on the level of sentence structure, or borrowing Dryden’s words, “paraphrase” is an anticipated result of translation activities and often preferred over “metaphrase” (1680).

In the following examples, it can be seen that for both Goldblatt and Lee, rearrangement errors sometimes result in the confusion of subject and object as well, and prepositions indicating such relationship, for example, “对” (to, of, against etc.), “从” (from) and “被” (by) in Chinese, are closely associated with this particular manifestation of *rearrangement* error.

Example 41

CV: **他让我哥哥**去把跑散的牛拢到一起，他坐在向阳的河堤边，翻着电码表，口中念念有词，念着念着，眼中便流出泪水，然后便呜呜地哭…… (Mo Yan, 2006: 111)

AV: **He asked my brother** to go gather the cows that had wandered off, and he sat on the riverbanks facing the sun, flipping through the chart of telegraph codes and mumbling something to himself as tears flowed out of his eyes, then he started crying and sobbing…

EV: **My brother told him** to round up the strays, but he’d just sit on the riverbank in the sunlight to flip through his code book and read aloud, until tears fell and he’d begin to sob. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 132)

Example 42

CV: ……像一个对劳动人民极度蔑视的资产阶级知识分子。(Mo Yan, 2006: 218)

AV: …like a bourgeois intellectual who is extremely contemptuous of labouring people.

EV: …the best comparison I can think of is the look of contempt a working man gives to a bourgeois intellectual. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 245)

Example 43

CV: 可他並不同人民有什麼過不去，要的只是過自己的小日子，不靠**對別人打靶**謀生 。

AV: But he did not have anything against the people; he just wanted to live his own simple life, without make a living off **using other people as target practice**.

EV: But he had no quarrel with the people, he only wanted to be able to live his own insignificant life without having to depend for his livelihood on **being used as a practice target**. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 212-213)

Besides shifting the order of lexical items, *rearrangement* error can also be manifested in the combination of clauses, as evidenced by the following examples:

Example 44

CV: 他狂热地留恋人民公社大集体，我父亲顽固地坚持单干。 (Mo Yan, 2006: 427)

AV: He was feverishly nostalgic for the collective of People's Commune, while my father stubbornly insisted on independent farming.

EV: He desperately missed the collective spirit of the people's commune and the stubborn perseverance of Lan Lian, the independent farmer. (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2008: 434)

Example 45

CV: 悲劇的情懷下萌生出正義的衝動，就這樣他投入賭場，當時卻很難承認是不是也有賭徒心理。總之，他以為看到了轉機，**為生存一搏和當一回英雄，兩者都有**。 (Gao, 1999: 160)

AV: A sense of tragedy gave birth to an impulse to seek justice. Just like that, he participated in the gambling, although back then it was difficult for him to confess whether he also had a gambler's mentality. Anyhow, he thought he saw a turn for the better, and **it involves both taking risks for a chance of survival and acting as a hero for once**.

EV: The impulse for justice sprang from a sense of tragedy, and he had been thrust into the gambling den, although at the time it was hard to say whether he wanted to gamble. In any case, he thought he had seen an opening and **there was something of gambling with life in being a hero**. (Gao and Lee, 2002: 155)

### 5.2.11 Omission and Annotation Error

As revealed by the analysis of some rearrangement errors, without the omission of certain textual elements, such as the Chinese prepositions or in the case of Example 24, the verb “elope” (cf. Section 4.5), the anticipated end of rearrangement alone cannot lead to the manifestation found in the English versions. Therefore, most of these quoted examples are actually the outcome of a combination of *rearrangement* and *omission* errors.

While omission can be attributed to the filtering of information by selective perception, addition almost always involves more explicit discursive reasoning of the grounds for action, due to the fact that the trigger of such translation choices lies beyond the text. Translation activity, considering that it bridges the gap between shared intertextual and contextual knowledge in different societies, is often expected to provide readers with extra information requisite to fully appreciate the text to the extent that is comparable to readers of other language version(s). For instance, although Lee claims that she does not set out to make the text “more easily digestible for a target readership” (Liu, 2001), she has demonstrated some consistency in strategically inserting temporal references to clarify the timeframe of historical events, such as “the Party Representative Conference official interpretation *of 1981*” and “When the Cultural Revolution began in the early summer *of 1966*” (Gao and Lee, 2002: 150, 184, italics added to indicate addition).

Meanwhile, Goldblatt has explicitly addressed this expectation of translators in his interviews, explaining that translators assume that “a domestic reader will be familiar with most of the historical, cultural, mythological, and political references in a story or a poem in ways that a foreign reader will not, at least not to the same degree” (Sparks and Goldblatt, 2013). Therefore, the last type of error is termed *annotation* error, and refers to places where the translator inserts extra-textual materials that are *not* inspired by any textual trigger and where such annotations generated incoherence in the text, intertext or metatext. Following is an example of annotation error:

Example 46

> CV: 大姑娘側身沉思的樣子，她爸是縣城中學的教員，她爸的爸，也就是她祖父，是地主，她高中沒讀完便下放到這深山裡來了。小的是個初中生，爸在省城一家眼鏡鋪配眼鏡，**當然也留不住女兒**。
>
> AV: The older girl appeared to be contemplating turned to one side; her father was a teacher in the county's middle school; her father's father, that is, her grandfather, was a landlord, so she hadn't finished high school before she was sent down to this remote mountainous area. The younger one was a junior school student; her father worked as an optometrist in an optician's shop in the provincial capital, and **he of course was unable to retain his daughter either.**
>
> EV: The older one's photograph was a profile of her deep in thought. Her father was a teacher in the middle school of the county town, and the father of her father, that is, her paternal grandfather, was a landlord. Before she completed middle school, she was sent to this remote mountain. The younger one had been a junior-middle-school student. Her father was a technician in an optometrist's shop in the provincial capital, and, **when his daughter decided she wanted to work in the countryside, he couldn't stop her.** (Gao and Lee, 2002: 365)

In this example, Lee's addition of "when his daughter decided she wanted to work in the countryside" aims to offer an annotation on the reasons why the two young girls dropped out of school and ended up working in the countryside. This annotation subsequently deviates from the implied explanation provided by the author, which has nothing to do with the girls' own will, but is determined to a large extent by the political classes assigned to their fathers or even grandfathers.

In this introduction to the typology of translation errors, this study intends to argue that the classification of translation errors is closely related to the translator's failure in striking a balance between the fulfilment of an anticipated end or a role-expectation and the limitations or possibilities presented by the situation of action. Sociologically speaking, errors are the product of concurrent and potentially conflicting forces derived from the translator's motivation to attain a personal goal that also complies with a shared understanding of the implications of that goal in the wider social and cultural systems. As for the actual manifestations of error, they can assume many forms, including the combination of several error initiators.

Before proceeding to the next chapter, it is important to emphasize that these 12 types of translation errors only serve to illustrate the typology developed by this study as an approach to the analysis of errors in translational action. Due to the limited scope of the case study focusing on the Chinese and English versions of two novels, the list of categories is far from exhaustive or refined. Given more empirical data or another language combination, there might be future supplement and revision to this classification. Nonetheless, this preliminary discussion can hopefully initiate research interest in the topic and demonstrate that translation errors can be studied under a systematic, theory-based and description-oriented research approach.

This initial attempt at classifying translation errors is seen as necessary for the integration of descriptive and prescriptive approaches to translation research, because it complements the previous two chapters and groups the translation errors based on their linguistic features and textual manifestation. This provides an alternative perspective towards translation error, which this study aims to portray as a textual feature that can be acknowledged, explained and perhaps averted or rectified. In contrast with the previous two chapters, where the investigation started from the textual clues and continued into diagnosis based on translator’s orientation and consciousness, this typology of errors originated from the recognition of their sociological causes and hopefully demonstrated the pedagogical and practical values in studying errors for language learning and translator training.

# Part III Translation as Industry Practice

# – Mapping the Intertextual and Interpersonal Network

## Chapter 6 From Source to Target

### 6.1 Problematising the Source-Target Model

As introduced in Section 1.2, the source and target-related terms have been recognised as some of the most basic, standard and established concepts in TS. However, their emergence and popularity can be attributed to the historical circumstances that provided a relatively stable identity for texts, languages, societies and cultures through the standardisation of vernaculars and the popularisation of the printing press (Pym, 2014: 20-21). Prior to these developments, most texts did not assume a physical form or the authority of an original. Instead, the variation, evolution and recreation of texts were the norm. Despite the terms' once helpful delineation of translation activities, it is debatable whether they would still prove effective in the present and future development of the discipline and its practice, which are now confronted with the challenges of open and shifting textual, linguistic, cultural and social borders.

For one thing, as evidenced by the entries in TS reference books, source text and target text are presumed to share a corresponding relationship with original and translation, or foreign and domestic (Munday, 2009: 228, Palumbo, 2009: 108), although an initial analysis would reveal that such assumptions are unfounded. This is because *inverse translation* where translators translate from the "domestic" into the "foreign" and *indirect translation* where the text to be translated is also a translation in itself are obvious exceptions.

When closely examined, the word "source" calls attention to the originality and thereby the authenticity of the textual material, while "target" hints at the finality of the translated product. As both terms are employed in their singular form by default, they presuppose the integrity of individual texts. Since the two terms constitute a spatial imagery in juxtaposition, they dictate the directionality of movement for the translator, the translating process or the translated product. Due to the terms' proven potential in generating a plurality of sub-terms, such as source and target text, source and target language, source and target culture, source and target readership etc., they encourage a systematic and static view towards translation. The translational action is subsequently portrayed as a transition or a transfer from a source system into a target system.

Scholars have already challenged the above assumptions with case studies of EU translation, marketing translation and self-translation. They have questioned the etymological implications of "*trānslātiō*" inherited by these source and target-related terms, which inevitably inspire associations with singularity, directionality and spatial movement. Rather than assuming the originality, singularity and integrity of either "source" or "target" texts, researchers have proposed the possibility of all texts being derivative, fragmented and incomplete. In the place of source-to-target transition, they have demonstrated that the translating process more often involves multi-directional, interpersonal and reciprocal interaction. Instead of depicting a one-off journey in space, they have suggested that translation activities could more aptly be portrayed as acts of propagation, extension and evolution, embedded in a never-ending intertextual network (Pym, 2014: 1-2; Tymoczko, 1999: 41-61; Chesterman, 1997: 8, cf. Section 1.2).

It has been explained beforehand that the dichotomies chosen for critical evaluation in this study may be conducive in certain research contexts. For instance, source and target text can still bear a corresponding relationship with original and translation, or foreign and domestic, in specific cases where the translator is translating from his/her second or third language, which also happens to be the language of the initial composition, into his/her native tongue.

In the case of Mabel Lee's translation of Gao Xingjian's novels, it has been clarified in her interviews that the texts used for the English translation are the first editions of *靈山*

(*Soul Mountain*) and *一個人的聖經* (*One Man's Bible*) published by Linking Publishing Company in Taiwan. Additionally, Lee has carried out no discussion on the topic of translation with Gao, let alone consulting him on problems she encountered during the translating process, nor did Gao make any special request to Lee about the translation of his works into English, in contrast with the detailed suggestions he gave to his French translator Noël Dutrait (see Appendix: 322).

Besides, Lee recalls that the translated manuscripts she submitted to the publisher only underwent "standard house-style editorial changes", with no notable content-editing (see Appendix: 336). After her English versions were published, Lee made no attempt at going back to reread or reedit her own translations either (see Appendix: 335), although she admits that any translation inevitably has areas for improvement upon later scrutiny, as "every translator can make mistakes" (see Appendix: 314). Therefore, it can be argued that in a translation scenario such as Lee's project of translating the two novels written by Gao, dichotomous concepts like source text vs. target text or original vs. translation may be deemed sufficient in representing the singular, integral, chronological and directional reproduction of texts.

Yet, Howard Goldblatt's translation of Mo Yan's works presents a very different case. There are multiple textual resources in the form of constantly revised editions of the Chinese version for Goldblatt to select from and compile his own textual materials for translation purposes. There is close collaboration between the translator and the author that almost always involves back-and-forth consultation and sometimes even co-authoring and rewriting. There are also intermediate texts with potential significance for translation research in between the earliest Chinese version and the latest English version, engaging various social actors involved in the project. Therefore, this chapter is going to reference primarily evidence collected through the investigation into Howard Goldblatt as a translator, accompanied by occasional comparison with Mabel Lee's translation of Gao Xingjian. In the following section, the problematisation of the source-target model is approached from four aspects, including the implications in the individual terms of “source” and “target”, the unidirectionality from “source” to “target”, and the systematic association of source and target factors.

## 6.2 Before There Was Source

From Shuttleworth and Cowie’s differentiation between source text and the original using the example of indirect translation (1997: 157-158), it can be inferred that they understand source text as a situational concept, while the original is invested with a more intrinsic feature. Therefore, when a text first came into being, it was the “original”. However, in a particular case of translating a certain text, what is directly used by the translator as reference would be the “source text”. Pym went a step further in questioning the very existence of any “original” that possesses an exclusive authority (2014: 1-2). Pym attempted to overcome the pristine connotations of the term “source text” by proposing the alternative of “start text”, a phrase that only denotes the circumstantial commencement of a particular action.

In fact, the “selection of a source text” has been considered by many as the point of departure for a translational action and an important factor in translation activities in general: Toury subsumed it under preliminary translation norms (1995: 58, 74), and Venuti listed it as a concern of his global strategy (2013: 193). However, both scholars were frequently criticised for failing to break with the traditional dichotomy of literal vs. free translation, with the former dividing his initial translation norms into adequacy vs. acceptability, and the latter inheriting Schleiermacher’s legacy in devising his famous domestication vs. foreignisation dichotomy (Jääskeläinen and Kujamäki, 2005: 72; Schjoldager, Gottlieb and Klitgård, 2008: 68-70).

When the text to be translated and the translated text are seen as integral entities, the theorisation of the translating process is susceptible to an either-or perspective. In other words, if the singularity, originality and authenticity of the "source" are absolute, then it seems that the decisions made by the translator in handling the text can only amount to either wholehearted allegiance or downright betrayal, and the loyalty of the translator can simply rest with either ensuring an *adequate* representation of the *foreign* text or producing an easily *acceptable* commodity for the *domestic* audience. Once the myth of any translational action stemming from *one* ultimate source is dispelled, the translator can potentially be confronted with multiple factors and the interaction between them when choosing one line of action among other alternatives, the textual materials he/she has at hand constituting maybe an indispensable one yet definitely *not* the only one of them. Rather than either a source- or target-oriented perspective, the translator's orientation necessarily involves both "source" and "target" concerns at all times and possibly much more.

When asked to comment on the enduring and fruitful collaboration between Mo Yan and himself, Goldblatt frequently attributes it to the freedom he has been allowed to assume by the author, for Mo Yan also "views the sanctity of the text in the same relativistic manner" as he does (Berry, 2002: 20). In fact, Mo Yan has openly acknowledged on several occasions that the origin of his creative ideas in writing novels is deeply rooted in Chinese folklore. He especially credited most of his fantastical descriptions labelled by the Nobel Committee as "hallucinatory realism" to his Big Grandpa (his grandfather's brother), who was a country doctor with a rich imagination. According to Mo Yan, many of Big Grandpa's stories have been woven into his novels, along with the rich materials supplied by other talented story-tellers in the family. In Mo Yan's own words, among the three-hundred odd stories he memorised from his childhood, "with minor changes, every one of them could become a pretty good novel”, and so far, he has not yet adapted half of them (Mo Yan and Lin, 2000: 474).

When commenting on his first two novels translated into English, namely *Red Sorghum* and *The Garlic Ballads*, which helped him win critical acclaim within and outside China, Mo Yan thwarted the critics’ attempt at labelling his creative efforts as a model of literary “innovation”, remarking that *Red Sorghum* can actually be traced back to “the folklore and legends” told by his kin, while the structure of *The Garlic Ballads* derived its inspiration from the haunting voices of the balladeers in his hometown (ibid.: 475). Mo Yan stressed, “That, not innovation, was [his] muse” (ibid.: 476).

When introducing his most recently translated novel, *Frog*, published by Penguin Books (2014) and centred on the topic of China’s birth control policies, Mo Yan acknowledges that the character of Gugu (Chinese term for one’s aunt on father’s side) is based on “the epic life story of a straightforward aunt of [his] who worked for decades as a gynaecologist in [his] home county of Gaomi and saw unspeakable things” (*Der Spiegel*, 2013). Like Gugu in the novel, Mo Yan’s aunt in real life also delivered thousands of babies into this world whilst denying many others the right to a life. Mo Yan’s aunt, Guan Yilan, was flooded with media interviews after the publication of *Frog*. In her interview with CCTV, she confirmed that at least half of what Mo Yan has recorded in the book was based on her experience related to him (*CCTV*, 2012).

From this perspective, the Chinese versions of Mo Yan’s novels are witnesses to the crystallisation of texts previously circulated in oral form among illiterate villagers. Mo Yan’s paratexts and metatexts regarding the *resources* he draws from testify to Pym’s argument about equivalence, source text and target text being largely historical concepts (cf. Section 1.2). His open acknowledgement regarding the origin of his creative ideas also echoes Tymoczko’s argument for all texts being derivative *intertexts* (1999: 41-61). Octavia Paz has elaborated on this concept of *intertextuality*, by offering the alternative perspective of viewing all texts as “translations of translations of translations” (cited in Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999: 3), regardless of the language they are composed in. He further elucidates that while each text is “unique” in the sense that it cannot be completely identical with another, no text is “entirely original”, for the intelligibility of any text relies on previously established interpretations of its symbolic meanings (cited in Inggs and Meintjes, 2009: 68). Thus, no text can claim the status of an ultimate “source”, but each text consists of fragments from preceding resources.

Besides being fragmented and derivative, a text to be translated might *not* be complete either. It has been illustrated in Section 1.2 how self-translation, especially the special case of “simultaneous self-translation”, directly challenges the concept of a fixed and closed “source text”. The probability of an unfinished “source text” is not only notable in the practice of self-translation, but has become the norm in many commercial projects. For instance, the model of simultaneous shipment, or “sim-ship”, is commonly practised in game localisation to ensure dominance on the international market at the earliest opportunity (O’Hagan and Chandler, 2016: 314-315). This puts the finalisation of any language version on hold until shortly before their simultaneous release, and translators are constantly working with drafts subject to further changes, rather than a complete “source text”.

The field of literary translation is no exception either. Mo Yan has consistently revised his own works for their reprints. For instance, *The Garlic Ballads* first appeared in the January issue of the bimonthly literary journal *October* in 1988. This was the version that Goldblatt encountered, brought to his attention by his Hong Kong friend William Tay (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 1995: 287). Yet before the English version of *The Garlic Ballads* met its readers in 1995, another three Chinese editions were made available, each having undergone further revision by the author.

According to the translator's note by Goldblatt, he used the Taiwan Hung-fan 1989 edition while consulting other versions as well (ibid.). This means that the original "source text" potentially involved four published Chinese versions, including the *October* edition (1988a), the China Writers Publishing House edition (1988b, hereinafter referred to as "Writers edition"), the Taiwan Hung-fan edition (1989, hereinafter referred to as "Taiwan edition") and the Beijing Normal University Publishing Group edition (1993a, hereinafter referred to as "University edition"), the last of which has acquired a new title "愤怒的蒜薹" (*Garlic Fury*). The new title, however, was not retained for later editions in Chinese. In this case, the "source text" was actually composed of multiple "source text*s*".

Despite the constant revisions, the primary storyline stayed roughly the same. *The Garlic Ballads* tells the story of three families of garlic farmers – Gao Yang, Gao Ma and Fourth Uncle Fang. The narrative starts with the arrest of the farmers involved in a riot against the local government, with analepsis to the tragic love story between Gao Ma and the daughter of the Fang household – Jinju, the past experience of Gao Yang living as an offspring of reactionary landlord under the Communist regime, as well as the garlic glut and Fourth Uncle Fang's death at a car accident that served as the direct cause of the riot. The story ends in a court trial of the government versus the farmers, with the final verdict yet to be announced. All the chapters are then connected through ballads sung by a blind minstrel – Zhang Kou, placed at the beginning of each chapter.

On the opening page of some of the Chinese editions as well as the English version, there is a quote that states "Novelists are forever trying to distance themselves from politics, but the novel itself closes in on politics. Novelists are so concerned with 'man's fate' that they tend to lose sight of their own fate. Therein lies their tragedy" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 1995). This epigraph has been credited as "a quotation by a famous person" in the Taiwan edition, while the English version attributed it to "Josef Stalin", following the *October* edition, despite Mo Yan's later clarification that the statement was not really delivered by

Stalin, and Mo Yan merely felt that Stalin would have said something along the line if his opinion were consulted on the relationship between novelists and politics (Mo Yan, 2012b: 329).

In the 1993 University edition, there is no quote, but another epigraph on Northeast Gaomi Township is added instead, which has also been translated and retained in the English version: “Northeast Gaomi Township: I was born there, I grew up there; Even though there was plenty of misery, these mournful ballads are for you” (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 1995). This inscription, having appeared at the beginning of the novel, firmly establishes the novel as another of Mo Yan’s Northeast Gaomi sagas, explicitly pinpointing the connection of this book with the previous and also the first English version of Mo Yan’s work made available – *Red Sorghum*, despite the fact that the events in the novel took place in a completely different and entirely fictitious place – Paradise County, while Gaomi was not mentioned again after the epigraph.

More detailed textual comparison reveals that places where the English version deviates from the Taiwan edition it claims to be primarily based on include where the Taiwan edition avoided explicit references to the Communist Party, the Nationalist Party or the Republic of China. All these references have been restored in the English version, as seen in the following examples:

Example 47

*October* edition, Writers edition and University edition:

说话间到了**民国十年**

天堂县出了热血男儿

……

高大义挺胸膛双眼如电

**共产党**像韭菜割杀不完

(Mo Yan, 1988a: 137; 1988b: 5)

Gloss:

Our story takes us back to the **10th year of the Republic of China**

Paradise County has produced a hot-blooded young man

…

Gao Dayi thrust out his chest with eyes flashing like lightening

**Communists** are like chives that cannot be wiped out

Taiwan edition:

說話間到了**光緒三年**

天堂縣出了熱血男兒

……

高大義挺胸膛雙眼如電

**好漢們**像韭菜割殺不完

(Mo Yan, 1989: 6)

Gloss:

Our story takes us back to the **3rd year of Emperor Guangxu's rule**

Paradise County has produced a hot-blooded young man

…

Gao Dayi thrust out his chest with eyes flashing like lightning

**Brave men** are like chives that cannot be wiped out

EV:

In the tenth year of the **Republic**

A hot-blooded young man came out of nowhere

…

He went to his death proudly, defiantly,

For the **Communists**, like scallions, could not all be felled.

(Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 1995: 4)

Example 48

*October* edition, Writers edition and University edition:

二哥说："想不到咱家里还出了一个宁死不屈的**共产党员！**" (Mo Yan, 1988a: 177; 1988b: 148)

Gloss: Second brother said, "I didn't know that our family had produced a **Communist** who would die before she caves in!"

Taiwan edition:

二哥說："想不到咱家裡還出了一個寧死不屈的**黨員！**" (Mo Yan, 1989: 189)

Gloss: Second brother said, "I didn't know that our family had produced a **party member** who would die before she caves in!"

EV:

"The fact that this family has produced a **Communist Party member** who'd actually rather die than surrender amazes me." (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 1995: 137)

Example 49

*October* edition, Writers edition and University edition:

同志，这也不是对付**国民党兵**，我还能骗你们？ (Mo Yan, 1988a: 179; 1988b: 154)

Gloss: Comrade, this is not like dealing with the **Nationalists**, why would I try to deceive you?

Taiwan edition:

同志，這也不是對付**日本鬼子兵**，我還能騙你們？ (Mo Yan, 1989: 195)

Gloss: Comrade, this is not like dealing with the **Japs**, why would I try to deceive you?

EV:

> “Comrades”, Schoolmaster Zhu said, “what do you take me for, a **Nationalist spy**? Do you really think I’d try to put something over on you?...” (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 1995: 142)

The fact that the Chinese version itself was never finalised is evidenced by the many textual changes in Mo Yan’s different editions of *The Garlic Ballads*. Consequently, Goldblatt does not simply decide what his “source” is, but what potential *resources* there are to choose from or even what alternatives he can suggest. The translation is not aimed at a “target” either, but involves a lot of “to-ing and fro-ing with the author” in a negotiation about what kind of translation product to deliver (Ge, 2011: 101), occasionally leading to a co-authoring process.

*The Garlic Ballads* is a novel inspired by true events, namely that of the 1987 Cangshan Garlic Incident as reported in the Shandong provincial newspaper *Dazhong Ribao*. Back in 1986, encouraged by the Cangshan County government, thousands of peasants dedicated their land to growing garlic. Their toiling ended in a bumper harvest, but when they tried to sell their crops, they were met with exorbitant taxes and levies from the local government. The government also manipulated the market to drive away external buyers, finally leading to a garlic glut threatening people’s livelihood. When the farmers’ petitions received no response, they staged a riot known nationwide as the “Garlic Incident”.

For Mo Yan, the realistic basis of this novel is what defines its significance. In his author’s postscript, he claimed that reading the newspaper report on the Garlic Incident threw him into such a rage that he had to put down the *Red Sorghum* novel he was writing to create *The Garlic Ballads*, which he wrote in a frenzy and finished in 35 days (Mo Yan, 2012b: 329). For such a novel inspired by true events, the last chapter of all the previous Chinese editions consist of excerpts from the actual newspaper reports, with only minor details like the names and dates altered. These official discourses were then contrasted with hearsays provided by the wandering balladeer, serving as the denouement of the narrative. This was the conclusion in all the Chinese versions that came before the English translation.

However, in the English translation, the entire chapter is substituted by court sentencing and individual endings for the primary characters involved in the riot, plots that were non-existent in the Chinese versions before it. According to Goldblatt, segments of Chapter 19 and all of Chapter 20, i.e. the last two chapters in the English version of *The Garlic Ballads*, have been revised "in conjunction with the author" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 1995: 287).

The specific challenge posed by this case to the source vs. target dichotomy does not merely lie in the fact that ST and TT are often used in their singular form. More significantly, "source" and "target" automatically imply singularity and integrity, so even if clarifications have been made regarding the possibility of multiple "source texts", the source and target opposition underplays the hybridities involved. In the case of Goldblatt, the fragmented and incomplete nature of his textual materials allows him to exercise agency in compiling his own text for translation purposes with the possibility for (co-)creating whatever is not yet available.

A similar scenario involving multiple "sources" recurred in Goldblatt's translation of *The Republic of Wine* for Arcade Publishing. In his translator's note at the beginning of the book, Goldblatt specifically commented on the novel's "extremely subversive" nature that meant it "could be published in China only after a Taiwanese edition appeared in 1992" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2000: v). It was only after the success of the Taiwanese version and the stir that edition has created among overseas sinologists that *The Republic of Wine* was accepted for publication in mainland China, where it was published under a new title "酩酊国" (*Republic of Drunks*). Later on, the title of the book was changed back to "酒国" (*The Republic of Wine*) for following editions.

The copyright of the English version has been credited to the 1992 Taiwanese version, but again it should not be discounted that Goldblatt also had other Chinese editions available before Arcade released the English version on 4 January 2000 (*PublishersWeekly*, 2000), including the 1992 Taiwan Hung-fan edition (hereinafter referred to as “Taiwan edition”), the 1993 Hunan Literature and Art Publishing House edition and the 1995 Writers Publishing House edition with the new title “Republic of Drunks” (hereinafter referred to as “Writers edition”). Textual comparison between the various editions and versions has revealed that Goldblatt indeed had referred to other editions besides the Taiwan edition.

Recognised as “a work of high metanarrative” (Kinkley, 2000: 582), *The Republic of Wine* is a Rabelaisian account of a special investigator’s journey into the city of Liquorland, a person who was assigned a mission to collect evidence confirming the rumours about local cadres eating baby boys as a delicacy. This narrative is supposedly a work in progress by a dramatised persona of the writer himself named Mo Yan. It is then interwoven with a separate storyline composed of epistolary exchanges between the character Mo Yan and a PhD student of Liquor Studies from the city of Liquorland called Li Yidou, who aspires to be a writer.

Inserted amidst these two narrative developments is the seemingly disconnected short stories sent by this Doctor of Liquor Studies, who requests that Mo Yan help him locate a suitable publisher and put in a good word for him. The short stories written by this local resident of Liquorland involve outlandish details about raising and cooking meat boys that seemingly echo the main narrative thread composed by Mo Yan, among other submissions of slapdash pieces poking fun at various textual genres such as Kung Fu novels, social satires, university lectures, tour commentaries, scientific expositions, ghost stories reminiscent of Pu Songling’s *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* and many more.

The three narrative threads then gradually merge as Mo Yan the writer’s detective story comes to be haunted by Yidou’s random inserts, until the two writers eventually meet in Liquorland, where Mo Yan, as a renowned and gluttonous author is welcomed by local dignitaries at a sumptuous banquet, seemingly heading down the same road of inebriation that sealed the fate of his own fabricated character, Detective Ding Gou'er. At the end, the multi-layered narratives and the detective's journey in Liquorland become so fantastical that critics have called it "a witch's brew of investigator and investigatees, fictions and realities that leave the reader rubbing his eyes to see straight" (Zhu, 2000: 270).

While the dramatised persona of Mo Yan inside the narrative was agonising over the ending he gave to Detective Ding Gou'er, the real-life writer Mo Yan outside the book also seemed to struggle with the conclusion of the novel. Even after the English version was published, Mo Yan in his interview revealed that he was still not happy with the last chapter and decided to rewrite it for later editions (Mo Yan, Dutrait, Frow, 2000: 59). While all previous versions had Detective Ding drown in an open-air privy filled with all sorts of imaginable filth, the Taiwan edition goes, "偵察員感到這裡是自己最好的歸宿，在溫暖的粥狀物即將淹至他的嘴巴時，他抓緊時間笑起來" (gloss: "the investigator felt that this was his best home, so when the warm porridge substance almost flooded his mouth, he seized the time to smile" (Mo Yan, 1992: 382). It endows the detective with a sense of fatalism, which led him to embrace his degrading death.

Meanwhile, the Writers edition reiterates Ding's indignation at his continuous mishaps in Liquorland by having him "protest" on the brink of drowning, the last struggle for redemption. The English version has followed the latter interpretation and depicted a special investigator distinctively different from his Taiwanese counterpart: "Feeling that this was not the place where he should wind up, the investigator announced loudly, just before his mouth slid beneath the warm, vile porridge, 'I protest, I pro-' The pitiless muck sealed his mouth as the irresistible force of gravity drew him under" (Mo Yan, 1995b: 326-327; Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2000: 330).

The two novels *The Garlic Ballad* (hereinafter referred to as "*Ballads*") and *The Republic of Wine* (hereinafter referred to as "*Wine*") are quite similar in terms of their publication history and thematic concern, despite their different relationship to real-life events. Both have been banned or rejected in mainland China for at least a period of time — one due to its explicit political poignancy and the other due to its experimental writing style. Both works have acquired a new title when being published in Mainland China following their Taiwanese editions, but neither new title has been preserved for subsequent editions. Also, both novels have an epigraph on their opening pages and address issues of contemporary China, especially corruption among the cadres of the Communist Party.

Faced with the various Chinese editions available at hand on both occasions, Goldblatt has assumed his freedom in selecting resources to work with, and his decisions in translating the two books did *not* demonstrate any consistent pattern or overriding strategy, nor are they attributable to any source- or target-oriented considerations. While Goldblatt chose to translate the fabricated quote from Stalin in the earliest edition of *Ballads* along with the inscription about Gaomi Township in later editions, he left out the epigraph in the English version of *Wine*, which states "在混乱和腐败的年代里，弟兄们，不要审判自己的亲兄弟" (gloss: "In an age of chaos and corruption, my brothers, do not put your own blood brothers on trial") in the Taiwan edition, and "在浪漫多情的年代里，弟兄们，不要审判自己的亲兄弟" (gloss: "In an age of romance and passion, my brothers, do not put your own blood brothers on trial") in the Writers edition.

Just as Goldblatt can conceive possible alternatives to the existing Chinese versions, his translation decisions have also challenged the necessary sanctity of any textual materials he is supplied with by excluding certain textual segments from his English version. By questioning the originality, singularity and integrity of a "source text", as Sebastian Veg puts it, scholars can operate with "a far more prosaic understanding of literary texts and their institutional status, which is not seen to be derived from visionary philosophical insights couched in aesthetically sublime forms by a prophet-like writer in the romantic tradition, but as *a complex interaction between social expectations and representations*" (2010, italics added).

## 6.3 It Does Not Stop with Target

The concept of intertextuality not only helps challenge the assumptions of originality, singularity and integrity invested in the term "source", it also proves useful in questioning the finality and directionality implied by the term "target". By calling all texts "translations of translations of translations" (cited in Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999: 3), Octavia Paz has blurred the boundary between the two concepts in the dichotomy of "source" and "target". As all texts are embedded in an intertextual network, not only the ones to be translated embody the generative capacities of a "source", but the translated products can also serve as an opening onto future projects. The finished product of one translation project may not be the final destination as implied by the term "target text", but leading onto further goals and actions, such as academic research, creative writing, retranslation and indirect translation among others, crisscrossing different languages, cultures and communities.

Goldblatt's translation of Xiao Hong serves as a typical example to illustrate that translation activities are *not* confined within the target system as the binary model suggests. His discovery of Xiao Hong, an author who was "virtually unknown in both her own country and the United States" has fed back into the literary tradition the author was situated in (Levitt, 2013). Goldblatt is believed to have "single-handedly" put this female writer forgotten by Chinese literary history back onto the map of "the most important pre-1949 Chinese writers" (Berry, 2002: 18). Thanks to Goldblatt, the Chinese versions of Xiao Hong's works have also undergone several reprints and the author herself has attracted the research interest of many Chinese scholars. It was a recovery of an author who was "lost" by her own countrymen, who is nowadays recognised as "the second most studied and written about writer from that period", placed after Lu Xun (Lingenfelter, 2007).

Goldblatt translated Xiao Hong's least-known work *Ma Bole*, a book that was originally planned as a part of a trilogy but never saw its last sequel due to Xiao's untimely death at the age of 30. Hence, the text to be translated was explicitly unfinished and incomplete. As the ardent promoter and pioneering researcher of Xiao Hong's works, Goldblatt authored a sequel in English on her behalf, "inserting translations of some of her short essays and stories from those late years" (Berry, 2002: 19). Therefore, the "target texts" of the *Ma Bole* trilogy do not all have their corresponding "sources", not to mention the directionality or the chronology associated with the "source-target" transition.

Moreover, when Goldblatt stated that Mo Yan also "views the sanctity of the text in the same relativistic manner" as he does (Berry, 2002: 20), he was not just referring to Mo Yan's repeated revision of his Chinese versions, but also his own modification of the English versions. For a translator like Goldblatt, the publication of a translated work does not mark the completion of a translational action. In his own words, a translator "never feels that his job is finished, even after it's been published" (ibid.). Goldblatt often rereads his favourite translations and revises them for updated editions on the basis of his newly gained perspective.

Among these retranslations is his debut work and an old-time favourite – *Tales of the Hulan River* by Xiao Hong. When Goldblatt first translated the book, his publisher Indiana University Press requested that he omit the last two chapters in order to allow room for another work of Xiao Hong's – *The Field of Life and Death* to be published in the same collection (1979). Although Goldblatt complied at the time, he later lamented that it was a regrettable decision and sought to rectify it by publishing a complete translation as a separate volume. The two translated works have been revised again for a 2002 edition published by Cheng and Tsui Company (Berry, 2002: 19).

Even in the case of Mabel Lee’s rather streamlined translation procedures, the end products of the translational action, namely the published English versions of the two novels, might *not* be fittingly described as “target text” either, since other languages tend to use translated versions in dominant literary languages, very often French and English translations as materials to inform their own translation. As Lee recalls, the indirect translations she officially signed contracts for include translations into Bulgarian, Georgian and two Indian languages – Marathi and Bangla, discounting the ones published without acknowledging the translation version/edition they used (see Appendix: 338-339).

According to Pascale Casanova, there are four scenarios of literary exchange through translation, including translating from a dominated language into a dominating language, from a dominating language into a dominated language, from a dominating language into a dominating language and from a dominated language into a dominated language, with the last scenario rarely seen in the international publishing industry (2010: 285-303). Chinese, along with the above-mentioned languages practising secondary translation, is subsumed under dominated languages, whose power hierarchy is not determined by linguistic, economic or political prestige. Instead, Chinese is a language with “large numbers of speakers and great literary traditions” that nonetheless does not fare well on the global literary market (ibid.: 290).

Therefore, the process of translating from Chinese into English, an undoubtedly dominating language in the publishing industry, is identified as a process of consecration. In this case, English, as well as the English versions of the text, serve as the “intermediary or vehicular” language and text (Heilbron, 1999: 435), which act a springboard for the literary work to reach other parts of the world. Consequently, the rare occurrence of translating from a dominated to another dominated language is realised through the intermediary stage of consecration in a process leading onto further targets or goals as Pym envisioned (2014: 1-2, cf. Section 1.2).

As Lee's English translations of Gao's two novels have been widely employed as the primary reference for other language versions, Goldblatt's extensive translation of Mo Yan's works have also frequently served as the basis for many indirect translations. According to Goldblatt, translators in Israel, Spain and Portugal have often translated from his English versions, because translators capable of working with Chinese are relatively rare in those countries (Open4learning, 2010). Under this premise, the English versions produced by Goldblatt after selecting, compiling and creating his own textual materials will certainly have produced unintended consequences in other language versions. As for his rewriting and co-authoring contributions seen in translating *The Garlic Ballads*, Goldblatt has confirmed that subsequent translations into other languages have adopted the new ending, some of which are indirect translations on the basis of his translation (Berry, 2002: 20).

The extension of a translational action into other languages is not limited to the case of indirect translation. For instance, Goldblatt was commissioned to retranslate Zhang Jie's *Heavy Wings*, previously translated by the celebrity translator couple Gladys Yang and Yang Xianyi, whose portfolio includes *Dream of the Red Chamber.* This was because the publisher at Grove Press read the German version and found it more readable than the existing English version (ibid.: 24-25). Thus, the German translation has evidently reached audiences beyond whom the translator initially envisioned and most definitely generated consequences he/she did *not* anticipate.

In addition to its impact on other translation activities, the final product of a translation project might also turn around to influence the production of text to be translated. In the case of translating *The Garlic Ballads*, a book Mo Yan finished in a little more than one month, Goldblatt and his editor at Viking agreed that the novel "ended weakly, leaving all his carefully drawn characters in limbo" (Goldblatt, 2004: 25-26). Therefore, Goldblatt proposed a few ideas to Mo Yan about writing "a new last chapter", with which Mo Yan "complied immediately" (ibid.). The outcome of this collaborative rewriting has been so successful and satisfying on both sides that "the new chapter replaced the old one in subsequent Chinese editions" (ibid.). Shortly after the English version was published in 1995, an updated Chinese edition was published by China Writers Publishing House (Mo Yan, 1995a), also with the last chapter explaining the characters' individual endings instead of citing newspaper articles.

As the new endings were supplied for translation purposes, the translating act transformed not only the Chinese version it used, but also future Chinese versions introduced to Chinese readers. Goldblatt has been noted for his "close collaboration" with Mo Yan and his successful translations of the author's works that "at times influenced Mo Yan's writing" (Braester, 2003: 541). In his case, the English version informs the author's revision of his Chinese version, with the unintended consequences of translational action feeding back into the cycle of producing texts in other languages, potentially becoming the unacknowledged conditions for the author's future creative writing.

Goldblatt describes the relationship he has established with Mo Yan as "mutually rewarding" (2014; 23), and such a bidirectional rather than unidirectional influence is not only found in his collaboration with Mo Yan. When he was translating another bestselling contemporary Chinese author Wang Shuo, who is renowned for the Beijing dialect and slang ubiquitous in his novels, he frequently consulted Wang on their interpretation. According to Goldblatt, these inquiries for the purpose of translation have yielded not only more informed translation choices on his part, but also "unexpected rewards" for the author himself (Berry, 2002: 21), for Wang later published his responses to Goldblatt's translation queries in the form of essays, with the questions excluded, in a freestanding volume titled *Ignorance is Bliss* ("不知者无罪").

Regarding the term "target", Nida already expressed his reservations on the grounds that instead of shooting at a mark, translational action continues into their reception, therefore "receptor language" is deemed a more appropriate term than "target language" in underscoring the decoding efforts on the part of the receiving audience (1975: 98-99). Similarly, Mohja Kahf contends that rather than accusing individual translators of misrepresenting a "source" text, translation choices should be framed in terms of the public's "horizon of expectations" and the "pressure of the reception environment" (2010: 42), which are defined by "what the public already understands about a genre and its conventions" and by "a reader's knowledge and assumptions about the text and literature in general" (ibid.: 30). These existing understandings, expectations, knowledge and assumptions do *not* remain static over a duration of time, however, but are continuously restructured by the translation activities that engage with them.

The ever-changing climate of the reception of translated literature is evidenced by Goldblatt's varied translation strategies when it comes to the rendition of culture-specific concepts in his different translated works. When translating *Sandalwood Death*, Goldblatt decided that the ongoing discussion on Chinese literature and literary translation in the Anglophone media as well as the ever-increasing translated Chinese works available on the US market have prepared the readers for a more challenging reading experience (Victorin-Vangerud, 2012). He thus attempted at further educating his American readers through the incorporation of more transliterated Chinese terms in rendering this "very 'Chinese' novel" written in the form of Maoqiang opera. Even though some of the culture-loaded words do have established English words that have been recognised as their equivalents, Goldblatt wanted to correct these existing translations as they represent "misread or misheard Chinese-isms" dating back to the imperialists and missionaries' early contact with China (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2013: ix). Here, the translator's translation choices are *not* dictated by a static perception of what the target readership or target cultural norms are but by an evolving understanding of what they can become. It is only by disrupting the binary opposition between source and target factors can a translational action be accepted as a continuous process and the relationship of cultures portrayed as a “heterogeneous continuum” (Tsing, 1997: 253).

These cases constitute challenges to the designation of a translated text as “target” and the finality of a translational action the term entails. They also serve to question the taken-for-granted directionality implied in the spatial imagery of “source” and “target”. As Chesterman has argued in favour of genetic metaphors in replacement of spatial metaphors associated with the source-target model, a translated product can be conceived as only an intermediary stage leading on to a continuous propagation and evolution of further texts (cf. Section 1.2).

## 6.4 And All Those in Between

On closer inspection, the numerous texts involved in real-life translation activities cannot be neatly categorised into source text and target text. In other words, from the moment when a translator or a commissioner decides to translate a text, to the point where the translated text enters the market as a publication, there are often more than one intermediate text involved in the process, and their identity does not fit into either the source or target category.

For instance, Goldblatt’s English version of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* was based on a “shortened, computer-generated manuscript supplied by the author”, and then during the translating and editing process, further “changes and rearrangements” were made with the author’s approval (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2004: xii). Here, between the published Chinese version and the published English version, there were at least three intermediate texts, namely the author’s abridged Chinese manuscript, the translator’s submitted English draft and the revised English draft.

Considering the amount of editing and rewriting that can be detected from a textual comparison between the Chinese version and the English version (Xiao and Zheng, 2015), it might be equally meaningful to compare the published Chinese version with the shortened manuscript, or the translator's first draft with the revised draft(s) at later stages. If the metalanguage of translation only takes into consideration one "source text" and one "target text", such ambiguous texts will be suppressed, along with the other forces at work apart from the translator during a translation activity.

Additionally, if one includes Goldblatt's wife and frequent co-translator Sylvia Lin into the picture, who usually produces the first draft independently for Goldblatt to work on (Ge, 2011: 101), then the situation is further complicated. This is because when Goldblatt approaches the translation, he has both Chinese and English "source texts" for reference. Goldblatt has identified at least five stages in his co-translating projects, including a rough draft produced by the native Chinese translator that is then fleshed out by Goldblatt for a second draft, followed by an interpretive phase undertaken by both translators to solve specific translation problems, a polished draft independently generated by Goldblatt to be submitted to the editor and finally another collaborative effort in deciding on editors' comments and suggestions (Berry, 2002: 24). The difficulties in subsuming any of these intermediate texts under either "source" or "target" categories are evident, yet the value in recognising their significance in translation research and using them to advance the understanding of how linguistic and cultural norms bear on translation choices cannot be overstated.

One may argue that in the above case regarding Goldblatt's translation of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, ST and TT can still function as helpful terms, indicating the shortened manuscript and the first translation draft respectively. If the later editing choices were decisions of the editor or the publisher, then strictly speaking, it seems that the translator's translation activity can still be sufficiently accommodated by the source-target model. Yet again, the real-life situation is not so easily untangled.

What is at stake is not merely the quantity of texts concerned in a translation endeavour, but also the complications in the translator's engagement with the texts. The text is not always out of the translator's hands once the English draft is submitted, but for both *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, Goldblatt later had to significantly whittle down the text at the special request from the Arcade publisher. For one of the books, after the text has been heavily edited, Goldblatt fought to restore "more than half the cuts" (Ge, 2011: 101).

The assumptions entailed in the source-target model can result in misleading conclusions regarding the translator's role in a translation project. In a review titled "Reading an Incomplete Nobel", Xin Huang expressed disappointment at Goldblatt's English translation of *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out*, which, according to Huang, "regrettably" falls "short of the high expectations of those readers who can read Chinese and who would have a more in-depth understanding of Mo Yan's novels", because it has been "significantly" "abridged and simplified" (2014: 42-43). Huang believes that such a translation decision to delete large chunks of texts available to the Chinese readers has betrayed the author's intention of presenting a literary work marked by its "length, density and difficulty" (ibid.).

Outside academic circles, the misleading image of unidirectional movement in the dichotomy of source vs. target has led to quite a few unjust criticisms against Goldblatt for "vulgarizing" and "bowdlerising" Mo Yan's novels (Efthimiatou and Goldblatt, 2012; Ge, 2011: 101). Yet Goldblatt has repeatedly emphasized in his interviews that the decision to shorten the text is almost always made by the publisher (Ge, 2011: 101). Therefore, the project of translating a book involves much more than a translator's personal preferences. As Mohja Kahf elucidates after presenting the dramatic textual changes made in the English translation of *The Harem Years*, researchers need to "shift from blaming the translator toward seeing the translation of a text as part of a process larger than one individual will" (2010: 30).

The type of dramatic editing found in Goldblatt's translation of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* cannot be attributed to the idiosyncrasies of the Arcade publisher either, but is a widely adopted practice particularly common in the American publishing industry. For Goldblatt's project of translating Jiang Rong's *Wolf Totem* commissioned by Penguin Books, a sizeable work of half a million characters, he was requested to cut away one third of the original translated manuscript he submitted to the editor (Ge, 2011: 102). The English version then excluded the quotes from Chinese historical books at the beginning of each chapter as well as an extensive discussion among the main characters on differences between the nomadic mentality of grassland Mongols and the agrarian mentality of the Han ethnic group attached to the end of the book. This editing choice has only been adopted in the English version, while the lengthy final chapter has been retained in the Japanese, French and other language versions.

All Goldblatt could comment on this editorial decision was "it wasn't my call" (ibid.). Yet such substantial editorial changes often have to be executed by the translator, given that most editors and publishers cannot read the Chinese version and prefer the translator to make a more informed decision on exactly how to implement their editing requests. This editing arrangement indicates that the translator was closely involved in the textual processing following his initially submitted translation draft.

The translator's knowledge of this convoluted process of textual reproduction allows him to not passively react to the editor or publisher's request, but also predict their reactions to his translated drafts at different stages and plan his translational action accordingly. For instance, when commissioned to translate the countercultural teenager fiction *Beijing Doll* by seventeen-year-old Chun Sue, Goldblatt immediately anticipated that the book would likely undergo drastic editing in later stages of the translation project because of the unpolished writing, so he chose to render the text as literally as possible when producing the first draft to be submitted to the editor, instead of proceeding to doctor the text the way he would in a final draft, where he “normally attend(s) to readability” (Goldblatt, 2004: 23). In this case, Goldblatt’s translational action was obviously informed by neither source nor target concerns as outlined by the existing binary model, but his knowledgeability as an experienced literary translator working in the intra-culture of the American book publishing industry.

Therefore, the final product of a published translation is more often than not the consequence of multi-directional communication and negotiation among various social actors with their respective exercise of agency in the dialectic of control, which is perhaps not best addressed by a unidirectional model. The source and target-related terms might prove to be lacking in addressing both the ambiguity of the various texts involved in a translation activity and the hybridity of these texts that extend beyond the binary perspective of either source or target considerations. Only when the meta-discussion of translation sees past the seemingly commonsensical division between source and target text, can translation be fully accepted as a social action embedded in an elaborate interpersonal network.

## 6.5 Against Systematic Associations

As explained in the Introduction, the dangers of indiscriminately applying binarism in intellectual inquiries include the suppression of ambiguities and hybridities in its often arbitrary reductionism, the likely dominance of one concept over the other, the imprisonment of any resistance from the subordinate concept within a binary model, and the systematic association of the dichotomy with correspondingly binary attributes (cf. Section 0.2). Among these features, this chapter has hopefully demonstrated how the dichotomy of source vs. target could underplay the significance of certain texts involved in a translation project, whose identities are ambiguous and hybrid, as the terms fail to accommodate these texts in the either-source-or-target perspective when approaching them as potential research materials. It has also been argued that the source-target model easily misleads researchers into describing and explaining translation choices as either adequate or acceptable, oriented towards either foreign or domestic concerns. Additionally, it has been indicated that the binary opposition of source and target frequently inspires association of these two terms with foreign and domestic, original and translation, faithfulness and readability etc.

The most problematic aspect of the source vs. target dichotomy is conceivably the various sub-terms it generates, establishing arbitrary correlations between language, text, culture and readership. In an attempt to empower translators and improve their visibility, Venuti presented a poignant case for the translation strategy or ethics of foreignisation (1995). According to him, the smooth flow of the translated language or a fluent translated text bears a causal relationship with the invisibility of translators, the underrating of translated literature, an imperialistic and xenophobic culture as well as a lack of recognition of translation on the part of readers, critics, publishers and even copyright laws. His "black-and-white characterizations" have been criticised by many (Pym, 2010a, see also Shamma, 2009; Tymoczko, 2000; 2006b; Baker, 2010; Cronin, 2010), but his perception of a necessary causality is partly attributable to the binary perspective provided by the metalanguage used in discussing translation.

To start with, Venuti's dichotomy only applies to the "unmarked direction of translation" or translating from the "foreign" into the "domestic" (Lonsdale, 2009: 84), for in the case of inverse translation, the analogy of source and target with foreign and domestic is reversed. More importantly, in today's globalised and multiculturalist society, multiplicities and complexities abound when it comes to the relationship between language, culture and readership. Borrowing Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's phrasing, the relationship between the initially perceived two languages or cultures is not opposites, but a "heterogeneous continuum" (1997: 253).

In the case of Mabel Lee translating Gao Xingjian, the translator is a second-generation Cantonese immigrant with Cantonese and English as her mother tongues, while the author is an exiled dramatist who writes in French and Chinese. In addition, Gao's two novels were written partly as a linguistic experiment aiming to reform the existing Chinese literary language. Taking these facts into account, the categorisation of the two social actors' affiliations on the basis of the language they work with in the context of these two particular translation projects seems debatable. It has been argued in Section 1.2 that examples of self-translators and migrant writers have posed significant challenges to the systematic association of source and target factors, for the social actors involved are explicitly identified as hybridised and intercultural beings that resist any homogeneous categorisation, in terms of the language they write in, the culture they relate to, the community they reside in and the readership they appeal to.

Goldblatt also testifies that while the readership of translated Asian literature, especially works from China and Korea, has been regrettably limited and constantly diminishing (2004: 26), expatriate Chinese authors such as Ha Jin and Anchee Min who write in an "adopted" and "quaint" English are relatively well received (ibid.: 24; Berry, 2002: 20). Their works demonstrate a clearly "foreignised" style that has been deemed compatible with their "aberrational" writing, therefore potentially "encouraged" by editors and further supported by "complicit" reviewers (Berry, 2002: 20-21). For Perry Link, Ha Jin is "clearly superior to Mo Yan" (2012b). Link's interpretation of Ha's decision to write only in his second language, which he had merely acquired in his 20s, is a "step of departing not only China but the Chinese language […] in part to be sure that even subconscious influences do not affect his expression" (2012a). Yet, Ha Jin himself reveals in a conversation with Mo Yan that he envies Mo Yan for being able to write in his native language, a language that he will always be most comfortable with, and Ha Jin does not believe that he will ever be at home with the English language the way Joseph Conrad or Vladimir Nabokov found themselves to be. However, since Ha Jin has already established himself as an English-writing Chinese expatriate on the US book market, he could only persist till the end and reserve Chinese for his occasional poems (Fairbank, 2015).

In view of Goldblatt's testimony, the American readers' openness to these expatriates' "foreign" works cannot be fully accounted for through any intrinsic feature in the text or the language of the text itself, but arguably involves an interplay between author identity, market economy, international politics, social mobility and other contextual factors. While it is true that these expatriate writings are not recognised as a part of translated literature, they serve as a caution against the presumption that translation activities and any form of cross-cultural communication necessarily draw a borderline between two languages, cultures, readership and literary traditions. The subjects involved in these migrant writings are indisputably engaged with the linguistic expressions, literary norms and social discourses from more than one culture, and translators are *not* that different. As to how these hybridised cultural beings give play to their multivalent influences, it very much depends on the "human, literary, and socio-political dynamics involved" in one's operating environment (Berry, 2002: 24).

In fact, the arbitrary distinction between visibility and invisibility itself in Venuti's theory is highly questionable. As Goldblatt puts it, "the translator is always visible and always invisible, and little more need be said" (Ge, 2011: 100). The inherently paradoxical nature of translators' (in)visibility is exactly what enables them to constantly shift the relationship between languages, cultures and readerships. Therefore, apart from migrant writers and self-translators, translators themselves might as well be better portrayed as intercultural and hybridised beings belonging to neither exclusively "source" nor "target" systems. In Pym's words, translation is "a fact of nomadic intercultures, pressed into the service of sedentary national cultures" (2003: 451). According to him, translators are intercultural as they are working *not* at the centre of either source or target culture, but always situated at the frontier, the overlapping border region of at least two cultures (ibid.: 457). The concept of interculturality should not contradict Tymoczko's scepticism towards the trope of translators being "in-between" (2003). Instead, it is readily agreed that translators are never operating in a vacuum, but they are never wholly allegiants of a homogenous culture either.

The similar lack of correspondence between different languages, texts, cultures and readerships can also be corroborated by evidence discovered in the case study. Among Mo Yan's works translated into English, *Change* was a book commissioned by an Indian publisher – Seagull Books for its edited series "What Was Communism?". This Calcutta-based publishing house was founded and managed by Naveen Kishore, who had a chance encounter with Mo Yan and his daughter Xiaoxiao at the 2005 International Nonino Prize Award Ceremony. What seemed like a passing acquaintance at the time was renewed four years later in 2009, when Kishore contacted Mo Yan for his project "What Was Communism?", an initiative in commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall (DoordarshanNational, 2013). According to Mo Yan, he initially declined the offer, but was eventually persuaded by Kishore's insistence and promise of absolute freedom in writing (Mo Yan, 2010: 1-2). Therefore, Mo Yan supplied his original manuscript as a direct response to an overseas publication request and hence wrote with the knowledge that the book will primarily be targeted at a foreign audience. Before the manuscript even came into existence, Kishore contacted Goldblatt to secure his consent for the translation contract.

Since the initiative started off as a collaborative venture simultaneously involving the commissioner, the author and the translator, if one subscribes to the idea that both authors and translators write with a readership in mind, then in this case, they are targeting the same readership, the one dictated by Seagull Books' market design for the "What Was Communism?" project. This readership is again almost impossible to define in "source" or "target" terms, not to mention the cultural environment of the work's reception. This is because Seagull Books is an independent publishing house based in Calcutta with the University of Chicago Press and Atlantic Publishers and Distributors holding distribution rights for its global and Indian readers respectively. Therefore, the readership is no longer confined within national boundaries, but is open to the international English-speaking community, which may very well include Chinese readers as well. Actually, the same thing can be said for almost any book that is available online. It is then somewhat farfetched to discuss any cultural expectations or ideological orientations shared by the vast extent of English readers.

Sandra Halverson has addressed this deeply rooted systematic perspective towards translation by tracing it back to the idea of language systems, which portrays languages as isolated and impermeable entities (2014: 118). Aside from the fact that most translators are bilinguals or multilinguals and thereby highly susceptible to cross-linguistic influences, even monolinguals are most likely to be subject to constantly evolving language in response to cross-linguistic contact. Goldblatt, for instance, has recognised how the various Chinese novels written within the Chinese-speaking communities but created in different times and places can have a notable impact on his translation activities. According to him, works from the 30s and 40s are easiest to translate into English, as they still bear "the lingering influence of Western writing and the pervasiveness of *guoyu* [the national language] that diminished regional usages" (Berry, 2002: 21, square brackets in original). Meanwhile, Taiwanese writings are more challenging with their relatively archaic expressions retaining traces of Classical Chinese. This is the reason why Goldblatt's collaboration with Sylvia Lin is mostly limited to Taiwanese writers (ibid.: 24).

This chapter has identified several research areas that can significantly benefit from an alternative perspective to the source-target model, including practices of co-translation, retranslation, indirect translation, as well as the relationship between translation and editing. The following chapter continues to address the challenges posed by real-life translation activities, by discussing how the sociological models introduced in this study can throw a different light onto the understanding of the term ‘translation’.

# Chapter 7 Approaching a Definition of Translation

## 7.1 A Rationale for the Definition of Translation

Section 1.4 introduced various attempts to define translation, yet no consensus has been reached among TS scholars on what the term “translation” really entails. The early equivalence-based definitions of translation gave way to target-oriented functionalist approaches, before the scope of TS was significantly expanded by Jakobson’s “intersemiotic translation” and Toury’s “assumed translation”. However, while Toury acknowledges the legitimacy of studying any utterance presented or regarded as translation “on whatever grounds”, he still distinguishes among the potential subjects of translation research according to the classifications of *genuine* translation, *pseudo*-translation and *plausible* translation (1985: 20, cf. Section 1.4). Similarly, having argued for the inclusion of film adaptation and rewording into the study of translation, Jakobson chooses to term the traditional perimeter of interlingual translation as translation *proper* (1959: 233). Both scholars’ reservations in relinquishing a commonsensical understanding of translation and the persistently marginal status of pseudo-translation, intralingual or intersemiotic translation in the research culture of TS indicates that despite the lack of a unanimously agreed definition for translation, there are some universally shared expectations about what “genuine” or “proper” translation should appear as, and pseudo-translation, intralingual or intersemiotic translation is *not* the first thing that is likely to come to mind.

Confronted with controversies over the issue of defining translation, some theorists have denied the necessity of reaching a common understanding on what translation is. Tymoczko in particular has employed Wittgenstein’s “cluster concept” in order to illustrate that items subsumed under one term do *not* necessarily exhibit any universal features. In other words, instead of having one criterion that differentiates translation from non-translation, all types of translation assume a common denominator on the grounds that there are overlapping similarities between them, allowing them to form a cluster (Tymoczko, 2007: 83-90, cf. Section 1.4). Due to the lack of uniformity across all manifestations of translation, any attempt at defining the concept would inevitably fail to account for certain exceptions. Instead of striving for a predetermined definition, Tymoczko suggests that common sense will prove sufficient in identifying research subjects for TS scholars and the true value of translation research lies in what it can reveal about translation activities that was *not* known before, instead of how it can verify suppositions that have been previously established.

The same caution against circular reasoning for a fixed and closed definition is also exercised by Toury, who felt the need to open up the concept of translation as he was wary of a culturally and historically restricted understanding of translation that could end up narrowing the scope of scholarly inquiry and precluding the possibilities for future revision of existing preconceptions. However, Toury was not ready to hand over the concept of translation completely to common sense, as he offered three postulates including assumptions about a source text, an act of transfer and an identifiable relationship between source text and target text (1995: 33). These postulates are *not* designed to serve as preconditions for discerning translation from non-translation, but rather indications of how a society perceives an assumed translation. Therefore, when facts are discovered to contradict these generally held expectations, the significance of the postulates comes to the fore.

Herein lies the rationale for including pseudo-translation into the periphery of TS (ibid.: 45-46). Despite being *not* a genuine translation that complies with the three postulates, the initial conception of a pseudo-translation as a translation and the consequent expectations invested in it provide a valuable insight into how a purportedly translated product functions differently in a society as compared to non-translated works, regardless of the absence of an actual translation process. However, it is imperative to note that the study of pseudo-translation does *not* suggest that ontologically speaking, pseudo-translation bears any intrinsic qualities of being a translation, which probably motivated Toury to name it "*pseudo*-translation". It is justified as the object of investigation due to its epistemological significance.

Toury's approach towards the definition of translation has been classified by Pym as a "formal conceptualisation", a "preliminary opening to the concept" in question and a reflection on established assumptions invested in the concept (2007). Pym further demonstrates the significance of identifying these preconceptions of translation by proposing two maxims — the maxim of translational quantity and first-person displacement (2004b and 2007, cf. Section 1.4), the violation of which does *not* indicate non-translation but yields implicatures that mean to achieve a specific purpose by flouting generally shared expectations. Thus, the significance in having pre-existing notions about translation is *not* related as much to ontological concerns, but more epistemological implications. Rather than setting out to discover the truth about the essence of translation, a formal conceptualisation aims to delineate an evolving understanding of it.

As explained in Section 1.4, this study does *not* claim that translation is a *thing* whose ontology can be pinned down, nor does it suggest that translation can be approached as a *word* whose entries in dictionary and whose semantic associations can vary dramatically across different languages. Instead, translation is viewed as a *concept*, which may remain ambiguous and susceptible to cultural and historical influences, but it should have at least achieved a reasonable level of consensus among those who make reference to it and even theorise about it without feeling the need to clarify its signification. It is only when the speaker or the writer is conscious that his/her employment of the term deviates from its taken-for-granted interpretation that he/she explicitly defines it. This tacit agreement on its commonsensical albeit controversial boundaries is what prompted Tymoczko to confidently declare that there should be no overlap between "cluster bombs or potato peels" and the cluster concept of translation (2007: 86, cf. Section 1.4).

However, as convincingly argued by Sergey Tyulenev, common sense is dangerous to intellectual inquiries and scholars should approach the concept of translation with "a great deal of *naïveté*", in order to save the discipline from "uncritical, commonsensical notions of translation offered by whomever, whenever, and wherever" (2014a: 190, italics in original). Regarding the selection of research materials, Tyulenev has raised valid questions about how one could possibly decide on the inclusion or exclusion of whatever is *not* explicitly called "translation" in history and whatever *is* called "translation", but invested with a meaning reinvented by other disciplines, such as Michel Callon's sociology of *translation*, without entertaining some initial ideas of what translation is (ibid.: 187). Therefore, this study has borrowed from Pym's definitional approach of "formal conceptualisation", in order to help achieve a critical and reflective awareness of one's own assumptions.

This study argues that there are universal elements in the conceptualisation of translation, albeit being applied to dissimilar degrees and being reshaped at various rates in different historical times and cultural contexts. These shared assumptions can be traced back to the common origin of translation activities around the world, which were practised to overcome linguistic differences in cross-community interaction. Due to this origin of early translation practice, the concept of translation primarily conjures up associations with linguistic expertise and textual processing, including both oral and written texts. The dominance of language and text in the conceptualisation of translation partly explains why ST, TT, SL and TL are still functioning as the most standardised and established terminologies in translation research. The emphasis on a necessary involvement of linguistic differences and textual materials is likely to be the reason behind Toury's reluctance to acknowledge pseudo-translation as a genuine translation, due to its lack of cross-linguistic operation. This may also be the logic behind Jakobson's reservation of translation proper for interlingual translation, since intralingual and intersemiotic translations deviate from the expectation of cross-linguistic processes and the envisioned end of textual production, respectively.

The recognition of the universal elements in one’s formal conceptualisation of translation does not lead to a fixed and closed definition of translation, for the decades of TS development have testified to a rapidly evolving theorisation of the translation phenomenon. Toury and Jakobson were just two among many who revolutionised both the scholarly and public perception of what translation *can* be. Even Goldblatt, who categorically denies the value of translation theories for his professional practice, has referenced Hans-Georg Gadamer, George Steiner, Octavio Paz and André Lefevere to support his argument that reading, editing and various other textual processing activities can be treated as a form of translation (2004: 22).

Therefore, the formal conceptualisation of translation adopted by this study – translation being a cross-linguistic textual processing activity – does not exclude the possibility for the potentially exponential growth of the discipline as heralded by Jakobson and others. Instead, this working definition is established as a guideline for the selection of research materials. In line with Toury and Pym’s rationale for proposing postulates or maxims, this study argues that a formal conceptualisation of translation is vital for any research to locate its subject of inquiry and identify the presumptions it is based on. There is at least some preliminary opening to the concept of translation in place that urged this study to direct its attention to Mabel Lee and Howard Goldblatt’s English versions of Gao Xingjian and Mo Yan’s novels as primary research materials, rather than treating Gao’s French writings or Mo Yan’s incorporation of folklores and local operas into his works as cases of translation. Migrant writing and multimodal adaption can be argued to be a form of translation under Jakobson’s semiotic framework, for it views translation as essentially a problem of semiosis involving recodification, code-transfer or code-switching (Frawley, 2000: 251). Yet, these materials did *not* become the focus of the current study as they are not immediately recognisable instances of translation practice according to the formal conceptualisation adopted by this particular research project and thereby are not associated with the assumptions underlying such conceptualisation.

Whilst employing “language” and “text” to delineate the scope of investigation, this study is aware that the concepts of language and text themselves are notoriously difficult to define. The distinction between language and dialect, language and register, or even language and individual stylistic preferences can at times be a debatable one. Besides, the Cultural Turn of TS has firmly embedded texts within their respective cultural contexts, thereby expanding the understanding of texts as sequences of words to the symbolic realisation of cultural and social facts. Without going into an extensive discussion on the definition of these two concepts, this study expects the ambiguity inherent in them to be permissible in the current research context, which may in fact benefit from the vagueness of their boundaries in illustrating the malleability of the preliminary conceptualisation.

In the following sections, the translation-related commitments undertaken by the two translators, Mabel Lee and Howard Goldblatt, are examined in detail to illustrate the blurred boundary between translation and other textual processing activities, as well as other cross-linguistic engagements. Aiming to address the question of how TS researchers can determine what subjects to study in order to illuminate the understanding of translation phenomenon, this chapter hopefully demonstrates the relationship between the selection of research materials and the definition of research subject. Eventually, this study argues for an open-ended definition of translation with nevertheless a critical awareness of its own presumptions.

## 7.2 Amongst Other Textual Processing Activities

Based on the discussion in the preceding chapter, it can be concluded that an equivalence-based definitional approach has been largely discarded in TS, not only because the concept of equivalence is highly elusive, but also because the sacrosanct authority previously associated with either “source language” or “source text” has been repeatedly challenged. Evidence from the case study has illustrated that without a fully established identity for an “original” text, the definition of translation can no longer be confined in a secondary and subsidiary position, hinging on the interpretation or reproduction of meanings.

Instead, translation can be viewed as an independent social action that simultaneously stands in an interdependent relationship with creative writing, editing, publishing and critiquing. The translational action is *independent* in the sense that a translator’s decisions are not dependent on the whims of an author or an editor, but are expected to demonstrate consistency and coherence over a durée of time and across different contexts. The interdependence of translational action and that of the authorial and editorial indicates that the translator’s choices are nonetheless informed by actions or anticipated reactions of the author and the editor (cf. Section 2.1.2).

The seemingly outdated accusations of “traduttore traditore” or “les belles infidèles” were used to pitch the aesthetic value of a literary text against the translation ethics of fidelity. The antagonism resulted in a recurring debate about whether and when translation should make improvements or corrections in the text(s) being translated (Chesterman, 1997: 169), a controversy that often sets translation and editing or adaptation in opposition to each other. Yet since the emergence of the Manipulation School, represented by André Lefevere’s theorisation of translation as rewriting (1992), translation has been regarded as traitorous by default, a manipulative action oriented towards a certain purpose (Hermans, 1985: 11). The text(s) to be translated is then better portrayed as merely one of the objects of orientation constituting the situation of translational action, taken as means and resources subjected to the translator’s selection and appropriation. As the perception of translation transforms from slavish obedience to masterful manipulation, it has been intimately associated with other types of text optimisation activities (Göpferich, 2007), on occasions even censorship (Seruya and Moniz, 2008; Ní Chuilleanáin, Ó Cuilleanáin and Parris, 2009; Merkle et al., 2010; Woods, 2012; Spirk, 2014; Looby, 2015; Billiani, 2016).

The inclusion of editing into the conceptualisation of translation is barely ground-breaking, with *transediting* being a highly recognisable concept in TS, especially widely quoted in the field of news production (Stetting, 1989; Bielsa, 2007; Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009; van Doorslaer, 2009 and 2010; Schäffner, 2012). Being first coined by Karen Stetting in 1989 to highlight the complexity of real-life translation activities that necessarily involve editing, the adoption of the term itself has recently inspired controversies. The fact that Stetting combined two words to formulate the term "transediting" seems to imply that translation continues to be interpreted in the narrow sense of linguistic transfer with the expectation of no detectable textual changes. Consequently, the addition, deletion and modification identified in translated products need to be accounted for by the incorporation of editing into the concept.

This restrictive conceptualisation of translation can also be seen in Stetting's contrast between what she terms "straight translation" and transediting, with transeditor being credited with "more courage and energy" than a "straight translator" (1989: 377). For Stetting, journalism was one of the five scenarios identified with the frequent practice of transediting (ibid.: 373-374). Meanwhile, she believes that in the field of translating literary, religious and historical texts, or what she categorises as cultural texts, transediting is only practiced "in a minor way" because of the irreplaceable sanctity attached to the idea of a creative "original" (ibid.: 376).

Therefore, the coinage of the term transediting is rather paradoxical: on one hand, it attempts to blur the boundary between translation and editing activities by underscoring the complexity of textual processing; on the other hand, the adoption of the term itself proves that translation is somehow distinguished from editing, or at least is not expected to involve editing. Christina Schäffner problematised the terminology in her article

“Rethinking Transediting”, where she concludes that the proposal of the term back in Stetting’s time heightened the “awareness of the complexity of processes” and encouraged “rethinking the more traditional views”, yet the potential substitution of translation with transediting risks taking “a step back” for translation research and returning to the equivalence-based understanding of translation (2012: 880-881). Hence, instead of leading to portmanteaux such as *transadaptation* or *transcreation*, the empirical evidence proving the necessary integration of cross-linguistic transfer and intra-lingual textual optimisation may best be utilised to expand the conceptualisation of what *translation* can be, in order to truly liberate the understanding of the subject at hand.

Besides media translation, the investigation into machine translation used in computer-aided translation scenarios has also identified at least three types of editing activity involved in the facilitation of translating with technology, including post-editing, pre-editing and the use of controlled language (Declercq, 2014). This inherent demand for editing should *not* be limited to the practice of machine translation, for the investigation into Goldblatt as a fiction translator has also identified similar instances for all three types of editing activities. While most of the time, the editing requests were made by the editor after the submission of Goldblatt’s initial translated draft, as seen in the case of translating *Wolf Totem*, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (cf. Section 6.4), there are also instances of Goldblatt editing the text prior to the commencement of cross-linguistic operation. For *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, in which Goldblatt has identified “protracted portions of material that beg understanding” and “seven addenda with thoughts on some of the personae that came to the author too late for integration”, editing was executed on the Chinese version to trim down the novel from 800 pages to a little over 500 (2004: 26).

While texts are sometimes adapted into a controlled language for the better performance of machine translation, Goldblatt translated *Beijing Doll* into a language that is “as literal as possible, getting absolutely everything” into the first submitted draft in the anticipation of dramatic editing requests in future stages (2004: 23, cf. Section 6.4). Apart from post-editing, pre-editing and controlled language, it is inevitable that there is always ongoing editing during the cross-linguistic textual production, if editing is to be defined as a process that “involves transforming the language or the structure of the original message by using such text-surgical methods as deletion, addition, substitution and reorganization” (Hursti, 2001: 2).

German sinologist and translator Wolfgang Kubin publicly denounced Mo Yan’s writings on more than one occasion, saying that “Mo Yan bores [him] to death” (von Hein, 2012). Yet Kubin holds high regard for Howard Goldblatt as a fellow translator, attributing Mo Yan’s success primarily to Goldblatt’s “outstanding” translations. Instead of crediting faithfulness as the translator’s merit, Kubin extolled Goldblatt’s perceptiveness of the “the writers’ weaknesses” and celebrated his skilful modification of the text into “a language that is better than the original Chinese” (ibid.). Kubin believes that the superiority of the English text over the Chinese is the primary reason “why Chinese works are often translated from English into German” (ibid.).

Goldblatt responded to such a provocative remark by pointing out that Kubin’s primary interest in poetry translation means that he has no qualm about offending fiction writers and actually earns “cachet” as a critic by berating Chinese novels (Ge, 2011: 103). However, Goldblatt is not silent on the subject of his writers’ weaknesses either. Despite his staunch advocacy for Mo Yan as a writer, he admits that at times, Mo Yan’s writings are hindered by his “impatience with novels he’s writing, as opposed to those taking shape in his head” (Berry, 2002: 20). His “diminished interest” as he progresses through an undergoing project directly affects the consistency in the quality of his works. A textual comparison between the Chinese and English versions of Mo Yan’s two most edited English translations, namely

*Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, reveals that the most notable deletion in the translated text occurred mostly in the second half of the two novels.

Although Goldblatt has been often misunderstood by critics and scholars for his production of “doctored” texts (Ge, 2011: 101), he holds no grudge against editors and publishers for their request for changes in his own translation. On the contrary, on multiple occasions, he has shown his appreciation and gratitude for their outspoken opinions for improving the text (Berry, 2002: 21). He believes that it is essential to have “a second pair of eyes” that can help read one’s writing objectively, pointing out “inconsistencies and mistakes” while offering “new perspectives on the work in general” (2004: 26).

This editorial assistance is exactly what Chinese writers are *not* blessed with, according to Goldblatt. Hence, when these Chinese texts are then subjected to an English translation project, Goldblatt deems a process he calls “retro-editing” to be inevitable, a concept he borrowed from Arabic-English translator William Hutchins. Goldblatt used the term to refer to his extra responsibilities when it comes to translating Chinese writers, mainly because of the low status of editors in China. Retro-editing has been defined as “editing for content a Chinese work of fiction during the translation and foreign publication process”, in an effort to “bring the work more in line with an admittedly arbitrary literary standard set by a translator and the editor of the translated text” (Goldblatt, 2004: 21-22). Quoting Hutchins, Goldblatt believes this vigorous editing writers undergo to be a “happy American or British ideal of a constructive dialogue between an author and a gifted editor”, which is a luxury for Chinese writers (cited in Goldblatt, 2004: 22).

According to him, the publishing industry in China has been dominated by a belief in the superiority of the writer as a creative genius, a rather Romantic idea that has already been debunked in TS. The cultural significance of “face” also plays a prominent role in exacerbating the situation, discouraging creative writers from accepting the assistance of other experts in textual production. Consequently, there is not much room left for the authority of other professionals involved in a publication project, especially those considered as secondary, such as editors and translators. Meanwhile, Goldblatt acknowledges that when it comes to editing, “no one does that better than the Americans” (Ge, 2011: 104).

Goldblatt proposed an alternative perspective to the taken-for-granted association of authorial ingenuity and textual consecration, by stating that “while there are several good writers in China, they produce, in [his] opinion, too few good literary works” (2004: 23). This comment has firmly placed the literary author back into the social network of producing a published product, a person who merely acts as one of the stakeholders, no matter how essential, in the social system involving other equally indispensable professionals. Certainly, there are scrupulous and meticulous writers who implement thorough self-editing, but Goldblatt believes that even they “can sometimes use a bit of whatever it is their domestic publishers cannot provide” (ibid.).

When confronted with the question of how his English versions can get away with violating the traditional doctrine of translation ethics, which is dominated by the principle of “faithfulness”, Goldblatt identified “publishing economics” as one of the primary reasons for the editing involved in literary translation projects in the US. Because translated literature, especially that of Asian writers, is extremely difficult to sell on the global book market, publishers and editors often choose unpolished works with some promising ideas and the potential to become bestsellers, before subjecting these selected books to heavy editing and rewriting (Goldblatt, 2004: 26-27).

The explanation Goldblatt offered for the publishers’ and editors’ seeming encroachment on writers’ creative authority is rather blunt, attributing it to the simple fact that “they wave dollars and euros in front of authors whose works get banned, pirated, or otherwise made unprofitable in their home country, and who seldom know a foreign language” (ibid.). Once they have secured the right to publish their translations, the publishers can then “call the shots” (Ge, 2011: 102). According to Goldblatt, “publishers publish titles to sell books” and “all other concerns tend to be subservient to this dictum” (2004: 26).

Consequently, significant retro-editing becomes the norm in translating Chinese literary works. For Goldblatt, while original authors might be better writers, they often neglect the fact that editors and translators are first and foremost the readers, and they might very well be better readers, who can provide an outsider’s perspective, a robust or even merciless criticism unavailable to the writers themselves, eventually to help the author realise the full potential of his/her works in terms of their communicability with readers. As editors at the US commercial publishers are hardly ever conversant with an Asian language, they enlist the translator to do some of the work for them, which is why the translator is often the co-editor in the US publishing industry.

Therefore, this extra responsibility is determined by the particular situation of action as well as the role-expectations each actor brings into the interactive context. With a shared appreciation for editorial contribution in the US publishing industry, editors and translators can amiably agree on arrangements that might be deemed sacrilege by outsiders. With translators possessing the resources of cross-linguistic expertise, they are then expected to implement the required textual changes, thereby undertaking editing tasks.

Rather than being dictated by either “source” or “target” concerns, such practice might be more justly identified with the “translation culture”, a social construct of norms, conventions, expectations and values of all those involved in translation and interpreting activities in a given social entity (Kujamäki and Footitt, 2016: 59). Similarly, the reaction of the same author to the editing suggestions on a specific book can vary depending on the situational constraints they are placed in. For example, when Mo Yan submitted his *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* to the Chinese editor, his demand was resolute – “do not change a word”, but when consulted on editorial suggestions by Goldblatt, he readily conceded – “do what you want, since I can't read it anyway" (Goldblatt, 2004: 26). With the relative freedom granted by both the editor and the author, the translator owns both the allocative and authoritative resources to exercise his agency in making editing decisions.

In comparison, Mabel Lee does not believe in retro-editing. She approaches translation assignments as "simply transforming original Chinese text into English" (see Appendix: 344). She insists that not only did she find no difficulty in interpreting ambiguities or rendering cultural specific items due to the high quality of writings by the authors she selected, but she also suspects that Howard Goldblatt's translational approach would not have worked well with Gao Xingjian (see Appendix: 314).

However, Lee also suggests that "if the original text has not been properly edited, faithful translation can be impossible", and therefore "editorial" amendments are needed (see Appendix: 342). For instance, when translating the memoir of a Chinese artist, she found that the translated text required "severe editing and even rewriting in sections", precisely because the author did not undergo proper editing with his Chinese version. Therefore, although Lee's automatic response was that translating does not involve editing, she became aware of the editing she did for the authors she translated when asked to discursively formulate her experience on the matter. Evidence from the case study has proven that editing is inherently entailed in the concept of translation, not only because of the technical constraints posed by machine translation and subtitling, or the commercial motives in producing promotional materials and media reports, but it is equally involved in translating the seemingly timeless genre of literary texts.

## 7.3 Translation as Cross-Linguistic Representation

The previous section has hopefully established that while translation is presumed to be a type of cross-linguistic textual processing activity, its approach towards text(s) necessarily involves issues beyond linguistic differences. Most notably, as translation serves an independent social function that focuses on text production, it almost always entails intra-lingual textual optimisation, where the translator utilises means and resources available in the situation to generate standalone texts that best fulfil their envisioned end, a role-expectation generally associated with the concept of editing.

Similarly, the cross-linguistic aspect of translation can also occasionally result in engagements *not* related to textual production. The original role-expectation invested in translators as regards to assisting cross-linguistic communication for parties who are otherwise denied mutual understanding already implies the problem of representation. Even for in-house translators, whose responsibilities can often be limited to receiving documents to be translated, generating and submitting the required translated products with little visibility or liability, they can still be implicitly representing an organisation for those who have to rely on their linguistic expertise to access the information it provides.

In the case of translating the two Chinese Nobel Laureates of Literature, since neither Mo Yan nor Gao Xingjian speaks English, their respective translators are likely to become their agents in English-speaking contexts. This potentially contains various responsibilities including locating publishers, communicating with editors, promoting books at festivals and fairs, managing legal contracts and royalty payment, as well as generally speaking on behalf of the writers.

Mabel Lee and Gao Xingjian had a literary agent in Australia named Australian Literary Management, but she often took on the “role of an assistant to the literary agent”, for the agency sent through many requests for her to handle (see Appendix: 321). She was also the one who helped secure Harper Collins in Australia and New Zealand as Gao’s publisher. For some of her other writers not blessed with the laurel of an international award, she wore herself out writing letters to publishers.

Having been lucky to find Harper Collins for *Soul Mountain*, whose release was immediately followed by Gao’s Nobel victory and hence predictable enthusiasm on the part of publishers in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the US to publish his second novel *One Man's Bible*, Lee did not have such good fortune with Gao's essay collection *Aesthetics and Creation*. When their literary agent failed to find them a publisher after three years, Lee asked them to return the manuscript and took the matter into her own hands, which ended in a contract from Cambria Press in New York (see Appendix: 325).

Lee reiterates the difficulties in selling Asian writers' works, lamenting that the royalty advances for the writers she translated kept shrinking, regardless of critical acclaim, due to the "anemic sales" they experience on the English-speaking market. With Gao being a reclusive writer and his publishers not willing to invest in the promotion of his writings, the sale was unlikely to improve if the translator also considered her job done after the publication of the translated product. Therefore, Lee believes that "it's up to [her] to try to promote it more" (see Appendix: 326).

Among the extra responsibilities she assumed as Gao's translator, Lee was also involved in raising funds for his travel expenses to Sydney three times (ibid.). When the English edition of his *Soul Mountain* was due for publication in July 2000, the publisher was not prepared to pay his airfare, prompting Lee to seek financing elsewhere in order to ensure Gao's attendance at the book launch events. Besides promoting Gao among the general public through mass media, Lee also significantly enhanced Gao's profile as a research subject within the academic community by publishing nearly 30 essays on various aspects of Gao's creative life (ibid.).

Similar difficulty is also encountered by Howard Goldblatt in securing publishing contracts, when Penguin Books, Mo Yan's original English publisher, turned down the English version of his third translation of Mo Yan – *The Republic of Wine*. The book was eventually accepted by Richard Seaver, founder of Arcade Publishing, who went on to publish five of Mo Yan's most iconic masterpieces. As the wife of the late Richard Seaver recalls, "[Goldblatt] and Mo Yan came to the Seavers as a duo" (Efthimiatou and Goldblatt, 2012). This was also the case for Naveen Kishore, the publisher of Seagull Books, who contacted Goldblatt for his translation project at the time of commissioning Mo Yan's semi-autobiographical novella *Change* (*DoordarshanNational*, 2013). For Goldblatt, his almost monopolistic representation of Mo Yan in the Anglophone context has tied his identity with the author.

Acting as their authors' agents may also involve decisions on how to package them as literary figures in their paratexts and metatexts, which may then serve as the framework for readers' interpretation of their works. In Goldblatt's prefaces to his English versions, he reiterates Mo Yan's frictions with the Chinese government, a portrayal in stark contrast with the media's frequent fixation on Mo Yan's cosiness with the Communist regime as a writer inside the system. Goldblatt describes Mo Yan as "the most controversial writer in China" and "the bane of China's official establishment" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2004: vii). He emphasized that the sale of his books was banned on more than one occasion because they were "considered extremely subversive" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2000: v). Far from being a state writer as some may accuse Mo Yan of, he is celebrated for exposing and satirising the political structure of China, whose counter-narrative led to outcry from conservative critics within the country (ibid.).

When Mo Yan was confronted with harsh criticisms after winning the prize, Goldblatt took it upon himself to defend him, promising that "no one who has read this novel […] could ever, in good conscience, characterize Mo Yan as a government stooge" (Sparks and Goldblatt, 2013). He sees Mo Yan's longstanding affiliation with the Communist Party and his history of serving in the People's Liberation Army as "a delicious quirk of irony" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2004: vii). With reference to Mo Yan's particularly inflammatory remark on censorship being a necessary evil, Goldblatt states, "That may be a hard pill for us in the West to swallow, but not necessarily by writers within China's borders" (Sparks and Goldblatt, 2013). He also attempts to clear Mo Yan's name as a writer from within the regime by distinguishing between the censorship the state placed on literature as opposed to that imposed on the internet and film industry, explaining that "writers need not worry about heavy-fisted censors redacting their texts in accord with perceived heresies" (ibid.).

Besides representing their writers, translated works also enter into the wider circulation of cultural products marked with a country/region of origin, thereby contributing to the construction of a certain cultural understanding for their recipients. The selection of text(s) to translate has already been identified as a significant decision in the translational action by most translation scholars since the Cultural Turn and the paradigm shift to DTS, even though this stage typically does *not* concern textual production. According to Goldblatt, due to the precarious situation of translated Chinese literature on the Anglophone book market, his selection of what to translate "could very well adversely affect not only [his] subsequent translations but all translations of Chinese literature, irrespective of who undertakes them" (Berry, 2002: 23).

Among Mo Yan's works, *The Garlic Ballads* was the first to catch the attention of Howard Goldblatt. In Goldblatt's own words, he has "never been so stunned by a piece of literature" (Efthimiatou and Goldblatt, 2012). He immediately sought permission from Mo Yan to translate it and eagerly started the work. Yet it was *Red Sorghum* that became Mo Yan's first novel translated by Goldblatt into English. According to Goldblatt, he switched to *Red Sorghum* midway as he realised that "this is absolutely the book to open up Chinese literature to the West" (ibid.). Goldblatt never went into details about the reasons for starting with *Red Sorghum*, but there must be a definite reason for putting down the ongoing translation of a book that he was "absolutely knocked out" by to embark on a new project (ibid.).

One potential explanation could be the obvious fact that "Red Sorghum", a film adapted from Mo Yan's book and directed by Zhang Yimou, won the Golden Bear Award at the 38th Berlin International Film Festival in 1988, the very same year that Mo Yan published *The Garlic Ballads* and Goldblatt made the decision to switch. It is very likely that Goldblatt would be aware of the news and saw the golden opportunity to engage the interest of publishers and audiences beyond the traditionally limited readership of Chinese literature. In general, the much more widespread public interest in the film industry as compared to literature has informed many marketing strategies in the publishing industry. In the case of Mo Yan, the earliest edition of *Red Sorghum* published by Penguin exclusively used screenshots from the film as the cover design, with a photo of the rising starlet Gong Li at the centre.

Furthermore, most editions of Mo Yan's English translations list *Red Sorghum* as the first of his many representative works (the only exceptions are the editions published by Arcade, who only listed Mo Yan's books that they have the publishing rights to), and the Methuen editions specifically mentioned that it was "made into the internationally acclaimed feature film" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 2006a and 2006b: title page). This might also offer explanation for the translation of the book title, which in Chinese is actually "红高粱家族" (Red Sorghum Clan). The director Zhang Yimou decided on "红高粱" (Red Sorghum) as the film title, because the film was adapted from the first two chapters of the book – "Red Sorghum" and "Sorghum Wine", leaving out the other three chapters "Dog Ways", "Sorghum Funeral", and "Strange Death" (Mo Yan and Goldblatt, 1993). By shortening the book title into "Red Sorghum", the English version dispels any further doubt in associating the book with the film. In contrast, the French version translated the book title as "Le Clan du Sorgho", choosing to preserve the semantic meaning of "家族" (clan) rather than "红" (rouge) like the film title "Le Sorgho Rouge" does.

This is not to claim that the success of the film adaptation was the only factor driving the translator's decisions. The reason why *Red Sorghum* might be a more suitable candidate to open up the western market most probably also lies in the book itself. Addressing the theme of the Chinese War against Japanese Aggression as part of the Second World War, *Red Sorghum* is much more likely to strike a chord with the Anglophone readers than *The Garlic Ballads*, which is based on a county-level protest of local peasants.

Apart from choosing textual materials for each translation project, the effect of a continuous engagement with translational action over the long run necessarily contributes to the compilation of a corpus of available works representing a particular culture. In Goldblatt's words, in the end, translators are "by definition, creating canon" (Berry, 2002: 23-24). Consequently, in addition to representing the individual works they translate, the collective of translators working in a specific language combination or individual translators with sufficient gravitas in the field can eventually end up presenting a selective and censored portrayal of another country's body of literature.

## 7.4 Translation Studies as an Empirical Science

The previous two sections have expanded on the preliminary conceptualisation of translation established for this study, by demonstrating that the cross-linguistic and textual processing demands originally placed on translation activities can incur other implications when they are fulfilled in real-life translation scenarios. Ultimately, this study approaches the relationship between a working definition of translation and the research findings of an empirical study from the perspective of Anthony Giddens' concept of structuration.

As Pym puts it, "the practice of translation exceeds its theory, thus requiring an ongoing empirical attitude" (2010b: 109), and this study agrees that translation research, whether it is aimed at applied or descriptive purposes, is built upon translation as a social practice. When primarily established for the applied branch of TS, theories are designed to instruct in the practice of translation; when grounded in the tradition of DTS, theories are proposed to describe, explain and predict translation practice. Meanwhile, the instantiation of translation practice in real-life situations embodies the duality of structure, at once enacting the existing notions of translation and potentially revising these current understandings (cf. Section 2.2.1). Academic research and translation theories are thus expected to discursively address this evolution of shared social knowledge regarding translation. This is understood to be Toury's intention in opening up the definition of translation and Tymoczko's advocacy for renouncing the possibility of defining translation. Both scholars have shifted the emphasis from an *a priori* definition to the retroactive impact of empirical studies.

Therefore, an "empirical attitude" towards the theorisation of translation calls for a continuous engagement with translation practice and the general preconceptions about translation that are deemed commonsensical. By conducting research on translation without making explicit these preliminary assumptions informing their approach towards research materials, researchers are nonetheless activating their tacit knowledge regarding the structured properties of translation practice, which is largely "taken for granted" to be mutually intelligible among members of the academic community and even the general public in the wider society. This implicit yet entrenched knowledge has been termed practical consciousness by Giddens (1979: 219). As helpful as practical consciousness is to ensure an undisrupted flow of routinised translation practice, it is unproductive in nurturing a critical awareness of the historically and culturally restricted nature of the conceptualisation of translation, as Toury dutifully stressed (1995: 31).

Talcott Parsons has also expounded on the implications of empirical research, by indicating that the observation of facts can never be entirely objective, but is essentially conducted within a conceptual scheme. Even statements generally deemed common sense are embedded within "the structure of our language, which differ greatly with other languages" (Parsons, 1968: 28). For instance, to apply this to the term "translation", the connotations of spatial movement inherent in the terms for translation activities in languages with Latin roots may be absent in other languages, rendering commonsensical assumptions of the crossing of borders and the directionality of travel questionable given another linguistic context. Therefore, the lack of explicit and discursive formulation of one's conceptions does *not* obscure the significance of the "implicit theory […] involved in his statements" (ibid.: 10).

According to Parsons, theory "not only formulates what we know but also tells us what we want to know, the questions to which an answer is needed", thereby determining the direction of investigation and consequently the facts that can be discovered (ibid.: 6-9). The findings of an empirical study then involve the verification or rejection of initial expectations derived from the theoretical conjectures available in one's conceptual scheme, evaluated against observable facts. When evidence is identified that contradicts existing theoretical expectations or when the current theoretical model is deemed insufficient to accommodate the newly discovered facts, either result necessitates "critical reconsideration of the system itself" (ibid.: 8).

Since knowledge and language essentially involves an arbitrary division of an otherwise continuous and heterogeneous reality, there are almost always facts that fail to fit into established theoretical categories and are thus believed to be trivia or exceptions in a systematic discipline, for example, the intermediate texts, derivative texts and propagated texts that do not conveniently comply with either source or target descriptions (cf. Chapter 6). These facts are thus "negatively defined" as "residue categories" (Parsons, 1968: 18). However, when there is a surge of interest in the investigation of such "residual categories", Parsons diagnoses it to be "the surest symptom of impending change in a theoretical system". This study, hence, aims to herald such an impending change in the still notably binary metalanguage of translation theorisation.

# Chapter 8 Conclusion

## 8.1 Summary of Research Findings

To summarise, this study sets out to critically engage with the phenomenon of binarism in the theorisation of translation, by examining mainly three pairs of dichotomies – source vs. target, descriptive vs. prescriptive and translation vs. non-translation. It does *not* deny the value of binarism in translation research or general intellectual inquiry, nor does it claim to propose a substitute for the existing models. Instead, this study merely found the existing binary perspective to be insufficient in addressing the evidence discovered in its case study and therefore aimed to problematise the uncritical application of dichotomies.

This study deems it necessary and significant to investigate into the binarism inherent in the metalanguage of TS for several reasons. Firstly, binarism can potentially generate misleading assumptions in one's understanding of the subject at hand: it suppresses ambiguities and hybridities in its impulse to categorise and generalise; it often creates hierarchical order by putting in contrast two mutually exclusive or contradictory concepts and the dominance of one concept is usually subverted by merely reversing the binary opposition; it is frequently aligned with other dichotomous attributes and its binary opposition extended to systematic associations. Secondly, some TS scholars seem to have acquired what Giddens terms "practical consciousness" in their employment of the above TS terminologies, to the extent that they frequently overlook their inadequate explanatory power in certain contexts and rarely feel the need to explicitate what presumptions the terms actually entail. Thirdly, with the advent of what one might call the "sociological turn" in TS, the scope and nature of translation research materials are further diversifying and methodologies have evolved from those largely based on linguistic differences, textual analysis or cultural norms into those incorporating interpersonal relationships and industry networks. This development in TS has introduced and underscored many examples of what Parsons terms "residual categories" (1968: 18), instances that cannot be accommodated by existing TS theoretical models. The increasing attention to such residual categories and the accumulation of facts that cannot be accommodated by the current conceptual scheme might act as the catalyst for a critical evaluation of the TS theoretical system on the whole.

This research project therefore identifies itself with the critical evaluation of metalinguistic issues as represented by Gambier and van Doorslaer's edited volume *The Metalanguage of Translation* (2009) and aims to participate in the discipline's meta-discussion by developing three themes, namely the binarism in TS metalanguage, the investigation into translation errors and the application of sociological approaches to translation research. The phenomenon of binarism, although mentioned sporadically in several of Pym's published works, has not been systematically dealt with in TS. This study addresses the topic by evaluating three dichotomies of prominence in the field – source vs. target, descriptive vs. prescriptive and translation vs. non-translation against empirical evidence. In an attempt to illustrate the possible interaction between the prescriptive and descriptive branches of TS, this study argues for the value of studying translation errors, a research topic that has become largely obsolete since the paradigm shift of DTS. Situating itself in the emerging sociological school of translation research, it hopes to enrich this recent disciplinary development by borrowing from two sociologists that have not yet been applied extensively to the field, namely Talcott Parsons and Anthony Giddens. The above three objectives constitute the contributions this project endeavours to make to TS.

To demonstrate the complications that can be found in real-life translation scenarios challenging the existing binary language, this project uses the case study of translating the two Chinese Nobel Laureates in Literature, Mo Yan and Gao Xingjian. Their respective translators rendering their fictional works into English have been selected as the subjects of investigation. The two Chinese writers are chosen because they provide an interesting research focus due to their contrasting political identities and the distinctively political focus of their reception in the Anglophone media. The case study was approached with a combination of detailed textual comparison of their two translated novels, paratextual and metatextual analysis and face-to-face interviews conducted with one of the translators.

To provide an alternative perspective to the binary models in TS, this study has borrowed from Parsons and Giddens' insights into social actors' orientation and consciousness. Both sociologists have attempted to resolve the binary opposition between structure and agency. Specifically, Parsons developed the concept of action-orientation to illustrate that one's social actions are oriented towards some choices as opposed to other alternatives, thereby characterised with a certain degree of consistency and coherence in the long term, instead of being conducted at random. Meanwhile, orientation does not exclude freedom of choice, and social actions should not be entirely predictable or solely dependent on their situational settings either. Rather, social action forms an emergent and independent system with its own equilibrium, standing in an interdependent relationship with personality, social and cultural systems. During the socialisation process, an individual has internalised certain value-orientations shared with other social members. These value-orientations offer meaningful solutions to the problems of interest identified in the actor's motivated pursuit after need-gratification, helping them make sense of their actions by providing a relatively consistent interpretation of their intentions and purposes (cf. Section 2.1).

While Giddens remains sceptical about the concept of internalisation, he also treats the acquisition of social rules regarding the signification and legitimation of one's actions as an indication of social knowledge. Giddens argues that social learning cultivates social agents' practical consciousness, an implicit understanding of what they do and why they do it, which is also the core component of their knowledgeability. It is developed following repeated encounters with recursive social practice, which then serves to repress the chaos of one's unconscious and help one achieve ontological security. This sense of security allows social agents to proceed in their daily life with efficiency, trusting that a large part of their actions and their interactions with other social beings will be mutually intelligible and little questioned. Although practical consciousness is not explicitly articulated, it can easily cross over into discursive consciousness, which is the discrete form of one's accountability of action. Yet it should be noted that discursive consciousness is not always an accurate formulation of one's implicit rationalisation during the actual process of action, but should only be understood as an interpretation of it upon reflection. Orientation and consciousness are therefore Parsons' and Giddens' respective answers to the integration of individual agency and structural influence (cf. Section 2.2).

According to Parsons, social action, divided into however small a unit act, always involves an actor and a situation. Therefore, individual agency is necessarily contextualised, embedded in a situation with its specific objects of orientation, including physical, social and cultural objects. These objects of orientation often embody both enabling and restrictive qualities, conceptualised as the means and conditions of action in Parsons' model. Among them, social objects refer to other social actors, who are distinguished from physical or cultural objects in the sense that their relationship with the social actor in question is one characterised by double contingency, meaning that their influence on the actor's action embodies a future orientation, as the actor anticipates certain reactions to his/her own actions from the social objects. As the actor's choice of action is at once confronted with the many possibilities and limitations presented by the situation of action, there is a voluntaristic and probabilistic quality to social action. Consequently, the actual outcome of social action often deviates from the planned or envisioned end of the actor (cf. Section 2.1).

The future orientation of action and the ability to anticipate are also seen as important manifestations of social actors' knowledgeability in Giddens' theory. For Giddens, time does not consist of segments with clear division between past and present. Instead, the past and the present are bound together by structure, or the structural properties of social practice. Structure is therefore seen as a duality, at once the means and the outcome of specific actions. It does not have any presence in form but is instantiated in social practice and preserved in individual actor's memory traces. Social actors' memory is then activated in a process of presencing, where a routinised social practice enables the actor's selective perception of incoming information through established anticipatory schemata. As social action is a continuous flow, each choice of action also generates the unintended consequence of reproducing the structural properties of social action, which later on serves as the unacknowledged conditions for future action, creating an accordion effect. In other words, neither structure nor memory remains static, but they are constantly reshaped by social practice. These structures consist of rules and resources, and similar to Parsons' conceptualisation of means and conditions in a situation of action, they are also at once enabling and constraining to the actor. Although Giddens rejects the concept of internalisation or the idea of social action being constantly motivated, he holds that social actors have an invested interest and thereby motivational commitment to the reproduction of structure (cf. Section 2.2).

An overall review of the historical development and current landscape of TS has identified "equivalence" as a continuous theme that runs through the once-central debate of word vs. sense translation methods as well as the currently still prevalent dichotomy of source vs. target. While word vs. sense concerns what Pym calls "natural equivalence", source vs. target is related to the question of "directional equivalence" (2014: 6-42). Yet the concept of equivalence and its accompanying assumptions of integral and stable textual identity were only made possible by particular historical circumstances in recent history. The environment that translation activities are situated in today has further evolved and is characterised by open and dynamic intersocietal contact. Despite the challenges already posed to the source-target model by research into EU translation, marketing translation and self-translation, the terms continue to be recognised as the most standard and established concepts in TS (cf. Section 1.2).

It has been argued in this study that the term “source” signifies originality and authenticity, while the term “target” implies finality. The two terms are frequently employed in their singular form and therefore presumes the singularity and integrity of texts. The directionality entailed in the source-target movement also suppresses the possible multiplicities and complexities embedded in an intertextual and interpersonal network. The two terms’ proven abilities to further generate sub-terms make them prone to a static perspective and inspire systematic associations, categorically classifying culture, society, literature, readership and texts based on the language systems they operate in, typically represented by Venuti’s theory on translator’s invisibility (cf. Section 6.1).

The case study of Howard Goldblatt as a translator has uncovered evidence to support a more “prosaic” and “relativistic” perception of authorial creativity, since the meaningful interpretation of texts relies on previously established and shared cultural symbols, while some texts even borrow explicitly from preceding narratives. Therefore, all texts are unique yet never original, but derivative, fragmented and incomplete in nature. They are situated in an intertextual network, contributing to the propagation, extension and evolution of texts. The text(s) to be translated is thus more accurately portrayed as resources for the compilation of future texts, rather than the pristine source of a literary creation. From this perspective, the sanctity of the “source text” is challenged and the text is subject to rewriting and selective appropriation (cf. Section 6.2).

Besides the indefinite identity of presumed “source texts”, “target texts” are seldom final destinations in themselves either, but leading on to future projects either within the same language system or across language systems and even other sign systems, including academic research, creative writing, retranslation and indirect translation. Especially in the case of translating from a dominated language into a dominating language, the process often results in the consecration and canonisation of texts, an intermediary stage opening up many future possibilities, with the unintended consequences of translational action serving as unacknowledged conditions for other actions (cf. Section 6.3).

There are also many intermediate texts during the translation process whose identity is too ambiguous and hybridised to fit into either source or target categories. By only recognising the two ends of the process, one risks suppressing the other forces at work in a translation project. Apart from the quantity of texts involved, the translator's engagement with these texts further complicates the picture. Because of their linguistic expertise, they are often enlisted in the textual optimisation process such as editing. Instead of either source or target concerns, they are sometimes informed by a knowledgeable evaluation of the intraculture of translation practice in the industry. The translating process is firmly embedded in an interpersonal network, with close collaboration and back-and-forth negotiation among different stakeholders, all of whom can exercise their expertise and agency. The process is multi-directional, interpersonal and reciprocal, on occasions reversing the directionality suggested by the source-target model, as seen in Howard Goldblatt's mutually rewarding relationship with his authors, sometimes influencing the author's creative writing (cf. Section 6.4).

Furthermore, because today's societies and cultures crosscut geopolitical boundaries and heavily rely on mutual influence, the classification of other social factors into these two categories and the conceptualisation of a border established by a translation project can be misguiding. Neither source nor target systems is isolated or impermeable but constantly evolving and interacting, forming what Giddens aptly terms "intersocietal systems"; different dialects or speech of various historical times within the same language system pose their distinctive challenges to the translator, suggesting that a social system can also be viewed as an integration of many subsystems. Therefore, translational action is not best described with a static and systematic view, but should be portrayed as a continuous process and the relationship between cultures a heterogeneous continuum. The above argumentation, however, does not intend to discredit the value of source and target-related terms altogether, but as illustrated by Mabel Lee's translation of Gao Xingjian's novels, their singular, chronological and directional representation can still be helpful in certain contexts (cf. Section 6.5).

Meanwhile, the dominant concept in the source vs. target dichotomy has changed from emphasis on faithfulness to the source into an increasing recognition of the target factors due to the paradigm shift of DTS. In an endeavour to liberate translation research from the ancillary status of serving language teaching, translator training or more established disciplines such as Linguistics and Comparative Literature, DTS claims to exclude any practical, subjective or prescriptive elements of translation research. Consequently, research topics such as translation error or translator ethics almost became taboo. Yet with the emergence of the "committed" or the "interventionist" approach, as represented by post-colonialist and feminist influences, TS has witnessed a return to the prescriptive perspective. This study argues for a place for any real-life translation phenomenon in DTS and general translation theorisation, including the investigation into errors. Most of the existing literatures on translation error are found to be mainly identified with applied translation studies, with few attempts at defining, categorising or explaining translation error. Therefore, this study approaches the binary opposition between PTS and DTS with a preliminary framework for error analysis, one that aims to be objective, theory-based and description-oriented (cf. Section 1.3).

Parsons' definition of error has been adopted for the purpose of this study, treating error as "the failure to attain ends or make the "right" choice of means" (1968: 45-46), but the definition of translation error is returned to its association with "wrong" translation, rather than being confounded with undesirable or less desirable translation decisions, to avoid leaving the concept to subjective value judgement. In other words, translation errors should not be confused with stylistic preferences or alternative interpretations. It is not equivalent to writing or reading errors either, but brought about by the specific expectation placed on the translator to overcome linguistic barriers. Errors are distinguished from other choices of action based on the assumption that the actor would opt for a different line of action should he/she be made aware of the facts previously unknown to him/her during the process of action. Translation errors are therefore resistant to defensive arguments, as once the grounds for action are questioned and discursive formulation of the reasons are sought, the taken-for-granted mutual intelligibility would break down and the actor's ontological security threatened. It often indicates a mismatch between self-confidence and self-awareness, the two desirable attributes for error avoidance proposed by Kussmaul (cf. Section 2.3).

In an attempt to correct the existing portrayal of translation errors as irrational, results of an unintentional or unconscious action, this study sees translation practice as largely characterised by practical consciousness. It is intentional and purposive action, but routinised and seldom directly motivated. Since translational action, like other social actions, constitutes a continuous flow that is constantly rationalised and reflexively monitored, it is subjected to the actor's selective perception, with incoming information filtered through the anticipatory schemata in his/her memory. Since error not only features in translation activity, but also contributes to the purposive and intentional nature of translation as social action, it is not as incidental as Malmkjær has depicted (2004: 154), but necessarily linked in with other more explicitly and consistently formulated translation choices. Neither is it unconscious and unreflective as Venuti claims (2013: 32), but it has been at least implicitly rationalised on the level of practical consciousness. It does not directly point to what the actor does not know, nor does it directly bear on the judgement of the translator's competence, but cognitive judgement only constitutes one aspect of the actor's orientation. Since translational action is voluntaristic, translator's choices are guided by normative orientation, negotiating between the conflict of possibilities and limitations presented by the situation (cf. Section 2.3).

To discern errors from other translation choices, two criteria have been proposed, including the presence of triggers and the disruption of coherence. Among the two, the presence of triggers is built upon the hypotheses of interlingual interference, formal patterning and similarity in verbal image presented by previous TS scholars (Hansen, 2010: 385; Malmkjær, 2004: 141; Venuti, 2013: 39). It is further divided into categories of textual and preconceptual triggers. Textual triggers then take the form of phonological, morphological, logographical and structural triggers. Often, errors prove be the outcome of a combination of textual triggers and preconceptual triggers, as the lack of textual triggers likely leads to the diagnosis of the translation choice as subjective interpretation, and the lack of preconceptual triggers points directly to the translator's linguistic deficiency and thus less relevant to a sociological inquiry. As a result, the two different scenarios of misusing top-down knowledge as envisioned by Kussmaul cannot be so easily set apart (cf. Section 2.3).

If triggers address the psycholinguistic process of excitation, coherence depicts the symptom of translation errors. Disruption of coherence includes the disruption of textual, intertextual and contextual coherence. Among them, intertextual coherence includes consistency with other language versions, relevant texts in the same language as well as the translator's para- and metatexts. The significance of these errors in revealing the motivational commitment of translators is then determined by their susceptibility to misinterpretation and the frequency of their recurrence throughout the translated product. The less susceptible they are and the more frequently they recur, the more telling they become in revealing translator's motivational commitment (cf. Section 2.3).

Through detailed textual analysis of the Chinese and English versions of Mo Yan's *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out* and Gao's *One Man's Bible*, novels selected due to their similar focus on modern China's political history, it can be seen that translation error is a persistent phenomenon in real-life translation practice, whether the translator involved is a veteran or amateur translator. The effect of these translation errors, however, seems rather fleeting and minute on the intended receivers of the translated product, and the lack of attention to these errors from those who read the translation in the place of the Chinese versions makes one re-evaluate the accusatory attitudes towards them. Meanwhile, very few instances of predetermined and consistently applied strategies have been discovered. Faced with similar translation problems, the solutions implemented by the translator can vary in different contexts, suggesting that translators largely rely on practical consciousness in carrying out their work, which can deviate from one's explicitly formulated grounds of action. Whenever there are explicit challenges that have been commonly acknowledged in their specific language combination, such as the supplementation of tense to Chinese verbs or the handling of Chinese names, the solutions are relatively consistent, and the translators can explicitly recall and comment on their decisions afterwards. Yet even these explicit challenges are not dealt with in a uniformed manner, especially when they are scattered throughout a long narrative (cf. Chapter 3 and 4).

Gao's translator Mabel Lee is an academic with rich intertextual and contextual knowledge about Chinese intellectual history as well as the author's biographical details. She claims to "stick rigidly" to the text she translates and does not attempt to make the text more digestible for her readership. Mo Yan's translator into English, Howard Goldblatt, is an experienced translator who identifies himself with the role-expectation of a literary translator primarily, who is more oriented towards the production of reader-friendly translations. The motivational commitment detected from Lee's recursive translation choices, including the pattern of errors, indicate that the translator generally tones down the sexual connotation in Gao's novel, by depicting the female characters with initiative and experience and the male protagonist with more emotional investment and less eloquence in expressing his affections. Lee’s sensitivity towards Mao-related references and her decisions to make explicit the time frame of Cultural Revolution has highlighted the political and personal focus of the novel. Her decision to translate an adverb in the Chinese version with a much higher level of certainty in most instances of its occurrence has demonstrated a relatively consistent pattern, contributing to a more condemnatory tone in delivering an indictment on a traumatic period of Chinese political history. However, this strategic choice has also contributed to the manifestation of errors, by setting in motion an interpretive orientation that feed back into the structuration cycle as unacknowledged conditions of action and reinforcing the translator’s anticipatory schemata (cf. Chapter 3).

In comparison, Mo Yan’s translator Howard Goldblatt has shown inconsistency in handling the translation of character names, once the translation problem has been scattered over a relatively long span of text, illustrating the necessarily contextual manifestation of the translational action. The distributional pattern of Goldblatt’s translation errors in *Life and Death* has also suggested a special order of translation, due to the low frequency of recurrence of the errors found in the chapter titles, indicating that they are seen as explicit challenges and have been dealt with as a group. A comparison of the translator’s translations of two different authors during an overlapping period of translational action has also suggested the possibility of translator’s preoccupation with certain themes, while his motivational commitment in reproducing them can cross over into other translation projects, further supporting the portrayal of translation as embedded in an intertextual network rather than a one-off uni-directional movement. The fascination with the Cultural Revolution and its close association with the ideological defeat of Communism in the translator and the public’s mind have also inspired a mixture of strategic additions or substitutions and translation errors intended to highlight the political poignancy of the narrative. Goldblatt’s freedom assumed in strategically editing the text, mostly manifested in deletion, has also contributed to errors that are otherwise less likely to occur (cf. Chapter 4).

Based on the scope of the current study, a classification of 12 types of translation error has been proposed. Assuming that translation or the role of a translator is invested with various expectations, including transfer, reference, selection adaptation, contention, displacement, explicitation, metaphor, exchange, rearrangement, omission and annotation, these errors have been classified due to the triggers and the result they produce. The conclusion, however, is not exclusive and rather acts as an initial exploration into the topic. The classifications allow room for the combination of two or more types of error and different patterns in various language combinations. Further investigation into real-life translation practice is essential in yielding more empirical data and testing the proposed theoretical framework in different language combinations, in order to further refine these hypotheses (cf. Chapter 5).

Not only has the definition of translation error been debatable in the field, the very subject of the discipline's investigation, translation itself, has been elusive to define. Definitional attempts have been made on the basis of viewing translation as a thing with an essence, a word with various semantic denotations and a concept with preliminary assumptions. Having reviewed many past definitional approaches, this study has adopted the term of "formal conceptualisation" as proposed by Pym for the purpose of the current investigation. It argues for the value of a working definition or a preliminary conceptualisation of translation, in resistance to the reliance on common sense in selecting research subject and compiling research materials. This importance attached to an academic *naïvité* in addressing one's subject of study does not, however, mean to deny the immense contribution of Toury and Jakobson in broadening the scope of the discipline. It merely intends to overcome the dominance of practical consciousness in the conceptualisation of translation and explicitate the assumptions that might have been taken for granted (cf. Section 1.4).

Confronted with the controversies in defining translation, this study first and foremost deems it necessary to explicitly formulate a working definition for the subject under study, as the initial selection of research topic, materials and methodology by default requires a conceptual scheme, however implicit. The danger of falling back on the practical consciousness of researchers is *not* opening up the definition of translation, but subjecting it to common sense. Instead, scholarly inquiries demand a *naïveté* towards one's subject to ensure a critical self-reflexivity in TS research. This study has thus identified the preliminary conceptualisation informing its research design, namely the universal origin of translation activities. It holds that translation activities came about as a response to the social demand for overcoming linguistic differences in cross-community interaction. Therefore, despite the different terms for translation in other languages and their various connotations, the concept of translation inspires the assumption of cross-linguistic expertise and textual processing activities. This deeply rooted tradition might also serve to explain Toury and Jakobson's reluctance to relinquish a universal element of their definitions and Tymoczko's confidence placed in common sense (cf. Section 7.1).

However, as evidence from the case study has demonstrated, the translators' often exclusive possession of cross-linguistic expertise entails cross-cultural or cross-societal representation of the Other. Therefore, the role-expectation of translators and the envisioned end of the translational action are *not* limited to textual production, but can involve communication with other stakeholders in the translation project, including publishers, editors, promoters, sponsors, agencies etc. The translators' paratexts and metatexts also contribute to the framing and consequently the interpretation of the authors they translate, as well as the language and the culture they introduce. Translators constantly enact their responsibilities as spokespersons by choosing certain texts over others to translate, by incorporating a relatively consistent personal style into their translated products and by contributing to the compilation of a foreign literary corpus over time (cf. Section 7.3).

Meanwhile, the envisioned end of textual production necessarily involves issues beyond linguistic differences. Evidence from the case study indicates that translation activities automatically concern editing and other textual optimisation activities, in order to produce independent texts that can potentially replace the Chinese versions they are based on in some contexts. Editing can take place before, during and after cross-linguistic operation. It can also involve the employment of "controlled language" or an intracultural language at intermediate stages of the translation project. In particular, the translation of literary works from Chinese into English is identified with a practice termed retro-editing (Goldblatt, 2004), referring to the editing a book undergoes in a foreign translation project. This common practice can be attributed to the status of contemporary Chinese literature compared to Anglophone literature on the global market, the status of secondary textual processing experts such as editors and translators compared to authors, and the intraculture of literary translation in English-speaking contexts, especially in the US publishing industry (cf. Section 7.2).

In conclusion, this study advocates an open-ended yet nonetheless discursively explicit approach to the definition of translation. The caution against commonsensical assumptions ultimately intends to position TS as an empirical science that continuously revises the theoretical understandings of its subject. Based on the new facts discovered to challenge established theoretical models and the exploration into residue categories, TS scholars can expand the discipline's boundaries through *a posteri* discoveries with a nonetheless critical reflexivity about their conceptual schemes (cf. Section 7.4).

## 8.2 Limitation of Current Research

This project is an initial attempt at systematically reviewing the binarism in TS metalanguage. It therefore tries to avoid referring to its research materials as either source or target texts, by developing a set of alternative terms such as versions and editions. However, due to the qualitative nature of its case study, it cannot be ascertained whether the majority of translation practices in the industry today resembles more the streamlined process of Lee's translation of Gao or the convoluted process of Goldblatt's translation of Mo Yan. In other words, although it has been demonstrated with empirical evidence that source and target-related terms do not suffice in certain research contexts, this study does not aim to overthrow these established dichotomies, nor does it claim to have discovered better alternatives. To truly tip the balance between the standardisation and the quality of TS terminologies and convincingly argue for a replacement of these terms in the discipline's meta-discussion, further quantitative studies need to be conducted to prove that despite the pragmatic value of these dichotomies, they are misdirecting the general theorisation of translation.

In its search for alternative perspectives, this study has turned to the sociological models of Parsons and Giddens. Their theories designed to describe and explain social action and social practice are deemed beneficial in overcoming the two-dimensional view found in some TS terminologies deeply rooted in the linguistic tradition. When a social action with its own goal, agents and situation replaces texts and linguistic differences as the starting point of investigation, there is no longer the necessity of classifying research materials into those that came before or after translators' intervention. Instead, the process of the translator's intervention, involving a plurality of other social actors, becomes the main research focus. However, this project lacked the resources to obtain manuscripts, drafts and communications at different stages of the translation projects, and only one translator granted face-to-face interviews. Therefore, the sociological models could not be applied to their full potential and the theories were only explicitly borrowed and best integrated in the discussion of translation errors (see Section 2.3 and Part II).

The limited scope of the case study also means that the research findings, especially the framework proposed for error analysis, cannot be easily generalised to translation phenomenon in general. This study thoroughly and exhaustively analysed the translation of two novels, before developing 12 categories to accommodate all the potential translation errors discovered in the textual comparison. Yet before applying the same analytical methods to other corpus and other language combinations, it cannot be affirmed that the 12 categories are all encompassing in describing and explaining errors or equally significant in meriting a separate category.

Based on the findings so far, it would be difficult to draw any conclusion regarding the relationship between translation experience/linguistic competence and the types or frequency of translation errors committed. In order to better demonstrate the integration of descriptive and prescriptive perspectives in the study of errors, more quantitative and empirical studies with contrast groups need to be undertaken. More large-scale research dedicated to the topic can also yield more convincing conclusions on to what extent translation errors are caused by random, one-off chance, by psycholinguistic triggers and by social actors' preconceptions.

In terms of methodology, it has been discussed in Section 0.4 that there are certain limitations to using secondary analysis and qualitative interview as a research method. Specifically, during the interviews with Mabel Lee, the translation errors identified in the textual comparison could not be directly and explicitly addressed, due to the power relations between interviewer and interviewee. The necessity of supplying gloss translations for the Chinese texts also introduces suspicion of the researcher’s own subjective interpretation and motivational commitment. When it comes to textual comparison and analysis, no better methodology has been discovered yet that can help present the research findings more objectively.

## 8.3 The Prospect of an Interdiscipline

Since the commencement of this research project, many other scholarly contributions have been discovered to coincide with the arguments developed in the current study. This study has underscored the significance of auto-reflexivity and meta-discussion in translation theorisation, a point echoing Brems, Meylaerts and van Doorslaer’s evaluation of the development of TS (2014). According to Brems et al., “self-reflection and meta-reflection are characteristic of every dynamic and developing scholarly discipline” (ibid.: 1).

TS has been a discipline fraught with paradoxes. One of them stems from the difficulty in defining its subject of study, resulting in a conflict between “the need for variety and the risk of fragmentation” (ibid.: 3). The dilemma has been addressed by this study in its discussion on the definition of translation. While acknowledging the revolutionary potential provided by Jakobson’s semiotic approach towards translation research, it argues for the indispensability of a critical awareness of one’s own presumptions.

Another paradox of TS lies in its struggle between the need for “mature theorization” on one hand and “the urgent call to keep theory and practice in close contact” on the other (ibid.: 6). Brems et al. have recognised “the link between theory and practice” as a distinctive characteristic of TS, and this study adopts the view that a major part of translation research is the empirical investigation into its practice. Therefore, it aims to narrow the gap between theory and practice by proposing a framework for error analysis and demonstrating the integration of prescriptive and descriptive approaches.

Closely linked with its call for "mature theorization" (ibid.), TS has never been completely free from an identity crisis, as it strives to establish itself as an independent academic discipline and "emancipate itself from neighboring disciplines and the industry", whilst trying to maintain its diversity and vigor by staying connected to these disciplines and committed to a synergy with "industry and technology" (ibid.). It has been widely acknowledged that the current interdisciplinary borrowing between TS and other subject fields has been notably imbalanced. While TS has already witnessed several "turns" in its trans-disciplinary development, other disciplines stay largely unaffected by TS' progress. The term "translation" in other fields, including Cultural Studies, Sociology and Biology, is employed mainly for its metaphorical connotations. Meanwhile, research areas that bear direct relevance to the practice of translation, such as International Business, adopt a rather "simplistic and mechanical" understanding of the translating process (ibid.), generally unaware of the rapid advances made by TS to correct that perspective. In other words, a real "translation turn" still has a long way to go and mutuality in interdisciplinary collaboration is yet to be achieved.

Moreover, the quest of TS for "unambiguous discourse and terminological uniformity" is frequently challenged by the doubt that any "univocal metadiscourse" will be able to accommodate "the complexity of modern society" (ibid.). Similarly, this study has set out to strive for a balance between the standardisation and precision of TS terminologies. Brems et al. questioned the "academic unconsciousness" that led to the lack of reflexivity in the meta-discussion of TS (ibid.), supporting the argument raised in Section 7.4 about the practical consciousness of translation scholars and their reliance on common sense when it comes to the assumptions invested in TS terminologies.

The current project can be viewed as an attempt to systematically examine the metalanguage of TS, develop an approach towards the analysis of translation errors and apply Parsons and Giddens to translation research. Following this study, many other metalinguistic issues remain to be addressed and their binary implications discussed. For instance, translation and interpreting still constitute two distinctive branches of the discipline, despite the commonly accepted use of "Translation Studies" as an umbrella term for both fields. Seminal reference books such as *The Interpreting Studies Reader* (Pöchhacker and Shlesinger, 2002) and the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies* (Pöchhacker et al., 2015) are published alongside their respective *Translation Studies Reader* (Venuti, 2012) and *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Baker and Saldanha, 2009), and the two branches are mostly developing at their separate paces. A meta-discussion is required to address whether TS should be more justly named TIS (Translation and Interpreting Studies), or whether the two are better united in a common epistemology and existing research methodologies. Considering their shared origin as cross-linguistic textual processing activities, a working definition for the subject of research adopted in this study, the two might merit a closer look at the features that unite them, especially given the emergence of practices that incorporate both oral and written texts, such as sight translation, subtitling, dubbing and voiceover. Another prominent dichotomy in TS is translatability vs. untranslatability, a controversy that can be found at the centre of many debates during the "Cultural Turn" (Apter, 2014; Spivak, 1992). Yet borrowing from Biosemiotics, Kobus Marais and Kalevi Kull have argued that translatability and untranslatability are "inherently connected" (2016: 171). Instead of rejecting understanding and communication, untranslatability provides the condition for meaning-making and semiotic innovation.

The study of translation errors can also be further extended to those of interpreting practice, which might pose unique challenges to the analytical framework established here, as interpreting, especially the cognitively demanding process of simultaneous interpreting, can be classified as a critical situation depicted by Giddens. The practice of it therefore is more vulnerable to the disruption of the interpreter's unconscious. In addition, due to the preparation normally entailed in performing interpreting assignments, the framework can be further complemented by how errors manifest in relation to previously established strategies or practical guidelines designed for specific tasks.

Lastly, the expansion of TS as an interdiscipline does not only involve the borrowing of theoretical models from other disciplines, but it also needs to start from empirical evidence and identify potential areas of cross-disciplinary collaboration. Many subfields crossing disciplinary boundaries have already attracted the attention of TS scholars, such as media translation, computational linguistics and the de-professionalisation seen in online crowd-sourcing (Cronin, 2010).

As Brems et al. have noted, the "permanent state of doubt and uncertainty" might be exactly the indication of a vigorously developing dynamic discipline (Brems, Meylaerts and van Doorslaer, 2014: 1). The danger that TS scholars have to caution against is *not* the seemingly vague and ambiguous nature or scope of their inquiry, but the "collective falling in love with a single approach" (Buzelin and Baraldi, 2016: 132). Therefore, constant self-reflection and meta-discussion can help "counterbalance these expectations and to re-evaluate even the most obvious concepts in our toolbox" (Kujamäki and Footitt, 2016: 59). This research project constitutes an attempt at such a critical self-reflection and meta-discussion.

# Appendix

*Transcript of Interviews with Professor Mabel Lee, conducted on the 24th and 25th of September 2015, in Sydney, Australia.*
*(Xiao – interviewer and author of the thesis; Lee – interviewee and translator of Gao Xingjian)*

Xiao: First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to you for agreeing to this interview. I've read so much about you, so it's really exciting for me to finally meet you in person. Before I ask about you, I think it's only fair that I tell you a little bit about myself. I'm also from Guangdong Province, where I believe your parents were from. I did my undergraduate degree at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Then I went to Durham University in the UK to do my Masters, and now I'm in the second year of my PhD studies.

I'm very interested in finding out about the role of translators, as perceived by translators themselves, literary critics, academics, as well as their general readers in English-speaking countries. My research combines the analysis of the actual translated texts with the social context the translator is situated in, which is why I'm interested in finding out about your personal background and the other social actors involved in your translation projects.

Lee: I began my undergrad degree in Chinese Studies in 1957, before you were born. A lot of our work was actually translation, because Chinese-language teaching wasn't developed in those days. Basically we started reading actual texts. In my first year we used some basic language-teaching material, but it was not very satisfactory. This was especially the case with explanations about modern Chinese grammar. Most of the time we used actual texts. We learned Chinese by reading classical Chinese texts. So it was in 1957 that I started Chinese, and I started on classical Chinese texts. In those days, in undergraduate courses, it was [like] six hours a week, including one hour of Chinese history, starting from early times, and going through the different dynasties: this was taught in English. In the second year, we started on other texts. In the first year, we read chapters from Mencius. And from the second year onwards we were familiarised with reading chapters from Lunyu, Zhuangzi, Han Feizi, Shiji, Tang shi, Song ci, Zizhi tongjian, classical Tang dynasty chuanqi short stories, Ming dynasty vernacular short stories, early Confucian texts as well as later Song neo-Confucian texts. So we had a broad education, reading actual texts.

I began teaching in a similar way, but with reading modern texts. I received my PhD in 1966 and was appointed to teach and to develop a modern Chinese program that included language and literature. In my undergraduate studies, I virtually read no modern Chinese author, but while studying for my PhD, I educated myself, by reading most of the works by the major May 4th writers as well as various accounts of the history of the young Republic. My background is actually Chinese intellectual history. My PhD was in late-Qing (late 19th early 20th century) economic thought. So it was going on from there, but I was just interested in how people's thinking changed and developed in China, with the impact of Western industrialisation in China. Anyway, I've always had a sort of historical interest in how people thought. I'm interested in people's psychology.

Xiao: You mentioned in your previous interviews that you grew up speaking both Cantonese and English.

Lee: Yes. Cantonese and English.

Xiao: Would you say that both languages are your mother tongues?

Lee: Yes.

Xiao: And your parents, I believe, were from Doumen, in Guangdong Province?

Lee: Yes. But my father was actually born in Sydney, and was taken by his parents to Doumen as a baby.

Xiao: And your three older siblings were also born there?

Lee: My three older siblings were born in Shekki, the county town of Zhongshan County. I was the first of four to be born in Australia.

Xiao: So was Cantonese the language used in your family?

Lee: Yes. It was the Zhongshan dialect of Cantonese.

Xiao: And you learned English mainly through school and the community?

Lee: Mainly from my siblings, I think. My older sister started school, so as she learned, I picked up what she learned every day. Also, we had a corner shop, so I was exposed to customers coming into the shop. I would hear it, and I must have liked the English language.

Xiao: And you were born in the town of Warialda?

Lee: Yes, it’s located in northern New South Wales. This country town had never had Chinese families living there. There were old Chinese market gardeners there, but the townspeople had never seen Chinese children. My family was the first they'd seen with children, and everyone was very good to our family.
My eldest brother was about twelve or thirteen, and the second one was probably about eleven. My elder sister was four. Everyone in the town was kind and helpful to my family, because of the children.

Xiao: How long were you in Warialda?

Lee: My family left when I was about five. We came to Sydney, and I started kindergarten.

Xiao: So basically you received all your education in Sydney?

Lee: Yes.

Xiao: And you spent your whole life in Australia? Have you ever lived in China?

Lee: No.

Xiao: You also mentioned in your interviews that there was no Chinese class at high school?

Lee: Certainly not. In those days, people were discouraged from speaking languages other than English. War refugees from Greece, Italy, Poland and other parts of Europe were told in public places by the Anglo-Saxon majority population to “speak English.”

Xiao: So it was not an option to learn other languages in school?

Lee: No. Only Latin, French and German were offered.

Xiao: Why did you end up choosing Chinese as your major at university?

Lee: I was interested in Chinese history. Chinese Studies had been established as a degree course in 1956 at the University of Sydney, and Chinese history was included in the curriculum. In 1957 I was amongst the first batch of students enrolled into Elementary Chinese, because we did not have a high school education in Chinese. If we had satisfactory results in the annual examinations, in the following year we would join students from Hong Kong and Singapore who had received high school education in Chinese, and enrol in Chinese I. In the following years there would be Chinese II and Chinese III, and if one had exemplary results in Chinese I, there was the option of taking an additional Honours unit in both Chinese II and Chinese III. To take this option and to achieve distinction or high distinction results allowed one to enrol in the Chinese VI (Honours) course. I took this option, and graduated BA with First Class Honours in Chinese. I was probably the first Australian-born Chinese woman to graduate BA with First Class Honours, as well as the first Australian-born Chinese woman to receive a PhD.

Xiao: Would you say there was a great disparity between the education of boy students and girl students back then?

Lee: Boys and girls from Chinese village backgrounds such as mine seldom had a tertiary education. They were lucky if they completed high school. Because the older generations were from peasant backgrounds, all they hoped for was that the boys went into business, and made money, and for the girls to marry well. There were exceptions, of course, and some men who went into medicine. I was probably the first Australian-born Chinese woman from that background to have received a university education, and moreover a PhD.

Xiao: Before you had completely mastered reading Chinese, did you have to rely on translated texts to learn about Chinese history?

Lee: I read analytical studies of Chinese history through books written in English. At the time there were few academic studies in the specific area of my interest. My reading of the Chinese language was only just gradually developing. In those days, we had no opportunity to study in China. Foreigners were generally not welcome, and the chaos of the Cultural Revolution would soon erupt. Taiwan did not encourage overseas students either, because there was the fear of communist infiltrators slipping in. While it was possible to develop and consolidate my reading skills in Australia, it was impossible for me to improve my speaking skills. There were few Mandarin speakers on the streets of Sydney: one could only hear various strands of Cantonese dialects spoken.

I met a Buddhist master from Beijing, during my final Honours year of Chinese. I was cross that I couldn't speak Chinese after studying the subject for five years, even though I was reading quite well. The Buddhist master said, "The way to start speaking is to learn some things off by heart." I did this, and suddenly I was speaking.

Xiao: Were most of the teachers Chinese originally?

Lee: We had one teacher from China. He was from Nantong, near Shanghai, and his English was perfect. He was working with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the Japanese invasion of China, and was a Chinese diplomat in Australia at the time of the Japanese surrender. When Mao Zedong declared the founding of the People's Republic, he chose to stay in Australia. He held a Law degree from Xiamen University, China, and after deciding to live in Sydney, he enrolled to study for his Masters degree in the History Department at the University of Sydney, and was soon recruited to teach in the Chinese Department. He later wrote a PhD on Qing Dynasty poetics, and this secured his position as a permanent member of the academic staff. An Englishman.

Xiao: Now that you have mastered written Chinese, would you say that you always prefer to read the original rather than a translation?

Lee: I don't know that I've mastered written Chinese, I'm still learning. As a student, it was helpful to read James Legge's translations of various classical texts. Whether it was 100% correct or not was irrelevant. It was near enough, and one could get a rough idea of the thrust of the texts. It was the same with selections of Chinese writings in translation. I was not interested in reading translations; I was mainly interested in history. It was only later on, much later, that I became interested in Chinese literature, not translations, but the originals.

While studying for my PhD, I systematically read through shelves of modern Chinese authors on my own. In other words, I educated myself in modern Chinese writings, because that part was missing in my undergraduate degree. At the same time I read everything available at the time on 19th and 20th century Chinese history. I regarded Chinese literature as documents of social history, and there were some powerful Chinese writers who had produced great writings.

I was appointed to a lectureship in Chinese Studies at the University of Sydney in 1966: it was my brief to develop the modern language, literature and history components of the curriculum.

Xiao: Would you say that you read a lot about English literature, or just not literature in general?

Lee: I think people in China were reading more English literature than me, even though I was here living in an English-speaking environment. I studied the textbooks, of course, for high school, but I would not have read anything apart from textbooks. In those days, there were not many textbooks: basically it was a play by Shakespeare, and one or two other authors.

Xiao: Do you think if someone has learned the language, they should always just go to read the original, and translation is only for people who don't understand the language?

Lee: It depends on the individual. Unless you're completely bilingual, you wouldn't necessarily be able to access that much. You'd access more material if you accessed translations. They may not be perfect, but you'd get a rough idea of what the work was about. If you were really interested in studying a particular text, maybe you could go to the original. But it's good to have translation for a quick reading, just to understand what such-and-such an author is about.

I'm sure in China and Taiwan, in fact in all of Asia, there is a long tradition of translation. In the English-reading world, people don’t have the tradition of reading translations, not like in Europe. However, this is gradually changing. When I started teaching, we were teaching translations of Chinese texts, because we thought the best way of learning the language was to read texts that were written in beautiful language, and with beautiful thoughts informing the text. But afterwards, everything became anti-translation. It was argued that everything should be theory-driven, and the study and translation of original texts was of little importance. In the English-speaking world, translation is not considered as research activity.

Xiao: You mentioned that there was a difference between Europe’s perception of translated literature and that of Australians’. Do you think it's because English is the main language in the world?

Lee: In far away Australia there is the general perception that English is the most important language. Learning foreign languages or reading translations do not enjoy a high priority compared with other academic activities. It's starting to change, gradually. A good example would be with publishers. For example, we took Gao Xingjian's *Soul Mountain* to publishers and had a contract with Harper Collins for Australia and New Zealand. But until it was announced that he had won the Nobel Prize in October 2000, we were unable to get a US or UK publisher. US publishers said, “Translation, not interested. We've already published a book translated from Chinese.” After it was announced that Gao Xingjian had won the Nobel Prize, people said, “Who is this Gao Xingjian? We've never heard of him.” Because Gao Xingjian didn't promote himself, the Americans seemed really annoyed: “Why couldn't it have been Bei Dao? At least we know who Bei Dao is. Who is this person, Gao Xingjian?” Gao Xingjian was a reclusive writer. In 1989, he wrote a play called Escape that upset both the Chinese government and the members of the Chinese democracy movement. The play alludes to killings in the Square, a fact denied by the authorities. Chinese democracy movement members were upset because the students are not depicted as heroes. Although the setting is obviously Tiananmen Square in the early hours of June 4th, this play is a tragedy that tells of human behaviour when confronting death. For Gao Xingjian his writing does not capitulate to political demands.

Xiao: Gao Xingjian mentioned in one of his essays that he thinks one's native language defines one's mode of thinking. Do you agree with that?

Lee: To some extent one’s early upbringing is important. But then, in his case, his studies in French literature are equally important, as well as the development of his own critical thinking. To sum up, I would say that he was a child prodigy who has single-mindedly developed his creative genius across genres. He has demonstrated his talents as a thinker, critic, artist, writer, playwright and director, and filmmaker. There are few as erudite in both Eastern and Western cultural traditions. He has investigated both of them. Apart from classical Western and Chinese literary sources, he has also looked at European philosophy, art history, and art theories, as well as artworks themselves.

Xiao: What about you? As someone from a bilingual background, do you feel like you tend to think in a more Chinese way, or a more Western way?

Lee: I'm not either one or the other. I certainly value a lot of things in my Chinese upbringing. Just last month, I had a stroke. I was very lucky, and had a 100% recovery, even though it was a serious stroke. Back home after a couple of days in hospital, I was aware of an uncomfortable feeling of dryness in my mouth, and I remembered what my mother used to make when this happened to us as children. Western medicine can be very drying, so I boiled lotus root powder with water, and ate the thick starchy mixture, that I had not eaten for 50 or 60 years. In my adult life, I learned Taijiquan, and I read Chinese philosophical tracts as well as studies about them. I am fond of reading and translating Gao Xingjian’s works, because I learn a lot in the process. Apart from Gao Xingjian, the other Chinese writers I admire are Zhang Taiyan and Lu Xun.

Xiao: It's generally believed that translators should only translate into their mother tongue. Do you agree?

Lee: It depends on how good you are in the language that you later acquire. Some translators are completely bilingual, and will translate or interpret both quickly and with a high degree of precision in any social situation. Literary translation is different, and mainly concerns the translator and the text: it is a lonely journey and can be several hundred pages in length.

Xiao: You've done a lot of contribution to introducing modern Chinese literature to the Western world. Do you think you will ever be interested in translating from English into Chinese?

Lee: I'm not a professional translator, and I am certainly not a two-way translator. When approached, I am happy to refer a list of one-way or two-way literary translators. At the moment I am quite busy working on three book projects, including a book of academic essays about Gao Xingjian, written by academics located in various parts of the world. I am coediting this book with Hong Kong University of Technology Professor of Chinese Literature, Liu Jianmei, author of Zhuangzi and Modern Chinese Literature (2016).

Xiao: Are you working on any Gao Xingjian translations at the moment?

Lee: I've drafted translations of Gao Xingjian's 36-poem cycle "Wandering Spirit and Metaphysical Thoughts" that he wrote in 2010, and was published (2012) in his book of poems of the same name. My translations of Poems 10, 11 and 12 from that cycle were published in the Sydney-based literary journal Contrappasso Special Issue: Long Distance (November 2015).

Xiao: Are you still working on his other poems?

Lee: I've also drafted his "Short Poem Collection," that was also published in his collection, Wandering Spirit and Metaphysical Thoughts (2012). When I move to getting them published in a book, I'll look at them with fresh eyes.

Xiao: Gao Xingjian mentioned that his Chinese origin only served as the cultural background of his writings. What about you? What does your Chinese origin, and what does being a third-generation Chinese immigrant mean to you?

Lee: Growing up in Australia, my being third-generation Chinese did not mean anything special to me. I was aware of my Chinese identity in a predominantly Anglo-Saxon and Christian community. However, even as a young child I saw myself as the equal of any other person, regardless of race, religion, age or gender. My brothers and sisters worked with my parents in the family businesses, and we were all proud even as youngsters to play a role.

Xiao: Gao Xingjian said that because of its flexible syntax and grammar, it is easier to depict a person's psyche in the Chinese language.

Lee: I totally agree with him. Unless it is describing a specific event, Classical Chinese poetry usually has no temporal or spatial limitations. Gao Xingjian's determination to explore and track the psychology of his protagonists has led to his poetry, fiction and plays all coming to life in the present moment. And this is precisely what he wants.

Xiao: Do you think Chinese works better as a literary language, compared to English?

Lee: I think it does, certainly in Gao Xingjian's case. He realised that the Chinese written language had lost its musicality because of attempts by linguists to standardize and normalise the language according to European syntax. He expended much effort in exploring the best works of pre-modern Chinese narration, and worked out strategies for restoring musicality to his own writings. I had translated three books of Yang Lian's poems, and had arranged to meet him while I was in Paris for a couple of days en route to Copenhagen. On one occasion he suggested paying a visit to Gao Xingjian. When we turned up in his apartment, it was like a meeting of old friends, even though this was the first time I had met Gao Xingjian. He had just received a shipment of the Chinese edition of his *Soul Mountain*, and presented me with a copy. While we chatted and drank wine, I leafed through the book, and got the feeling that I was reading poetry. Suddenly I found myself asking, "Have you got a translator? Do you want me?" He was surprised, but delighted, because at the time translators of Chinese literature were quite hard to find.

Xiao: So you were instantly attracted to *Soul Mountain* even before reading it?

Lee: I only scanned a few pages while we were sitting around and having drinks.

Xiao: I can't help noticing that the two main writers you've translated – Yang Lian and Gao Xingjian – have distinctive political identities. Apart from the beauty of their language, is there anything in their personal experience that attracted you to their works?

Lee: I would argue that their politics is not different, but their choice of using or not using their position as writer to promote a political viewpoint is different. I met Yang Lian in

1988, and he desperately needed English translations of his new work. John Minford had been his main translator, but had taken up the Chair of Chinese at Auckland University in New Zealand and was too busy. Yang Lian said he needed English translations for his readings in Australia and New Zealand, and asked if I could do it. I said, “I'm not a translator, and you've got John Minford. I don’t want to snatch you from John.” He said, “John’s too busy as head of department to do any translations.” I agreed to have a look at them. If I liked them, I’d translate them, even photocopy them for him to use at his poetry readings. Afterwards, I did poetry readings with him, and we had standing ovations. I would introduce him, read a poem in English, and then he would perform his poems. He is an extraordinary performance poet, and has a magnificent voice. We did quite a few readings together, and they were all unbelievably successful. After the Tiananmen events of 1989, he came back to Sydney a few times, and even taught contemporary literature for a semester, before settling in London by 1991.

Xiao: What about Hong Ying? How did you get into translating her?

Lee: I met Hong Ying in London in 1991, soon after she went there for the first time. I think it was at a poetry reading with Yang Lian. Then I met her again, a few times, probably either in Paris or maybe Stockholm, or somewhere else. Much later, in 1997, she gave me a book of her poetry. I liked them, translated quite a few. During 1999 and 2000 I sent different poems to five different literary magazines, and they were all published. By late 2000, after the Nobel announcement, I was busy with Gao Xingjian related work. But Hong Ying’s book remained in a particular place on my bookshelves, because I knew that I'd go back to translating her poems. Again, it's her language that attracts me, and the thoughts, the tone, and the fact that the writing is not long-winded. I prefer writing that is terse, and more compact.

Xiao: So you met most of the writers that you translate through personal connections?

Lee: Yes, and I translated them because I liked their work. If an opportunity for publication presented itself, I would seize it. Historical time and opportunity are also important.
I can affirm that I like the way Yang Lian, Gao Xingjian and Hong Ying use the Chinese language, and that I greatly appreciate their writings, and moreover, have loved translating their works. However, because translation has never counted in my academic career, I could only ever work on translating in my spare minutes. Opportunities are important. With Hong Ying, I published some poems, in 1999 and 2000. Afterwards, I was too busy. Then a couple of years ago, prize-winning Australian poet Michael Brennan, who runs Vagabond Press, asked me to put together a “three Chinese poets” volume:

especially women poets. I edited the collection Hong Ying, Zhai Yongming and Yang Lian. The poems by Zhai Yongming and Yang Lian were translations by my former colleagues Naikan Tao and Tony Prince. I was happy with the book that was published in 2014. Afterwards, I translated a solo book of Hong Ying's poems called I Too Am Salammbo (Vagabond Press, 2015). Usually I like to write an introductory piece, to tell people about what I have learned about the person during the process of translation. I don't subscribe to the theory of a text existing in a vacuum, no matter how famous the theorist. In particular, having read Hong Ying's two autobiographical novels, I think her poetry has an even deeper meaning.

Xiao: Would you say that the time constraint is the main difference between translating poetry and translating novels?

Lee: For me it was simply coincidence. I had translated three books by Yang Lian before I met Gao Xingjian. The third book I had finished in 1991, but I couldn't find a publisher until 2002. I wore myself out writing letters to publishers: they just weren't interested. Tiananmen 1989 had a strong negative impact on American publishers, and they were not interested in Chinese writings. Even in 2000 before the Nobel announcement, US publishers were not interested in Chinese writings. The situation has changed since those times.

Xiao: Why do you think Tiananmen had such an impact on the reception of Chinese literature?

Lee: The China-US relationship polarized with the 1989 Tiananmen events. The US public demonized the Chinese authorities, and also anything Chinese. From the perspective of the Chinese authorities, foreign powers had been funding the protesters. Historian will later unravel the true situation. However, the rest of the world had been watching television all day for months, and were probably 100% on the side of the student protesters. Global media can and has been successfully manipulated, but I claim no expertise in this field.

Xiao: But do you agree with their point of view? Do you think it's possible to produce good literature in China nowadays?

Lee: It should be possible, but I haven't read anything that interests or enlightens me. Even in translation.

Xiao: How about Howard Goldblatt's translation?

Lee: I know Howard Goldblatt. He's an aspiring writer himself. He has translated a huge number of writers, and he has promoted Mo Yan in particular, especially for the Nobel Prize in 2000. In fact, a lot of Chinese writers were being promoted in 2000, and everyone thought that their writer would win the Nobel Prize. During a century of the Nobel Prize for Literature, it had never been given to a Chinese writer. Mo Yan was probably the top runner for 2000, and the pundits all knew Bei Dao, but people just didn't know about Gao Xingjian, because he was very much a recluse.

Xiao: Would you say that Gao Xingjian winning the prize was a surprise for everybody?

Lee: Yes.

Xiao: So there was no speculation about his winning?

Lee: No, none at all. Other favourites were Jia Pingwa and the Taiwan writer Bo Yang. There were probably more than 50 writers nominated that year for the Nobel Prize. Apart from the few familiar with Gao Xingjian's writings, most China pundits were surprised by his Nobel win, because he had slipped off the radar for almost two decades. In the US, journalists presumably asked US academics and China pundits: "Who's this guy who's won the Nobel Prize?" Almost no one had read Gao Xingjian's prolific publications from the late 1980s onwards. People knew his plays from the early 1980s, but after that Gao Xingjian was no longer living in China. It was highly embarrassing for China pundits in the US, so the best thing for them to do was to say that Gao Xingjian was just a very ordinary playwright. That was a knee-jerk reaction in 2000, but this is no longer the case.

Xiao: Have you read anything by Mo Yan?

Lee: Yes. I have read some of Howard Goldblatt's translations, and some of Mo Yan's original writings, but basically I don't like reading that sort of writing.

Xiao: Why do you think he's such a successful case with English readers?

Lee: Only time will tell if Mo Yan is truly successful on the world literary stage. I don't think Chinese writers are largely successful. Sales depend on the publishers, how hard they promote writers. When Gao Xingjian and Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize, for a few months their novels were bestsellers. Gao Xingjian's *Soul Mountain* was a bestseller in Australia for about five months. Publishers find it hard promoting writers, unless they take part in international literary festivals. At English-speaking festivals, both Gao Xingjian and Mo Yan would require translators. On the other hand, Ha Jin speaks English and can successfully promote his own books. He has won significant prizes in the US. I first met Mo Yan and Howard Goldblatt at the Sydney Writers Festival in 2002 or 2003. Mo Yan mentioned at public presentations that he had a special agreement with Howard Golblatt. If Howard thought any parts would not work well for English readers, Howard would accordingly adjust the translation, even to the extent of removing whole sections of the original text.

Xiao: Would you say that you have a very different translation philosophy from Goldblatt?

Lee: Maybe. But then, to begin with, I would not have been translating Mo Yan. On the other hand if Howard Goldblatt were translating Gao Xingjian’s novels, and suggested changes and deletions, I doubt that Gao Xingjian would have been agreeable. For me, Gao Xingjian's narrative fiction and plays read like poetry, and I'm happy to translate his work as closely as possible, like poetry.

Xiao: Would you say that there are some differences between translating poetry and translating novels? Do you translate fiction differently?

Lee: Gao Xingjian's fiction is quite different. It's not like a conventional narrative, and this is precisely why the reader is immediately witness to events that are unfolding. I'm interested in the feel of words, and also the poetic sense of the words, and Gao Xingjian's writing appeals to me on many levels. It is a fascinating experience to read and translate his novels, short stories, plays, and poetry: there are continually turns and surprises. He has aptly described what he seeks to achieve in a work as being akin to a symphony, and he achieves this by using a range of strategies to evoke a range of rich sensations in his readers. However, in the case of his theoretical writings about literary or art aesthetics, or his unflinching analysis of China’s modern history, it is his erudition and lucid intellect that sets him apart. Translating his creative works is quite different from translating his critical essays.

Xiao: Do you translate them differently then?

Lee: I simply follow the original text, so the result is naturally different. When I'm translating something, I totally lose myself in it. I quickly make a first draft to get a good feel for the original text. Then I spend time polishing the translation many times. Of course, every translator can make mistakes. One can only try one’s best to tap into the flow of energy in a work. If it's good writing, usually there's a poetic flow of energy that goes through the whole work. While making my first draft, I strive to isolate the flow of energy or rhythm in the original text, and try to replicate this in my translation. I like to think of this flow of energy as Qi-energy.

Xiao: When you polish your work, do you constantly compare it with the original, or do you just put down the original, and work on the translation?

Lee: I put down the original, and only turn to it again if something doesn't seem right, that is, if the Qi-energy in my translation doesn’t flow through.

Xiao: When you're doing the translation, if you come across something that you need to check the dictionary or other resources for, do you put down your work and check it first?

Lee: I do all the checking while making the first draft, marking places that need checking, and checking them at the same time.

Xiao: When do you normally feel like you need to check dictionaries or resources?

Lee: When I don’t know or understand something.

Xiao: So is it mainly bilingual dictionaries?

Lee: Yes. Nowadays there are a lot of new words.

Xiao: What dictionaries do you normally use?

Lee: I sometimes use Hanying cidian, but mostly I use Google Translate. If that doesn’t work I just type the Chinese characters into Google, and examples are provided for reference, so it’s possible to work out appropriate meanings.

Xiao: Do you remember any examples of when you had to consult someone else?

Lee: No.

Xiao: You said that during the Cultural Revolution, some of your students were inspired by revolutionary ideas, and demanded to study contemporary Chinese newspapers instead of literary texts of the 1920s and 1930s that were passé.

Lee: Yes.

Xiao: That is really interesting. Can you share a bit more about your personal experiences?

Lee: Our students were very revolutionary. They said we shouldn't be reading all this badly dated literature, they said we should be reading today’s Chinese newspapers. I said, “Okay, let’s start doing newspaper readings immediately.” Not long afterwards, they said, “Could we stop newspaper readings now?” Afterwards, some of the students went off to study in China. Full of revolutionary zeal and stirred by righteous indignation against world capitalism, they were staunch supporters of Chairman Mao and Madam Mao (Jiang Qing) and the Cultural Revolution. A number of those students were in China when Mao died, and the Gang of Four, including Jiang Qing, were arrested. When I saw the students in China, they told me that they were learning to hate Jiang Qing and the Gang of Four.

Xiao: Apart from your students, do you have any other direct experience of the Cultural Revolution?

Lee: I had an order for the PRC newspapers, Renmin ribao and Guangming ribao, and I would glance through the propaganda. I tried reading some of the literature produced in those times, and even chose a couple of paragraphs from the revolutionary novel Jinguang dadao to read with students. This was to show them the sort of writing that was promoted as “exemplary” at the time. I taught literature in the historical context of the past, but the Cultural Revolution was happening at that very time. I could provide accounts of what I heard from relatives and friends who had arrived in Sydney via Hong Kong. By paying off local officials or else people smugglers, a trickle of my parent’s fellow villagers were able to procure exit visas at the time, and we would hear of their horror stories.

Xiao: Was there a lot of media coverage of the stories here?

Lee: Generally not. But there was a lot in Hong Kong newspapers. I went to China for the first time in 1975, and thereafter every two years.

Xiao: What about the June 4th events in Tiananmen Square? Were you paying close attention to that?

Lee: Yes, of course. I was in Beijing to take part in a big international conference to celebrate the 70th anniversary of China’s May 4th 1919 Movement. The occasion was being celebrated all over the world. Most of the Australian academics had chosen to go to Taiwan, but I wanted to present my paper in Beijing. The academics travelling to Taipei had their airfares and hotel expenses paid, and also received generous per diem spending money. I paid for my own plane ticket and expenses. It was a tense time in Beijing, and I was keen to get home. I sensed danger all around, and was glad that my flight home was on the evening of 4th May. In the late 1980s, Nicholas Jose, was the Cultural Counsellor in the Australian Embassy in Beijing. He was there during the military crackdown on Tiananmen demonstrators on the morning of 4 June 1989. Prior to that Jose had held writer residencies in Shanghai and Beijing, and knew many writers and artists. He thought that “fun people” should go to Australia. So Yang Lian and his wife YoYo arrived from Beijing. I arranged lectures at the University of Sydney, and a hundred people would come to hear presentations by Yang Lian and other celebrities from China like Bai Hua, Wang Meng, Mang Ke, Zhang Xianliang, or by Gao Xingjian from Paris. Our past and present students would come, and we'd then go to Chinatown for dinner. In those days I had good connections, and it would be about $10 or $12 per person including drinks. All the waiters would stop work to listen to these celebrities with booming voices and who liked talking. The venue I used was next to a bar, and people would come early, order wine, sit around, and chat. After the talk, we would adjourn to the designated Chinese restaurant. Generally about 40 or 50 people would come to dinner. I was involved with bringing Gao Xingjian to Sydney three times. The English edition of his *Soul Mountain* was due for publication in July 2000, but the publisher was not prepared to pay his airfare. Years later, I was involved in bringing Yang Lian and Murong Xuecun on return visits to Sydney.

Xiao: So did Gao Xingjian come in the end?

Lee: Professor David Goodman at the time was Director of the China Studies Centre at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), so he put in a contribution of $1000. With this I asked the University of Sydney to match the amount, but without success. I then went to the French Consulate and asked whether they could help. Both the Consul-General and Ambassador had met Gao Xingjian in the past, but unfortunately the budget had been finalised for the year. They were keen to help and managed to get a plane ticket on Alitalia. I think it was Alitalia's last flight anywhere. Gao Xingjian was stuck in Milan, for a full 24 hours, so he missed a couple of interviews. But on the whole, he was covered quite well in the media. Before the announcement of his Nobel Prize win, we had sold quite a lot of copies of the English edition of *Soul Mountain* in Australia and New Zealand, that is, in the region in which HarperCollins had distribution rights.

Xiao: I remember over 4,000 copies had been sold.

Lee: While studying for my PhD I taught matriculation Chinese to several large classes of high school students each week. Then from 1966, I was teaching at the University of Sydney. My former students would have bought copies because of me. When I joined the University of Sydney's Department of Chinese Studies, I was teaching all levels of Chinese from beginners up to 4th Year Honours.

Xiao: Did you use Gao Xingjian when you were teaching as well?

Lee: Yes. During the 1990s, I taught Gao Xingjian's play, *Taowang* in Chinese II (Honours) for a number of years. Three of my Chinese IV Honours students published the first English-language translation of one of Gao Xingjian's essays: "Without Isms (Meiyou zhuyi)". I am sure I was the only person in the world teaching Gao Xingjian's plays, and introducing his essays such as Meiyou zhuyi during the 1990s. This was years before he won the Nobel Prize in 2000.

Xiao: Talking about the play *Taowang*, the title has actually been translated into many different English versions.

Lee: The authorized translation is by Gilbert Fong, and he has called the play Escape (2007). I had referred to the play variously as "Fleeing" and "Absconding" in essays published in the 1990s, and in the early 2000s before Fong's 2007 translation.

Xiao: Do you think there are actually subtle differences between the different English words?

Lee: To begin with, I favoured "fleeing". I sensed a subtle difference. I was thinking of the author distancing himself from certain situations, rather than escaping from them. In the play psychological distancing is omnipresent at various levels, as is the ambiguity of that distancing.

Xiao: You also translated the title of the play as "Absconding".

Lee: Yes. "Absconding" and "Fleeing" are similar. I knew I was being difficult. The first English translation was by Gregory Lee in the US, and he called the play Fugitives. At a superficial level the play is about “escaping”, that is escaping imminent arrest, torture, imprisonment or even death. But at a deeper level, the play explores human responses when confronting imminent death, and the possible extinction of the species: male/female sexual instincts for procreation are therefore aroused. At a deep psychological and intellectual level the play also examines the position of the individual against the collective. The individual must “flee” the collective in order to preserve his or her own critical independence. In the play Gao Xingjian posits that to join any group is to surrender one’s autonomy for independent and critical thinking. He does not move from this position, and it is forcefully reiterated in most of his writings.

Xiao: Now that Gao Xingjian's works are banned in mainland China, are you able to talk about your research on Gao Xingjian when you give a lecture in China?

Lee: People aren't interested. I did give a paper, but people just didn't seem interested, and my conclusion was: “Too bad.”

Xiao: So you were actually able to talk about him in China.

Lee: Yes. It was a university conference on literature, so I thought people should have been interested. In the end, I thought, that it was not worth wasting my time talking about it to people who are just interested in “what is the flavour of the month.” I spoke on my paper anyway. Since then I've probably blanked the experience out of my memory. Even academics seem to have become more nationalistic and jingoistic. There will always be some, but not necessarily many, who will be interested in Gao Xingjian.
On another occasion in Beijing, I took part in an “in conversation” event with a prominent academic. His first words to me were: “You’ve translated Gao Xingjian, but we have many better writers than Gao Xingjian in China.” I said to him, “Have you read any of Gao Xingjian's works?” He said, “I have copies of Gao Xingjian's works.” I said, “Have you read them?” He didn't answer my question. But I had the audience on my side. Maybe it was awkward for him, in his position, to be talking about Gao Xingjian. Anyway, he knew that I would be talking about Gao Xingjian, so he could have chosen not to take part. I thought he was silly to take me on with something like that, and certainly I was unimpressed.

Xiao: Do you think censorship in China has a great influence on Chinese writings and Chinese academic research?

Lee: I heard of someone writing a PhD thesis about Gao Xingjian, but not exclusively. It was probably a comparative literature study. But such a PhD would not go anywhere. One would not have the freedom of fully exploring, and publication. So basically his writings are banned, even though officially he's not. His books can't be sold in major bookshops. But there are pirated editions. I’ve been told that Changjiang Chubanshe is publishing Gao Xingjian’s novels and selling them in China since 2000, Of course this means that no royalties are paid to the author. I understand that Gao’s works can be found on the Internet, but this makes Gao Xingjian too hard a research subject for academic research within China.

Xiao: Have you personally experienced censorship in China?

Lee: No, and I have had an essay on Gao Xingjian published in China.

Xiao: According to your translation experience, are there any Chinese concepts that you feel just can't be fully conveyed in English?

Lee: You can always find some way around.

Xiao: What kind of strategies would you use to go around things like that?

Lee: It depends on the situation. I suppose I choose people who are easy to translate, like Gao Xingjian, Yang Lian, Hong Ying. Because I'm not a professional translator, I choose writers who respond to me personally, who write about things that I'm interested in. So I don't have this problem. Some translators who take on difficult theoretical texts may have difficulties, but this does not concern me.

Xiao: So apart from Lu Xun, Gao Xingjian, Yang Lian, and Hong Ying, are there any other Chinese writers that you enjoy reading?

Lee: I started off reading late-Qing texts written by Liang Qichao and Zhang Taiyan. I was particularly fond of Zhang Taiyan, but he was too hard to read quickly. I thought I would need more than a lifetime or two if I wanted to get very far with reading his works. I will only read authors who write in a form of language that instantly captivates me. The opening sentences must capture my attention, and my interest must be sustained throughout. I must experience aesthetic pleasure in the reading, and I must find a work to be intellectually enlightening.

Xiao: I noticed that you started your research on Gao Xingjian after you took on the project of translating *Soul Mountain*, is that right?

Lee: Research and translation moved in tandem. I was a teaching academic, supervised postgraduate students, and had to maintain a research profile. Translation was not deemed to have research value, and did not count as an academic activity. So would make use of material I had translated in research publications. I eventually completed the translation, and HarperCollins (Australia) offered us a contract. Our literary agent, Australian Literary Management asked how we would divide the royalties. We had never considered this before, but eventually decided on 60/40 with him as author receiving 60%. I often have the role of an assistant to the literary agent, who channels many requests to me. With our publisher contracts, he leaves it to me to read them, and phone him to summarise the contents. I simply mark where he should sign. Unfortunately, one doesn't make a fortune from writing. He said that he gets the biggest royalties from English-language editions, and that the English-language publishers are better with their accounts. Publishers don't seem to promote books much, and unless you speak English and can help in promoting sales, the English language publishers have not shown much interest in promoting sales of his follow up books. However, they are now on reading lists for some senior high schools and colleges. Gao's major works have all been published in French, and he is well known to French readers.

In late February of 2015 the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium launched the permanent display of Gao Xingjian's The Awakening of Consciousness in the dedicated room for which this large-scale, six-painting series had been created, and on the following day his big retrospective exhibition was also launched at Ixelles Museum. For an artist to hold solo exhibitions at two major venues in Brussels at the same time for a period of three months was extraordinary.

Over the past decade he has also produced three films, so he is an all round artist who is crossing borders in genres as an innovative novelist, playwright, director, theatre director artist and filmmaker. His works for the theatre include two mega operas. His creations cross genre boundaries, and also cultural boundaries. He is as informed in Eastern cultural traditions, as he is in Western cultural traditions. And this is not a limited understanding of both cultures. For example, he is erudite in European filmmaking, and this is based on his having worked his way through the French film archives while still in China. In the 1980s, the Chinese intellectual and cultural scene was quite lively, and even though there was censorship and restrictions, still there were gaps, and people were able to see and read a lot of things. From the early 1980s, he had wanted to make his own kind of films. Now at the age of 75, he could be said to have fulfilled his major creative aims. I think he really enjoys filmmaking.

Xiao: Is that the main part of his creative life now?

Lee: Now, yes. At least it seems so to me.

Xiao: Gao Xingjian mentioned that he made suggestions to his French translator, Noël Dutrait, about tense in the translation of his novels. Did he make any requests to you at all?

Lee: No. We've never discussed translation. We have met over the years, but we tend to talk about other things. I think sometimes, possibly because he knows French, that Noël Dutrait would say, “Here's the French translation, would you like to read it?” So if he reads it, he might make suggestions. But he doesn't know English, so he just leaves me to it. And I have my own peculiarities of language use. And it's Australian English, so it's a bit different from American. I can't use some American words, and I refuse to. I would not feel comfortable using words that are distinctly American.

Xiao: So did you base your translation entirely on the Chinese versions published by Lianjing?

Lee: Yes.

Xiao: Gao Xingjian didn't make any further modifications to the text for translation?

Lee: No.

Xiao: The play *Taowang* seems to be a turning point in Gao Xingjian's life and the concept of fleeing became the foundation of a lot of his theories on literature and politics.

Lee: I think that was a critical turning point, because it forced him to consolidate ideas that he already had in his mind, and that he felt quite strongly about: especially the fact that he didn't want his creative activities to be subservient to politics, the market, or any other force. He refused to let any external force push his creations in any particular direction.

Xiao: Do you think the Tiananmen Square incident has anything to do with his decision to write *One Man’s Bible*?

Lee: According to what he has indicated in various works, the brutality of the Tiananmen crackdown made him decide to sever his ties with the country of his birth. Bringing *Soul Mountain* that he began writing in China in 1982 to a completion, symbolized his break with China. He also mentions that decades after the Cultural Revolution he continued having nightmares about what had happened. Eventually, on the brink of becoming a French citizen, writing about those events in *One Man's Bible*, was presumably a way of getting rid of those nightmares.

Xiao: *One Man's Bible* is normally seen as the sequel to *Soul Mountain*.

Lee: They are like brother and sister. He said that Noël Dutrait had once asked if he could write his biography, but that he had refused. He said his two novels were enough. He clearly dislikes intimate details of his life to be known. He said that a Chinese academic has been publishing "sensationalist" details about his life. A few years ago, when Gao Xingjian presented a PEN lecture in Tokyo, this academic attended, insinuating himself into photographs standing next to Gao Xingjian, and then showing these to Gao Xingjian's brother to show he was a close friend. The brother was unwittingly prevailed upon to give the man copies of some family photographs. When Gao saw the book the man had published about his personal life, he was furious: apparently the book was largely based on interviews with Gao Xingjian's former wife.

Xiao: Do you think there was any progression from *Soul Mountain* to *One Man's Bible*? Is there something that Gao Xingjian developed further in *One Man's Bible*?

Lee: The two books are quite different. I don't think I'd say that there was a progression, they're just different, written about different stages of his life.
I think he is trying to be truthful and honest in what he's talking about – about himself – and he does this by his use of pronouns. If he says "you", it distances him as the author, and he can talk honestly about this person "you". And because the Cultural Revolution was a terrible time for him as an individual, he used the third person, "he", to keep himself as author to be honest and not to make excuses for himself as victim. His use of pronouns is an ingenious strategy, and he has used it in his fiction and plays to make substantial breakthroughs in these genres.

Xiao: Do you find one of them more challenging to translate than the other?

Lee: Translating *One Man's Bible* was much easier, because I had terminated my teaching career by the beginning of 2000. *Soul Mountain* was 560 pages, and I'd never translated anything that long. Also, I had agreed to work on the translation after being appointed to head the School of Asian Studies. I didn't have time to open *Soul Mountain*, but instead spent the next two-and-half years not reading anything, and only writing funding

applications to support teaching teaching programs for Korean, Indonesian, Thai, Hindi, Sanskrit, and classical Chinese. Asian languages had been generously funded by the federal government, and then suddenly axed: that was precisely when I was made head of Asian Studies. In the end, the faculty and university was unresponsive, and the long-established Indonesian program was threatened with being closed down. I applied successfully from Korea and Taiwan for the funding of senior lectureship positions, and several publishing subsidies from Japan.
After my headship ended, I started translating a chapter a day of *Soul Mountain*. I would tell my husband about the chapters as I translated them. One day he suddenly said, "Gao Xingjian is going to win the Nobel Prize." When we submitted the manuscript for publication, the HarperCollins manuscript reader and assessor wrote: "This book is not the perfect novel, but it's one that will win literary prizes." So it was all quite magical.

Xiao: But after that reader's report, it took about a year to hear from HarperCollins again.

Lee: The manuscript somehow got lost in the pile of manuscripts. Then one day the Managing Director suddenly came across it, and said, "How come this book hasn't been published yet?" And then they moved quickly. It was another of those things. It came out at just the right time.

Xiao: It took you much less time to finish the translation of *One Man's Bible*. Is it because you had much more time to work on it?

Lee: Yes. Towards the end of 1999, I had written to the personnel office to terminate my contract with the university. I did not want to mark another student assignment, and I was not happy with developments that were occurring on all Australian university campuses.

Xiao: I guess you had a very different time schedule when working on *One Man's Bible* as compared to *Soul Mountain*. Did you feel more confident when you were translating it?

Lee: I didn't ever think about what I was doing. I just knew what I needed to do. Naturally, I wanted the book to come out quickly. However, when we signed the contact with HarperCollins USA, there was a clause saying that they were to be given first offer for any works of fiction. This meant that we didn't have to worry about finding a publisher. So in the way *One Man's Bible*, and then the short story collection Buying a Fishing Rod for my Grandfather were published without having to look for a publisher. Finding a publisher for *The Case for Literature* – his Nobel lecture, and other essays – was harder, but it was published by HarperCollins Australia, and by Yale University Press for distribution in the US and UK. Our literary agent could not find a publisher for Aesthetics and Creation after three years, so in the end, I asked for the return of the manuscript. I was lucky, and found Cambria Press in New York before long.

Xiao: Do you keep track of the sales figures of these books?

Lee: No, I had so much paperwork. Publishing rights to the US edition of *Soul Mountain* were auctioned after the Nobel announcement of October of 2000, and went to HarperCollins in NY. This meant US$100,000 in advance royalties to Gao Xingjian and myself, that we shared 60:40. Both of us ended up working through various taxation problems. I recall having to borrow $20,000 to pay my taxation, and having to fill out GST forms every three months for a few years.

Xiao: I know that besides your translation work and your teaching at the university, you've also been running your own publishing house since the 1980s.

Lee: Yes, from early 1980, but no more.

Xiao: So you're not running it anymore?

Lee: I closed it. My former academic colleague and publishing partner died in 2007, and I was doing everything on my own. When the Australian dollar rose against the American dollar, it meant that I was not making anything to cover shipping costs of books to our international distributor in New York, and that I had to pay out of my own pocket. We had to pay shipping costs, they would sell books, and we would receive 50% of net profits. I was really happy to be free of all this. I just pulped all the remaining stock that I was storing at home, because I couldn't afford to pay the storage any longer.

Xiao: In which year did you close it?

Lee: It was 2012.

Xiao: Did you ever use it to publish your own translations?

Lee: Only one. That was the English edition of Yang Lian's book, Masks and Crocodile that I published in 1990. In the same year I also translated his The Dead in Exile that was published by Tiananmen Publications in Canberra, the national capital of Australia. After that I thought he must publish with a commercial company that would pay him royalties, because we couldn't ever pay him royalties.

Xiao: Is that why you chose to seek other publishers for Gao Xingjian's books?

Lee: Yes. For both Yang Lian and Gao Xingjian, I thought to myself, "These poor writers. They're obviously talented, and deserve to make a living out of their writing." In 1990, I had completed a third book of Yang Lian's poetry in translation: it was titled Yi. It was published in 2002, even though we had signed contracts in 1999. When I complained to Yang Lian about the slowness of the publisher, he was philosophical: "The publisher isn't worried, because no one else will want to publish it, either. So we just have to wait." But Yang Lian is okay now. He's well established on the international literary festival circuit, and goes to a few conferences or writers' festivals, every single year. He also travels to China regularly. He seems happy, and is confident discussing complex issues concerning poetry in either Chinese or English. He was here earlier this year, and we did a trip down memory lane, reading his poems, and chatting before a very large crowd of 100 or so, including many old friends.

Xiao: What about Gao Xingjian? Has he always been relying on his paintings rather than his writing to make a living?

Lee: He has been relying on selling his art since he relocated to France. Unless you're writing bestsellers, you don't make money. I believe that Gao Xingjian's books will continue to sell for a very long time, and furthermore be appreciated more as time goes by. His innovative use of pronouns is hard for some readers to get used to, but other English-language writers are slowly starting also to experiment with pronouns in their writings. Because Gao Xingjian is not an English speaker, he can't effectively promote his works in the English-speaking world. I suppose it's up to me to try to promote it more, but there's a limit to how effectively the translator can promote an author's books. I must have published at least 20 uncollected essays on various aspects of Gao Xingjian. Sometimes I think I should put them together in a volume, but somehow the idea fails to excite me.

Xiao: Since Howard Goldblatt is so good at promoting Mo Yan, do you think he played a big part in Mo Yan's success with the Nobel Committee?

Lee: Howard Goldblatt is a celebrity translator in the US, and he was enthusiastically promoting Mo Yan in the US during the late 1990s. In 2000, few in far away Australia were aware of the fierce international competition to tip the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature: in 100 years, no Chinese writer had ever won the Nobel, so many Chinese authors were nominated: some estimates say that more than 50 had been nominated. That night in October, I had no idea that the Nobel Prize for Literature would be announced. That night, the BBC somehow got my telephone number: “We’re calling you because a journalist will shortly interview you, about Gao Xingjian winning the Nobel Prize.” I said, “What?” And then, told my husband. He said, “It could be a hoax, a practical joke or something.” He ran upstairs to check the Internet. It wasn’t a joke, we drank champagne, and I spoke to journalists from the UK, China, Greece, US, and Mexico. In Australia, the next day, there was a notice saying, “Chinese writer Gao Xingjian wins Nobel Prize for literature.” It was the size of a postage stamp in the national newspaper. I was subsequently interviewed in various Australian and overseas newspapers and magazines.

Xiao: Would you say that there’s any Chinese writer that the general public in Australia is aware of?

Lee: China experts all over the world knew about Bei Dao, Gao Xingjian, Yang Lian, Mang Ke, and others from the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, there was little interest in the general Australian population. Following the 1989 army crackdown on Tiananmen protestors in Beijing, many Chinese academics, writers, and outspoken advocates of free speech and liberal democracy were listed as the “black hands” responsible for stirring up the student protestors. They faced imminent arrest. Many happened to be overseas at the time, or afterwards managed to flee overseas. Yang Lian happened to be in New Zealand at the time, and I think Bei Dao may have, or soon after, was in the US. Most of these poets and writers soon found translators, and became a presence in their adopted countries.

Xiao: When you were running your publishing company, what were your criteria, when you were selecting works to publish?

Lee: We were aware of how hard it was for Australian academics working on anything related to Asia to get published. We started in the early 1980s, that’s when there were no suitable Chinese language textbooks available. So, we decided to compile our own textbooks. Our Chinese language textbooks sold well, and as we hoped supported our other publications (mainly literature and art) on East Asia. We published more on Japan and Korea than on China because we could apply to Japanese and Korean foundations for printing subsidies: our applications were 100% successful. We published quite a few titles with the imprint: The University of Sydney East Asian Series. We had permission to use the University's name, but we had no support in any form whatsoever from the University. In a sense this was good because it meant that we had absolute freedom to choose what we thought was worthwhile, and we answered only to ourselves.

Xiao: Would you say the biggest challenge of running a publishing house is financial difficulties?

Lee: Definitely. Our Chinese language textbooks financed our costs. We would break even, because of the high US currency compared with the Australian currency. We were paid in US dollars, and we'd win on the currency exchange.

Xiao: Your company was in the business for almost 30 years.

Lee: Yes, from the 1981, so it was indeed 30 years.

Xiao: Would you say that the focus of what you published changed over the 30 years?

Lee: No. Our interest was always mainly literature. Apart from the East Asian Series, we also published a large number of semi-academic books. We also published three books by Australian poets: one from a Chinese background and the other from an Indian background. Towards the end, we published the memoirs of two men who migrated to Australia during the Japanese invasion of China. One was my former teacher who travelled to Australia as a diplomat with the Kuomintang government. The other was my brother who came to Australia when he was about 12 or 13 and became a highly successful businessman.

Xiao: Apart from your own publishing house, Wild Peony, are there any other publishing companies that are more sympathetic to translations and Chinese literature?

Lee: In Australia, not really. I was lucky with Gao Xingjian and HarperCollins. There have been some books published by Australian authors of Chinese descent. Prize-winning author Brian Castro would be the most famous in that group. There is also the well-known poet Ouyang Yu, who is a bi-lingual writer.

Xiao: He interviewed you as well.

Lee: Yes. I don't think he sleeps. He just writes, all the time. We actually have become friends over the years. He's a talented poet, but writing in Australia, and being Chinese wasn't easy at the beginning. However, today he is an established figure in the Australian literary world. In the mid-1990s Penguin accepted his book of poems, and then they closed their poetry series and left him stranded. So he contacted me. I consulted my publishing partner. She said, "Ouyang Yu is criticising Australia all the time. Why would we want to publish him?... Find two notable Australian writers to write favourable reports on the manuscript, and we will publish it." I asked two well-known authors, and both said that Ouyang Yu presents a view that a lot of new migrants have about Australia, but do not articulate. We published two of his poetry volumes. But we couldn't sell many copies, so Ouyang basically sells it himself. He has poetry readings and sells the books at $15 each. Poetry is hard for anyone, not just Chinese people. There are so many Australian poets, and I don't think they sell many copies, either.

Xiao: When you were translating the two novels by Gao Xingjian, did you translate in a linear manner, from cover to cover? Or do you translate in a different order?

Lee: Cover to cover. I'm very systematic.

Xiao: So, you don't feel like you're grabbed by any chapter that you want to translate first?

Lee: I found every chapter amazing as I translated them. I had read neither of the novels before I started translating them. No other books have grabbed me like these two novels.

Xiao: I notice that when you were translating *One Man's Bible*, you used past tense for the "his" story, during the Cultural Revolution. But you used present tense for the 'your' story. But for *Soul Mountain*, you used present tense through the book.

Lee: I was aware of translating *Soul Mountain* in the present tense, because it reads like Chinese poetry and is without tense; there was only one instance (perhaps one sentence) where I was forced to use past tense. On the other hand, *One Man's Bible* tells of "you" of the present – now a French citizen – recalling events that had occurred thirty years ago in China. The author is intent on truthfully documenting his own thoughts and actions back in those times. He was determined not to adopt a victim mentality in order to exonerate his own cowardly actions of that time. By denoting the himself of those times as "he," the author enjoys the psychological freedom to ruthlessly indict "he" of complicity in the heinous crimes perpetuated during the Cultural Revolution. By extension, the author indicts not just "he" – but numberless "he" or "she" in the population of complicity. The nightmarish times of the Cultural Revolution, described in

*One Man's Bible* definitely belong in the past. I later read that Gao Xingjian had once discussed the possibility of using the present tense for *Soul Mountain* with his French translator, Noël Dutrait, who replied that the result would be very bad French. However, in English, this is possible.

Xiao: Gao Xingjian, in order to ensure musicality in the language, he would record his first draft before writing it down. Do you use any similar method in your translation?

Lee: No. I have read my completed translations of Gao Xingjian's creative writings so many times that I can feel he is reading the text aloud in Chinese at the same time.

Xiao: Do you read the original a few times before you start to translate?

Lee: I translate directly onto the computer. I had dipped into a few pages of *Soul Mountain* during my first meeting with Gao Xingjian in Paris. I instantly liked the feel of the language, and I somehow strongly intuited that this novel was something special.

Xiao: So far, have you found a Western writer that has a similar style to Gao Xingjian?

Lee: Gao Xingjian's style is unique. He is equally erudite in the development of Chinese and Western literary and visual art practices. Importantly, he has probed the dynamics of all of the genres in which he works or has worked, and his continuing search to interrogate the possibilities of aesthetic representation in language and the visual arts is hard to match, and even hard for critics to properly assess. I have not read a huge number of Western authors, but linguistic beauty in the first few pages is a prerequisite. At the same time, I must also be seduced by the content of those first few pages. My preference is for works that are philosophical and also explore psychological issues within certain socio-political historical contexts. As an undergraduate student of Japanese, I recall reading numerous translations of various Japanese contemporary authors, notably Mishima and Kawabata as they became available in English. However, our undergraduate texts were mainly pre-modern Japanese classics. Lu Xun (1881–1936) and Gao Xingjian (b. 1940) are the most interesting writers I have encountered, and both still continue to fascinate me. Probably it is because they talk about things that interest me most. Of Western writers I have read many of the works of Aldous Huxley, Nietzsche, Octavio Paz, Harold Pinter, Arthur Miller, Sebald, Philip Roth and Günter Grass. Amongst Australian writers, I have found the works of David Malouf and Brian Castro to be exquisite writing in some inexplicable way, that I need to later explore.

Xiao: Would you say that those two are similar in what they write?

Lee: Both were/are intellectual and creative geniuses, and both extended the parameters of creativity. But Lu Xun made his choice for politics, and Gao Xingjian made his choice for literature.

Xiao: There used to be a popular saying in translation studies that compares translation to women. It says that translation can be only be either beautiful and unfaithful, or faithful and not beautiful. Do you think there's any truth in that?

Lee: I hadn't heard of this before, but I think the translation has to be beautiful. But then, if the original text is not beautiful, you can't make it beautiful. I think the original has to be beautiful for the translator to make it into an equally beautiful text.

Xiao: But do you sometimes come across the dilemma of being either faithful and being accurate to the original, and also make the translation sound good in the other language?

Lee: Because I chose my authors very carefully, I never encounter this problem. But if one were professional, and one decided, "Yes, I will translate this work," it could be quite difficult if there are clumsy parts. So, I've never attempted to do anything that was clumsy. But then, as I said, I've only translated Yang Lian, Gao Xingjian, and recently Hong Ying. All three writers have good creative minds and fine innate linguistic skills that they have honed to perfection. I was not translating work that was poorly written. If I were, I would have give up. With these three writers, translation was both a privileged as well as a wonderful experience.

Xiao: Gao Xingjian saw his writing of *Soul Mountain* as a linguistic experiment, so the beauty of the language was a priority in his writing of *Soul Mountain*. The content and characters, etc. came second. Do you feel that for you, it's the same priority? Or do you have different priorities in the translation?

Lee: He states that had to work on the Chinese written language. He was aware that by the 1980s the language of literature had lost its aesthetic appeal: it had lost its musicality. He blamed this on the sudden flood of poorly translated foreign writings from the mid 1970s: people believed this was how modern Western writings were written, and were imitating it. It is possible that translators at the time couldn't understand much of the Western so-called theoretical writings, that they were called upon to translate. People were keen to read Western writings. Sometimes translators couldn’t understand in places and would just make up something. The corruption of the Chinese language was also due to attempts to standardize the language according to Western grammatical rules. Gao Xingjian worked on the language of literature, going back to the fiction of the Ming dynasty. Writers of the past had beautiful language, they were trained in classical literature and were very aware of language. When literature is used to push political messages, the literary content evaporates. Gao Xingjian also blamed the linguists who standardized the Chinese language according to the criteria and rules of Western grammar: forcing the Chinese language into Western grammatical moulds had destroyed the musicality of the Chinese language, which is tonal by nature. So he began to choose his words carefully. As if he were writing poetry, he intoned as he wrote, and read aloud what he had written. He soon developed the strategy of recording what he wrote, so that afterwards he could critique how it sounded. Through this strategy, I expect that he gradually trained himself to listen to the words in his mind or heart, and that it was no longer necessary to make recordings…

Xiao: Nowadays English can be said to be a global language, and it does receive a lot of influence from other different languages or other people learning to speak English. Do you find that modern English also has the same kind of language problem that Gao Xingjian was worried about?

Lee: I don’t know the jargon of many areas in contemporary culture. Gao Xingjian seldom uses jargon. And I certainly wouldn’t attempt to translate anything with jargon that I don’t understand in any language, for example if the original is about motorcycles, and the motorcycle culture. I wouldn’t be interested in translating it, so, it’s not a problem, because I don’t touch anything like that.

Xiao: For Gao Xingjian, he writes mainly for his own pleasure, so he doesn’t really consider the preferences of his audience. But for you, when you translate Gao Xingjian’s work, was your purpose mainly to enjoy the translation, as well? Or do you have your readers in mind?

Lee: Well, the thing is, we’re interested in similar things, so it’s not a problem. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be interested. It just happens that what he’s interested in, I’m interested in. And that’s what drew me to his works.

Xiao: Did you ever consider who would be more likely to be your readers?

Lee: No, I don't think I ever thought about readers. With my translations of Gao Xingjian's creative works, I knew what I was translating was worthwhile. My concern was to make my translation reverberate with what I sensed or intuited in the original text, and achieving this is a beautiful and rewarding experience for the translator. At the same time, I was conscious of learning more about literature, art, and human existence.

Xiao: Fiction is one kind of literary work, so it's inevitable that there are ambiguities in the interpretation of certain sentences and meanings. How do you deal with ambiguities?

Lee: I think it's fine. There's always an inner logic in good writing. A good writer would have sorted out ambiguities. Gao Xingjian is a meticulous writer, and he admits to polishing his manuscripts many times, until he felt they had been purified or cleansed of impurities. For a translator to work on such a text is a pleasure and sheer enjoyment. However, I did ask Gao Xingjian about something I thought strange in *Soul Mountain*. Pockmark Wang and Pockmark Li are each mentioned as living next to a brothel, so I asked if he had the surname of the person mixed up. His response was that there were lots of people with pockmarked faces, and there's one called Wang and another one called Li. It was just a coincidence that both Wang and Li each happened to live next door to a brothel. He was quite certain about it.

Xiao: Would you normally show your translations to friends or family before sending them off to publishers?

Lee: I don't show my translations to anyone. I recall verbally telling my husband about parts of *Soul Mountain*.

Xiao: Gao Xingjian's is a male writer, so it's difficult for him to directly portray the female psyche in his novels. But when he's putting on a play, he can borrow the voice of the female actor.

Lee: And also the body.

Xiao: Do you feel that as a female translator, you can also bring something that the male translator cannot bring to his fiction?

Lee: Because he's a man, I don't believe that it's difficult for him to portray a woman's voice. Some would argue that it's not possible for a man to portray a woman's voice. But then, on the other hand, women have portrayed men's voices, and this is not challenged. For me this is strange. I am an advocate of equality. I maintain that a good writer can portray the psychology and behaviour of another individual, whatever that individual's sexual preference(s). To assume that only a woman can portray a woman's voice, or only a man can portray a man's voice is to assume that all women are similar, and that all men are similar.

A good writer doesn't encounter problems, and simply "cross-dresses" to suit their character – whatever the character's sexual preferences. As for the translator he or she simply follows the script, and does not project his or her sexuality into the original text.

Xiao: As a reader, when you were reading the novels, do you feel like there is any particular character that you can relate to?

Lee: Not personally. It's clear that it was autobiographical, and that he was exploring different facets of his own psychology. I must have empathised with the protagonist.

Xiao: Gao Xingjian has also been criticised by some people for the design of his female characters in his novels, because some people say that they are only portrayed as the protagonists' sexual conquests. How would you interpret this kind of female design?

Lee: Both novels are autobiographical, and both talk about abnormal times in China's history. Some of the female characters I would judge to be based on real persons, others are likely to be wishful thinking or fragments of dream. Perhaps some of his critics are jealous of his alleged "sexual conquests."

Xiao: In his novels, it seems that the protagonist is always more after lust in the sexual relationships, while the women are seeking more.

Lee: The women he portrays are looking for love.

Xiao: Yes. Would you say there is an imbalance of emotional investment in the relationships?

Lee: If one looks at his fiction, and particularly his plays, the female protagonists invariably love the male, and seek love – although futilely – in return. But the male protagonists are not like this: they just want sex, but are incapable of demonstrating love for their female sexual partner. Also, men see nothing wrong with flirting and even engaging in sexual flings with other women. Men are portrayed as having sexual urges, and their female partners also increasingly state that they also have sexual urges. I believe this behaviour derives from what he has observed in the behaviour of his friends, or even personally observed in his own behaviour. In other words, it is in a sense an amalgamation of autobiography and biographical data he has stored from his surrounding environment.

Xiao: It was quite interesting, what I found on the intellectual property page. With both *Soul Mountain*, and *One Man's Bible*, there was a paragraph that says, "This novel is entirely a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or localities, is entirely coincidental."

Lee: Really? I hadn't noticed that. In *Soul Mountain*?

Xiao: It's in both books, at the beginning of those books. It's interesting how it kind of contradicts the commonly-held belief that it's autobiographical.

Lee: It's an autobiographical novel. It's not autobiography. So, that gives him a lot of leeway. Maybe it is in your UK edition. I have checked the Australian and US editions, and that insertion is not present.

Xiao: So it was not your decision to put that in the book.

Lee: No. I did not check that page for the US and UK editions.

Xiao: Did you actually read the published translation?

Lee: No.

Xiao: I suppose, with your translation of *One Man's Bible*, it was much easier to secure a contract.

Lee: We more or less already had a contract. The contract we signed on *Soul Mountain* stipulated that any Gao Xingjian fiction I translated should be offered to them first. And if they rejected it, then we could offer it to other publishers. Anyway, they have published all the Gao Xingjian fiction that I have translated.

Xiao: After you submitted your draft of translations, did they go through editing and proofreading?

Lee: Yes.

Xiao: Were you involved?

Lee: Yes. I had to agree or disagree with any changes they suggested.

Xiao: Were you aware of any changes made to your translation?

Lee: They did not change the translation at all. The changes were mostly standard house-style editorial changes.

Xiao: So you didn't have any problem with whatever changes were made?

Lee: No.

Xiao: According to your experience, when they proofread a translation, is it just the same process as proofreading any other book?

Lee: Yes.

Xiao: Was that how you edited the translations submitted to your publishing house, as well? You never really checked them against the originals?

Lee: I have queried translations. I tend to know when something's wrong. I was/am usually quite harsh when editing.

Xiao: Did your publishing house commission translations, or did you just receive submissions?

Lee: Apart from 3 or 4 titles, Wild Peony publications were authored by Australian academics or translators. We made nothing from our publications, excepting from our language teaching materials. We didn't ever pay royalties. In the 1980s Australian academics who wrote about the culture and society of Asian countries, always found it very hard to get an Australian publisher. So, my colleague and I were trying to support Australian academics, Australian poets and Australian printing companies. Only two of our books were not printed in Australia. At a time when the economy was bad, we thought we should support Australian printing.

Xiao: According to your knowledge, if the translation is commissioned by a publisher, will the translators' freedom in carrying out the translation be constrained?

Lee: There are some very good professional translators. But I'm not a professional translator. Today, there are a lot of very good translators, so if they're commissioned to translate, they will do a very good job.

Xiao: Do you know of any special requests made by the publishers when they commission the translation?

Lee: I've never done one. That's not 100% true. I did a short one. But it was something they desperately wanted, and I did it over a few days during the the Christmas holiday. Nobody else would do it. I think I charged a lot, too. But I said, "Basically, I don't want to be a professional translator."

Xiao: Do you have the habit of reading book reviews of the authors that you translate?

Lee: I have read reviews of my translations, of course. A lot of China experts rubbished Gao Xingjian's Nobel win for political reasons. Also, most China experts had not read his writings apart from what he'd written in the 1980s. So when the Nobel announcement was made, and they were interviewed to comment on Gao Xingjian, to shield their ignorance, they chose to say something dismissive, "Oh, he wrote a few mediocre plays in the 1980s." They didn't know anything. They hadn't read anything since then. And it's easier to criticise and just slag off someone to save one's own skin. Journalists would say, "Oh, you're a professor of Chinese. How come you don't know about Gao Xingjian?" And, the thing is, they just didn't know. And most people were willing to criticise him, even though they hadn't read any of his writings from when he left China in 1987 to the time he won the Nobel Prize in 2000. Gao Xingjian had kept a low profile because he was busy writing and painting. So, for a decade none of the China experts had read Gao Xingjian's Chinese edition of *Soul Mountain* that was published in 1991… Just their bad luck.

Xiao: What about the book reviews of your translated works? The English reviews. Do you read them?

Lee: Of course. I do. Most of them are positive. Before the Nobel announcement a couple of Australian reviewers of *Soul Mountain* were negative. It was not to their taste.

Xiao: What was their criticism?

Lee: They just didn’t like *Soul Mountain*, maybe it was too different, and did not fit in with what they were accustomed to reading. But that’s their problem, not mine. Since Gao Xingjian’s Nobel win positive reviews from American literary writers, emerged. They were not China experts, but writers, and I think that’s more important: because one is a China expert this does not automatically mean that one knows anything about literature. Just because one speaks Chinese and reads Chinese, doesn’t mean that one is a China expert, or a Chinese literary expert. Just speaking and reading Chinese, doesn’t mean one is either of these: China has a huge population who speak and read Chinese.

Xiao: If, in the near future, you’re asked to revise your translation for a new edition, would you change anything?

Lee: I’m too old for it. Someone else can do it. I’m sure there’d be little things. Actually, if I did, I probably would make changes.

Xiao: In what areas?

Lee: Smooth it out. When you hand in the manuscript, at a certain point in time, that’s the best I can do at this time. That was 2000. But if I were to start on it in 2020, 20 years will have passed, I would be a bit more mature, under less strain. I think, basically, it would be similar. But maybe iron out little things, because in time, you change, and you look at the text with a different set of eyes. But, basically, it would be similar.

Xiao: When you were translating *One Man’s Bible*, because Gao Xingjian had already won the Nobel Prize, did you get any pressure from the publisher to finish it quickly?

Lee: No. I don’t like pressure, and the publishers never pushed me. I like to enjoy what I’m doing. I was attracted to *One Man’s Bible* for different reasons. I loved it for the rich sensuality of the images projected before me as reader. Emerging from the written text as one reads, images move, sounds are sensed, textures are felt, and foods leave a taste. In one chapter a man was beating a temple drum with his bare hands, and his entire body became a part of the drumming process. I could feel the man touching the drum.

Xiao: Now that Gao Xingjian’s novels have been translated into more than 30 languages around the world. Do you know of any translation that’s based on your English version?

Lee: I have never signed contracts for the English editions of either novel to be translated into another language. I also had never thought to ask Gao Xingjian or Liliane and Noël

Dutrait if foreign publishers had ever sought permission to translate from the French editions. It is possible that many of the translations of the two novels into other languages were published without acknowledging which language/edition had been used. The French edition of *Soul Mountain* was published in 1995, and the English edition not until 2000; and the French edition of *One Man's Bible* was published in 2000, and the English edition not until 2002. It is likely that most European publishers would have turned to French editions of both novels. I signed contracts for Gao Xingjian's short stories to be published in Bulgarian and Georgian, and the two Indian languages of Marathi and Bangla. We only ask them a few copies when published. I'd send Gao Xingjian a couple of copies, and I'd keep a couple of copies; the rest I would send to the library. Of course, I would muse, "Neither of us can read a word of these books anyway."

Xiao: Are there actually more translations based on translations rather than the original? What do you think of such a translation method that's once removed from the original?

Lee: I think it's hard. It's harder when it goes through another language. I talked with Gao Xingjian about it once. He said, "There's an Egyptian edition of *Soul Mountain*, but it's very small, very slim." So it's obviously abridged. But still, people do send him copies. There's a Gao Xingjian Archive at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and also one at Aix Marseille University (formerly known as University of Provence). Exciting things keep happening. Did you know that Gao Xingjian released a third film, Requiem for Beauty, in 2013? And this year, two exhibitions of his paintings were held concurrently in Brussels over a three-month period. One was at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, where his new series of large-scale works, The Awakening of Consciousness, opened on permanent exhibition. He had painted six works especially for the dedicated space, an entire hall with high ceilings, that he named: Subconscious, Illusion, Impulse, Introspection, Somewhere Else and Bewilderment. The hall was meant to be a space of quiet meditation and contemplation. The other was a Gao Xingjian retrospective exhibition at the spacious Ixelles Art Museum.

Xiao: After Mo Yan won his prize in 2012, a lot of the media criticisms were directed at his political identity, rather than his actual works, which is very similar to the Gao Xingjian situation.

Lee: It was political, but quite different. I felt sorry for Mo Yan. He was put into an awkward position, because he lives in China. This was not the case with Gao Xingjian, who was a French citizen living in Paris, when he won the Nobel Prize in 2000. He had no compunctions about openly criticising the Chinese authorities during his Nobel Lecture. Mo Yan does not seem politically oriented, he just loves telling his stories.

Xiao: Do you think the fixation on the writer's political identity is something that's unique to Chinese writers?

Lee: It appears to be the case in present times, particularly in the Anglo-American world. Chinese political dissidents, writers and artists alike, are popular in the so-called democracies of the West. Of course all writers – not just Chinese writers, but all writers as intellectuals – are likely to have a strong political stance, but not all of them will necessarily promote a political cause in their works. As writers, Gao Xingjian and Mo Yan clearly pursue totally different aesthetic goals. It is pointless to compare them as writers, or to compare their political views.

Xiao: Do you think this kind of media attention to Chinese politics will affect English readers' expectation of Chinese literature?

Lee: I don't think so. Chinese writings, just as writings in other languages, are not all the same. Discerning Anglo-American readers will not read works they do not appreciate. I personally find Mo Yan's writings to be too focused on the gruesome and grotesque. Of course, some readers enjoy that sort of writing, and it is their prerogative to read what they enjoy. But in some strange way, due to consistent anti-China reports, especially in the Anglo-American press, Mo Yan's works portray a China that is indeed horrible, but readers often think that the whole country is like that. Equally strange and gruesome tales are told about other societies, but readers tend not think that the entire society is like that.

Xiao: Do you think this opinion of Western countries towards China will change in the future?

Lee: The world of today is a geopolitical struggle: the US versus China. But that shouldn't have anything to do with literature. Politics is politics. Writers should be able to write what they need to write, although a lot of writers think that politics, warnings about social problems, should all come into it. What will be the impact of the novel Submission by French writer, Michel Houellebecq, that tells of a Muslim takeover of France in the near future. There has been literature that has lasted for a long time, over many centuries, and surely that's the sort of literature that will continue to be important. If it's just sensationalist writing, it will probably soon die out.

Xiao: Before Gao Xingjian won the prize, his works were translated into three languages, Swedish, French and English. Do you know which is the main language that the Nobel committee reads?

Lee: I think French was important, because most of the Nobel committee would have been fluent in French and English, but not necessarily Swedish. Gilbert Fong's translation of five plays from The Other Shore was published in 1999, and he said he had put in a nomination when the book was published. The English edition of *Soul Mountain* was launched in Sydney in early July 2000, and Gao Xingjian was present. He received a lot of media coverage at the time. He suggested that I sent copies to the Swedish Academy, I had the head librarian there in the early 1990s, so I sent him a few copies. That was early July, and in early October, we heard he had won the Nobel Prize. Champagne.

Xiao: So far, there are only two Chinese writers who have won the Nobel Prize.

Lee: Two Chinese-language writers. The Chinese government considers Gao Xingjian to be a Frenchman, and the French consider Gao Xingjian to be a Frenchman.

Xiao: Why do you think it is so hard for Chinese language literature to gain international recognition?

Lee: The Chinese literary world wanted a "Chinese writer" to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. In the 100-year history of the Nobel Prize China had never produced a Nobel winner – so it was said. The implications of a "Chinese writer" had not been thought through. That the Frenchman Gao Xingjian should win the prize was totally unexpected, it confused and also angered many Chinese literary authorities. Liu Zaifu, former Director of Modern Literature at the Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, accurately summed up the situation: "Gao Xingjian's winning the Nobel Prize for Literature is a victory for the Chinese language."

Xiao: But Japanese literature seems to fare much better than Chinese literature.

Lee: Yes, but that was geopolitically driven, too, because the US had chosen Japan as its most important ally by the end of the Second World War. Money was put into into literary translation as well as other cultural areas. During the Second World War the US made movies about the cruelty of the Japanese soldiers, but with victory everything had changed, and the savage Japanese assaults on the populations of China and the rest of Asia were suddenly forgotten, at least in the US. Such is the power of Hollywood. I've read quite a bit of Japanese literature in translation. I've only read one book by Haruki Murakami but somehow it didn't resonate with me. However, I have read most of the available translations of Mishima, Kawabata and Ōe Kenzaburō. I have read in various publications that in the post-war era, the US government generously funded Japanese studies at universities, including Japanese literature and literary translation. The Chinese Communist Party formed government, and established the People's Republic of China in 1949. Within a few years Mao Zedong progressively imposed the cruellest dictatorship ever seen in human history, that culminated in the Cultural Revolution during which any traces of individuality were virtually snuffed out in literature and art. Since the late 1970s the situation in China has changed for literature and art…

Xiao: You never thought of yourself as a professional translator, but you have already become, in reality, such an experienced translator, and a successful one. Around the world, there are so many programmes training translators. Do you think they actually make a difference in terms of training professional literary translators?

Lee: I think if you are a literary translator, you have to be interested in literature. You have to be interested in words. It's not just professional. You have to have some sort of literary talent and interest in literary aspects of a text. It's not just the surface meaning of a text. And this involves a fondness for playing with words.

Xiao: And what do you think is the biggest challenge for translators of Chinese literature today?

Lee: The original text must be good, and be of interest for readers in the target language. Otherwise, even if it's a competent translation, if the writing is not interesting, there's not much point.

Xiao: Do you think there should be a set of translation ethics? And if there should be, what do you think is the most important item on the list?

Lee: A literary translation should strive to be faithful to the original text. Because there are aesthetic elements embedded in the original literary text, the translator should not create a separate text. There is usually an implicit obligation for the translator to strive to faithfully translate, rather than to fabricate. On the other hand, if the original text has not been properly edited, faithful translation can be impossible. If the translator and author discuss how the translation will be received by the target audience, and an agreement is made for the translator to improvise, then that is their business. I have heard Howard Goldblatt mention that he has an understanding with Mo Yan about changing or deleting certain bits that won't appeal to, or be incomprehensible to English readers. Mo Yan has also talked about this. The amendments could in a sense be considered "editorial." Howard Goldblatt has translated numerous Chinese authors since the 1970s, and he would certainly be the most prolific Chinese-English literary translator in the world. He also thinks a lot about translation, and talks about translation, which I find quite interesting, as well.

Xiao Gao Xingjian was advocating creative writing without isms, writing without promoting a political cause, but which also includes writing without the constraint of being an absurdist, or a modernist, or any kind of literary school. Do you think the discussion of Chinese literature today is too limited by these Western archetypes?

Lee: I think it will take a long time to change. All these fast-changing trends were all for a time fashionable in the Western world, and when China opened to the West after the end of the Cultural Revolution academics were keen to engage with these literary trends that had occurred while China was closed off from foreign influences. In effect each of these literary movements prescribe paradigms for literary and art creation, but tells one very little about literature and art. Gao Xingjian is correct in his analysis, that these literary and art movements are all about using politics to subvert and destabilize existing authorities in literature and art. Gao Xingjian is also critical of writings that promote a specific political viewpoint, that is, writers becoming foot soldiers for politicians. This was precisely what Mao Zedong had writers and artists doing for him: creating literary or art propaganda. In the last decade of the Qing dynasty, that is, the first decade of the 20th century, the monarchist reformer Liang Qichao promoted the writing of political novels. Later on Mao Zedong successfully forced writers to write political propaganda on his behalf. Not to conform was to risk severe punishment or even death. In so-called Western democracies of today writers and artists too are expected to present a political message, or to promote some idea: in other words, to distort aesthetic truth in order to fit a particular "ism."

Xiao: Do you think it is possible to do research in Chinese studies, like Chinese literature, without actually learning the language, and just relying on translations?

Lee: Well, this has already been happening. Many English departments have been teaching undergraduate as well as postgraduate courses in "Literature in Translation" or "Comparative Literature." This is not strange, because how many people read Russian, for example? Yet the Bible, and the great Russian novelists, for example, have been read exclusively in translation and discussed for a very long time. I have had high school children from the US email me to ask questions about Gao Xingjian because they had decided to work on *Soul Mountain* for a school project.

Xiao: Do you have a writer that you would be interested in translating, next?

Lee: As far as I know, I'll be translating an essay by Liu Zaifu, about Gao Xingjian. That's my immediate project. I actually taught a couple of Liu Zaifu's essays in the 1990s. Probably I was the only person in the world teaching his texts at the time.

Xiao: Did you feel like your research on Gao Xingjian informed your translation, in any way?

Lee: The translation of his creative works was simply transforming original Chinese text into English. I don't think my research informed my translation.

Xiao: What kind of work has taken up most of your time at the moment?

Lee: For the past twelve months, I've been editing the memoirs of Chinese artist Shen Jiawei. A prize-winning artist in China from the 1970s, he relocated to Australia in 1989. Since then he has become a prize-winning portraitist in Australia, and he has numerous paintings in the Australian Portrait Gallery, and other public and private collections. However, it is his history murals that preoccupy his creative energy and explorations. He had written about each of his major paintings, and a mutual friend had translated these, giving the manuscript the title: Behind the Canvas: Memoirs of a History Painter. I suggested that he should get the manuscript published. He had not edited the Chinese for publication, and so the translated text required severe editing and even rewriting in sections. Behind the Canvas tells how a young man, a former Red Guard, volunteers to go to Heilongjiang, and gets trained as an artist by a soldier printmaker in that area. It's historically interesting, and moreover important archival material. His painting, Standing Guard for Our Great Motherland, was selected by Jiang Qing for exhibition in Beijing at the National Art Exhibition of 1974, and it was hung in the most prominent spot of the National Art Museum, and subsequently collected. He was 23 or 24 at the time. Jiang Qing thought the soldier's faces should be sterner, and more pink, so she had her artists touch them up accordingly. But when Jiang Qing fell from power, the painting was rolled up and sent back to his Heilongjiang work unit. Also, Shen's father was arrested and locked up in his work unit prison for a year: someone reported that he had hung a poster of his son's famous painting next to his desk. Shen was told that his painting was in the basement of his former work unit, and he went to rescue it. His father was in gaol, and he was too scared to unwrap it: it remained under his bed for quite a few years. It was restored in the New South Wales Art Gallery, and exhibited in New York. And also, Bilbao in Spain. Not so long ago, it sold at auction in China for over 1.2m US dollars.

Xiao: Is this a propaganda painting?

Lee: When Shen Jiawei painted the work, he would certainly not have considered it to be a propaganda painting. He was simply reflecting army life in his Heilongjiang environment. In addition, I am co-editing a book of essays on Gao Xingjian with Liu Jianmei who is professor of Chinese Literature at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Xiao: Are they mainly papers from Hong Kong academics?

Lee: We have academics from Hong Kong, France, Belgium, Japan, Thailand, New Zealand, Poland, USA, Australia, UK.

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