



**The Politics and Practice of Trans-culturation:
Importing and Translating Chinese Autobiographical Writings
into the British Literary Field**

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation, to the best of my knowledge, is my own work.

It does not contain material previously published or written by another person.

It does not contain material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university, except where due acknowledgements have been made.

29-12-2010

Date

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my extraordinary grandfather

Abstract

This study examines the social, cultural and institutional factors and circumstances surrounding the process of importing and translating six Chinese autobiographical writings in the British context. In parallel, it conducts a critical reading of the press reviews of these six books to map out and discuss the representations of Chinese culture and society as outcomes of the translation process (with the translation process understood in the broad sense to include the selection of the source text for translation as well as the actual translating activities). The investment in Chinese autobiographies set in 'Red China' and their uptake by the UK readership have become a prominent phenomenon over the last two decades or so. This phenomenon poses several questions around the criteria on the basis of which this specific genre has been selected and imported into the British literary market and the way it is translated. In this study I use a sociologically-orientated methodological and theoretical framework that takes into account the socio-cultural contexts of translation which then features as an instance of social reproduction. In addition to the press reviews, this study uses as primary data the accounts, views and experiences of the people who have been involved in the translation process, including the literary agent and the publishers who have not received enough attention in the recent sociologically-orientated approach despite their decisive role with regard to many aspects of the translation process. My research thus examines translation from the perspectives of social agents and their interactive relationships within institutional contexts that shape the agents' activities. Based on semi-structured interviews with the participants who were involved in the translation process of the six autobiographies, this study focuses, firstly, on the selection and importing of six Chinese auto/biographical writings for translation and the role of the social agents involved, with particular attention given to the literary agent. Selecting and importing the originals are seen as a formative stage in translation, involving the actions of a range of social agents situated within different yet overlapping institutional contexts: namely, literary agents, publishers, translators and authors. Secondly, this study focuses on the actual translating process, considered in the light of its interplay with the evaluation of the 'good' translation and the editing process, to examine the extent to which the social and professional interactions and negotiations between translators and other social agents – writers, literary agents and editors – affect the way translators translate. Then, based on a critical textual analysis of the press reviews of the six translated Chinese auto/biographical writings that appeared in the UK daily newspapers, this study examines how the reviewers represent and frame the truth-value and witness voices through the translated self-writings, and how these reviews anticipate and mediate the readers' perceptions of Communist Chinese history and society. My findings suggest that the power relations underpinning the struggles, competitions, negotiations and collaborations within the publishing and literary fields shape the translation process where literary agents, publishers/editors, translators and authors interact and negotiate to yield the final product for the British book market. The selection process is shown to be a decisive step in the process of translation, which to a great extent shapes the way the Chinese autobiographies have been translated and received. Translation, thus, plays a significant role in anticipating, (re)constructing and reshaping the (existing) representations of Contemporary Chinese culture and society.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The types of images and cultural representations of *Chineseness* constructed through specific models of reading Chinese literature in the Western context have been approached and studied from various perspectives in Chinese Studies.¹ Modern Chinese literature has been treated either as the object of desire, fantasies and neuroses or as naturalistic reflections of reality without constructedness and artifice (Chow, 1991). These models of reading Chinese literature have an impact on the construction of the cultural representations of China; they are both the product and the instrument of a hegemonic ideology that operates through specific models of reading. The problematic reading of Chinese literature in the English-speaking world has further been examined from the point of view of its Eurocentric underpinnings and effects with regard to the reception of Chinese literature within the English-speaking context (Duke, 1990; Jenner, 1990) where there is a remarkable interest in the (self-)exile writings with the thematic topics pertaining to key events in contemporary Chinese history, predominantly around the Chinese Cultural Revolution (Zarrow, 1999).

‘Truth’, ‘factuality’ and ‘authenticity’ are the standard expectations of the (target) English-speaking readership about reading the (self-)exile writings that articulate the authors’ victimised voices. Salman Rushdie speaks of one of the functions that literature, especially in the exile context, achieves, namely: to deny and contest ‘the official, politicians’ version of truth’, the truth that is to be manipulated and altered by the state of their homeland to narrate what happened in the past in order to fit its present political needs (2004: 226). As another pole of official narratives, however, the question coming through the exile context that needs to be raised here is to what extent the truth that is revealed through the insider voices in the literary work can be defined as valid or even absolute truth, as self-grounding truth coming from the voice of the officially suppressed witness. The question is: to what extent we can still grant and recognise the validity of the truth through such literary accounts, especially if we take account of the close linkage between the past memory and the interpretation of the past from the vantage point of exile writers’ current cultural and ideological positions; and, most importantly, if we look into the cultural and political circumstances where the exile writings are produced and received.

¹ This issue of the representation of China’s image through reading Chinese cinema in the West is raised and systematically investigated in Chow’s seminal book *Woman and Chinese Modernity* (1991).

These questions remind us of some of the crucial and interrelated aspects of time, space and the production process of self-writings by the insider voices in connection with the notions of truth and authenticity in auto/biographical writings. As for the production dimension, at this point we are forced to look at the aspects of how and through what channels these Chinese (self-)exile writings have *travelled*, in Said's term (1983), and arrived into the Western context, and the mediating impact of these channels on the notions of truth, authenticity and cultural representations. More specifically, the notion of *truth* and *authenticity* through auto/biographical writings cannot be adequately examined and discussed if we miss a crucial dimension of the 'vehicle of translation', the essential means of transportation that makes *truth* travel from one culture to another (H. Liu, 1995: 20-21).

Translation in this context can no longer be understood in the sense of a 'faithful' rendering of words and phrases and the search for accurate faithful equivalence between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). By looking at issues of who authorises the translation, why specific texts with specific thematic orientations are translated, and who translates the text and its representation of the translated culture as a result of the translation production process, translation cannot be seen as something that stands at some removes from political concerns. Politics – in the broad sense of the word – along with ideology are inevitably inscribed in the various dimensions of translation as textual, cultural, social and economic activities. Politics and ideology come into play in the choice of genres and themes of the materials to be translated as well as the selection of particular source-language/culture texts from a larger body of texts. This selection inevitably involves a great degree of exclusion regarding texts that remain untranslated. Politics and ideology are also inscribed in the literary criticism applied to the translated texts in the reviews that appear in the literary press. In parallel, politics and ideology, in this sense, affect and underpin the publishing industry and its specific logic and interests, the type of domestic audiences the translation is targeted at, and the discourses and canons that have shaped their tastes and expectations, in addition to the translators' personal political and ideological leanings. Given the complex political considerations bearing on the translation of culture into another language and indeed into another culture, it is clear that translation is not merely the task of individual translator's linguistic choices. Rather, it involves an interface with 'forms of institutional practices and the knowledge/power relationships that authorise certain ways of knowledge while discouraging others' (H. Liu, 1995: 3). Against the backdrop of these considerations, in this study I will focus on the politics of translation from the perspective of the translation

production process with particular attention given to institutional, organizational and cultural factors that constrain and to some extent determine the final product of translation. My study is based on the case study of six Chinese auto/biographical writings by (self-)exile writers located within the British context.

Auto/biographical narratives focusing on the writing of Communist China have recently become increasingly popular with the English-speaking readership and the British readership in particular. This popularity was initially due to the phenomenal success of *Wild Swans* which was written and published in English in 1991 by Chinese-born British writer Jung Chang. The autobiographical work of *Wild Swans* is composed of the interlocked stories of three generations of women in her family. The backdrop against which the stories unfold revolve around the political and military upheavals in 20th century China, with its focus on the pre- and post- Chinese Cultural Revolution spanning the period from the 1940s till the 1970s. The book hit the best-selling record of non-fiction paperback books in British publishing history. It sold over 10 million copies worldwide. It received the 1992 NCR Book Award and the 1993 British Book of the Year Award. *Wild Swans* has set a successful precedent and has been received as a work of history of 20th century China, with highlighted focus on its Communist years, and a documentary account of Chinese contemporary culture.² Since then there has been a proliferation of auto/biographical books either written in English or in Chinese then translated into English with thematic foci revolving around the period of the Cultural Revolution and the economic transitions and their social consequences under the Communist regime. This sub-genre has been constantly gaining a great deal of popularity in the West, occupying a significant position in the field of Chinese literature outside China. Translating Chinese auto/biographical writings with the theme of Communist China into English is thus a growing and in some ways intriguing phenomenon. Studying this phenomenon, from the point of view of translation studies, brings up a number of questions around the process and outcomes of cultural representations through translation.

Chinese auto/biography is one of the earliest forms of writing in Chinese literary history which functioned as a historiographical genre (Wang, 2002: 4). It has, however, been neglected as a literary form in the Chinese literary scene throughout Chinese literary history, despite its crucial role during Chinese literary modernization (May Fourth period) as a means of raising national identity (Ng, 2003) and its didactic function during the Cultural

² For more details, see HarperCollins web site: [www.fireandwater.com/Jung Chang](http://www.fireandwater.com/Jung%20Chang)

Revolution and thereafter (Hegel, 1985). The marginalised position of auto/biography can be explained on the basis of the historical, ideological and political factors which have constantly exerted a great of influence on the Chinese literary canon. With the consolidation of realism as the dominant literary genre with its specific political and ideological features since the May Fourth period, literature is defined as the people's national literature which is expected to be capable of conveying the truth and the reality of the social as opposed to the self (McDougall, 1971: 147-50). This is particularly the case since 1942 Yan'an Talks when literature was firmly defined as proletarian literature with the specific social and political duty of serving workers, peasants and soldiers, and reflecting the worldview of the masses (Mao & McDougall, 1980). Having been conditioned by the realist criteria, auto/biography, seen as individualistic self-indulgence with its lack of social conscience, is devaluated as opposition to the Communist ideology promoting proletarian literature as collective choice (Ng, 2003: 25-32).

Additionally, within the discussion of the cultural constraints on auto/biography, Wu (1990: 233) sees Confucianism, which has a profound influence on Chinese society, as a fundamental constraint that has prevented self-writing from becoming an independent genre throughout Chinese literary history. He observes that in the Confucian normative framework, there is a lot of emphasis on the collectivity – collective values, practices and achievements – whilst the individual, as Wang (2002: 4-5) also points out, should have no autonomous existence in the narrative. Autobiography, which is inherently oriented towards the thematisation of selfhood and individual identity, can easily fall in self-exaltation and self-glorification. The ideology of Confucianism stands behind the very obstacle that can explain the Chinese cultural aversion towards self-disclosure and self-presentation.

However, outside China, given that this peripheral genre is viewed as a factual chronicle of twentieth-century Chinese history, it has been the literary genre that has recently been translated the most, and has been increasingly contributing to the representation of Chinese culture and society. It is even more interesting, from the translation perspective, to look into how this peripheral genre has been introduced, arrived and has been received in the English-speaking world.

Studying the phenomenon of translating Chinese auto/biographies into English can help address the question of why translated Chinese literature is read and received based on certain reading and reception models that equate contemporary Chinese literature with documentary

historical accounts, whilst giving little attention to its literary value. This relevant linkage has received hardly any attention in the research literature that has examined cultural representations of China. Likewise, in the research literature little attention has been given to questions surrounding the autobiographical truth in relation to the issues of time and space which are intertwined with the discourse of *truth* that is produced and received in the British target culture. In addressing the question of the extent to which the production process of the translation of Chinese auto/biographical writings anticipate, construct and reshape the (existing) representations of Communist China, I hope this study will contribute to filling in this gap, and contribute to a grounded understanding of cultural representations through the translation of Chinese auto/biographical writings on Communist China.

Specifically based on the views, accounts and experiences of participants involved in the various stages of the translation process, this study uses a sociologically-orientated approach to translation to examine the motivations, criteria and circumstances standing behind the selection of the auto/biographical writings for translation, the ways in which the self-writings are translated, and their impacts on the final shape of the translated product. Besides, cultural representations of China as an outcome of the translation process are studied through a close examination and analysis of the newspaper reviews of the six translated auto/biographical writings. The purpose of looking at this facet of reception is to examine the extent to which the specialist reviews anticipate and frame the established expectations and representations about contemporary Communist China, and the extent to which the reviews (re)shape the existing images through critical reviewing of these six translated auto/biographical writings.

In Chapter 2 I first set out the background of my research in terms of Chinese auto/biographical writings in (self)-exile contexts that have been translated into the English-speaking and British culture, and the ways in which Chinese literature is processed through the institutional and cultural contexts of translation. Second, I explain and discuss the theoretical issues around the topics of translation, the generic characteristics attached to the notion of the autobiographical truth as well as the function of newspaper reviews as a facet of the reception of literary works and as ideological means used to frame people's perceptions. Finally, in the light of the theoretical framework to be used in this study, I explain the rationale based on which I have selected six translated Chinese auto/biographical writings and set out the methodology and research strategy employed in approaching my analysis. In Chapter 3 I focus on the process of selecting the six Chinese auto/biographical writings for translation by looking at specific cultural conventions and practices operating in the British

publishing field, with particular focus on the role of the literary agent and the publishers and their cooperation in the selection process. In the Chapter 4 I examine the textual translation process, with close attention given to the role of the translators and their interactive relationships with the literary agent, the authors and the editors, to highlight the cultural and social factors as well as power relations that come into play to constrain and determine the end product of translation. In the Chapter 5 I conduct a textual analysis of the newspaper reviews of the six translated Chinese auto/biographical writings in the light of generic issues around the autobiographical truth; the aim is to explore how the reviews mediate the perceptions of the autobiographical *truth* and *authenticity* and to bring out certain ideological tendencies in the British target culture. Finally, in Chapter 6 I wind up by recapitulating the findings, drawing out the conclusions, outlining and reflecting on some implications, and suggesting further research. I also point out and discuss some limitations of this study.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will explicate the theoretical and methodological framework within which my study will unfold. I will start by delineating the background to the research and specifying the focus of this study. Then in section 2.2. I will move on to discuss the theoretical framework that will underpin the way I approach my study. Special attention will be given to Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and *habitus*, and the issues around the genre of auto/biography, and their relevance to this research. In section 2.3., in the light of the theoretical framework, I will set out the methodology that I will pursue as a research strategy to approach my research topic.

2.2 Background of the Research Focus

2.2.1 Historical Truth in (self)-Exiled Chinese Auto/biographical Writings

Commenting on the truth value of the genre of autobiography, Mark Twain makes the following remark in his correspondence with William Dean Howells:

An autobiography is the truest of all books; for though it inevitably consists mainly of extinctions of the truth, shirkings of the truth, partial revealments of the truth, with hardly an instance of plain straight truth, the remorseless truth *is* there, between the lines, where the author-cat is raking dust upon it, which hides from the disinterested spectator neither it nor its smell ... the result being that the reader knows the author in spite of his wily diligences.

(collected in Henry Fielding in Abbott, 2002: 63)

The remark better explains the way the claimed truth that underlines the value of the genre of autobiography is processed and filtered through the authorial intention. In this sense, autobiography contains an irreducible core of truth not because of the authorial intention, but in spite of the authorial intention. This seems to be particularly the case with Chinese auto/biographical writings that have gone through the process of publication and reception in the UK where the truth-value is seen as the essential to their positive uptake. These auto/biographical writings, which are based on the experiences of the authors and their families through the periods prior to and following the Chinese Cultural Revolution, are seen as a worthy attempt to capture the historical truth of China. Writing to bear witness and tell the truth about Communist China is commonly assumed to be the primary parameter that brings under one literary category of auto/biographical writings by (self-)exile writers; this is

the category that Grice (2002: 29) describes as ‘writing Red China’ which has appeared in the wake of *Wild Swans* that has functioned as an archetype for these auto/biographical writings. Although Grice suggests that ‘the critical reception of these recent books about Communist China may be symptomatic of a cultural resurgence of orientalism’ (2002: 104), yet her comparison between *Wild Swans* and *Daughter of the River* (Hong, 1998) brings into light a difference in the scope and angle of historical representation:

Unlike *Wild Swans* ... *Daughter of the River* does not have the epic sweep of a century’s history; but only deals with the period of the 1980s. This is partly because of Ying’s youthful age (she was born in 1962 ...) and partly due to Ying’s emphasis upon her own personal story, and that of her immediate family, rather than with China’s history in general. Her perspective is likewise limited by her social circumstances. As a member of an uneducated peasant family, Hong Ying simply did not have an intellectualised, or broad perspective on Mao’s machinations and China’s political and economic changes, except where they directly infringed upon the circumstances of her immediate community. When she does refer to an incident or moment in China’s history, or an action taken by Mao, it is invariably filtered through her community, and is often reported as unsubstantiated hearsay. (Grice, 2002: 177)

Although it is questionable whether class divisions would limit the horizon of seeing through history ‘objectively’ and ‘insightfully’, this should not concern us here. What is noticeable is that by comparing these two autobiographies in terms of historical accuracy the basis of which *Daughter of the River* is judged as inadequate in some ways, it is safe to say that this emerging genre as a whole is fitted into one shelf of ‘writing Red China’, and accordingly evaluated based on the extent to which historical ‘veracity’ is provided. As Evans (1997: 29) notes, expectations about historical ‘veracity’ all too often structure the receptions of these translated Chinese self-writings. This raises a number of questions around truth and validity in the genre of auto/biographical writings by Chinese (self-)exile writers against the backdrop of the mediating circumstances of the production process – including the translation – that occurs in the UK.

Mark Twain’s remark above uncovers the process of autobiographical truth making which generically deconstructs the claimed truthful accounts in this genre of ‘truest of all books’. Within the context of (self-)exile ‘writing on China’, the complex character of auto/biographical writings presented as authentic and testimonial representation of the self as well as the broader social and political context becomes even more complicated if we take account of the contextual circumstances under which the auto/biographical writings have been produced and read in the UK. This complexity draws attention to the phenomenon of

(self-)exile writings and the process of their production, which is shaped by the idea of the faithful representation of Chinese traumatic experiences through the voice of the witness. In the following section, I will discuss theoretical issues pertaining to (self-)exile writing and its relevance to the Chinese context to shed some light on the implications of the literary and cultural factors that have mediated what is presented as the authenticity of auto/biographical writings on ‘Red China.’

2.2.2 Voices from (self-)Exile: Restoring the Original

Exile is defined in both cultural and political terms to signify the modern condition and experience of transnational and intercultural dispersal and displacement, which involves people of any national, ethnic or cultural background who migrate or are displaced from their native land. In this broad sense, Peters (1999: 19-20) draws some conceptual distinctions between exile, diaspora and nomadism, with exile referring to traumatic experience, imminent danger and insecurity associated with the living environment which makes one’s native country no longer habitable. Exile, thus, suggests some form and some degree of punishment, or punitive consequence, due to what are seen as ‘political crimes’ that people engage in; these so-called political crimes are often the product of the criminalisation of political dissidence that writers and artists are all too often involved in by using their socially and culturally powerful means of expression (Kramer, 1999: 165-66). In the contemporary Chinese context exile is closely bound up with political persecution, as well as individual disillusionment with the social and political environment in China. The experience of exile of some members of the Chinese intelligentsia is often intertwined with the political and social circumstances that act as the ineluctable and most decisive forces that push many of them to leave their home country and embark on an exilic journey as a result. Although choosing to be in exile can also be to some degree a matter of personal decision that could have been avoided, yet the choice made is often based on political grounds, such as restrictions on freedom of speech which directly affect the writing environment where the author operates. The existence of a personal reason or personal choice warrants the description of the exile in this case as a self-imposed exile, to the extent that leaving their own native country is primarily caused not by the government’s punitive measures but by the writers’ motivation and ambition to pursue their literary careers and to live in a vibrant and highly visible artistic and literary environment, supported by an established tradition of freedom of expression and democracy³ (Kramer, 1999: 164-65). The shock, displacement or political turbulence

³ English-speaking countries, mainly the United States and the UK, are generally seen as the favorite host

accompanying the experience of (self-)exile often leads to an experience of writing centred on some nostalgic looking-back from a place distant from 'home'. This distance is both spatial and temporal. Thus, space and time are placed in the foreground where the authentic voice is emphasised. This voice is deemed to be the articulation of memory work, of collecting and selecting memory from the past; it is engaged in what Peters calls 'the project of restoring the "original" – the original home, the original state of being' (1999: 19). The restoration of the original stands in some tension with the intention of telling the 'truth' from the vantage point of being an (self-)exile writer, which 'often conjures something new in the very act of looking backward' (Peters, 1999: 20). That is to say, (self-)exile writings produced in the West can never avoid the issue of distance in time and space; the representational and 'creative' re-workings inevitably inhabit this distance, and seek to bridge it, which involves (re)writing, translation and the reception of the Chinese self-writings in the host cultural context or target culture.

2.2.3 Translation Process and Cultural Representation

Translation, seen as another type of re-writing with emphasis on the extra-textual factors (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990; Hermans, 2006; Venuti, 1995), has always been entwined with (self-)exile writings (Asad, 1995), especially within the context of writing/translating about 'Red China' where the cultural and political factors are inextricably interrelated with the linguistic narratives that are produced for the audiences of the target culture and society. The process of translating the authenticity of self-writings would inevitably involve the act of restoration of the original with the cooperative inputs of various participants (literary agents, publishers, writers and translators). The aim is to fill the gap between the memory of the past and the narrative representation in the present, making up what reads as truth. Translation, in this context, unfolds within the parameters of institutional, cultural and literary conventions that steer the translation process via complex negotiations embedded in certain power relations. These factors combine to impact on the ideological, political and cultural representation of the translated *Other* (Hermans, 2006).

As translation studies have started to bring into focus the socio-cultural and institutional contexts of translation as well as the role of translation in different historical contexts, there have developed some significant convergences and overlaps between translation and other disciplines. For instance, translation features prominently within postcolonial studies

(Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999; Cronin, 1996; Niranjana, 1992) where translation is seen as a zone of tension, dissension and conflict. This model is centred around the questions of what role translation plays in enhancing the asymmetrical power relations and reproducing the ideological structure of the post-colonial cultural hegemony (Niranjana 1992: 33-34). In a similar vein, translating Third World literature into English has also been examined from feminist (Flotow, 1997; Simon, 1996), postcolonial and poststructuralist perspectives (Spivak, 2000) inspired by the broad field of cultural studies. The aim has been to highlight the political and ideological dimensions embedded in the translation process.

Within these broad approaches, the translation process is conceptualised as operating well beyond language and text, beyond the linguistic and textual nexus between the source texts (ST) and target text (TT) that involves only the translators and the ST writers. Rather the cultural, social and literary contexts within which the STs are selected, translated, mediated and reviewed are all seen as constitutive of the translation process (Lefevere, 1985, 1992; Venuti, 1998, 1992). The translation process accordingly has come to be seen as ‘a deliberate and conscious act of selection, structuration and fabrication’ (Gentzler & Tymoczko, 2002), which involves negotiations – framed within power relations – that aim to construct and (re)shape an image of the source texts inscribed into target texts that are transferred from one context to another (Sengupta, 1995: 159). Translation is thus construed as playing a significant role in (re)shaping the images of the *Other* through the *eyes* of the *self* (the translator) (Wolf, 1997, 2002) as well as the filtering system of the target culture that reflects certain evaluative and ideological trends within the target society. ‘The problematic connection between the textualization and conceptualization of culture’ in translation, as Wolf (2002: 180) puts it, has been brought under examination; and so has the cultural representation in which ‘the translation of culture’ (Asad, 1986: 141) calls for an examination of the ‘aspects of process and production of translation’ (Wolf, 2002: 181).

Another major focus in recent developments in translation studies is manifest in the attention given the power dimension involved in the production of translation. The workings of power traverse the selection the source texts for translation, the translating/mediating of the STs as well as the editing process (Lefevere, 1992; Venuti, 1992). These extra-linguistic factors and cultural and social contexts are examined in the light of the translational norms and values that regulate and govern the translator’s choices and translation strategy (Chesterman, 2000; Hermans, 1996, 1999; Toury, 1995); these norms and values also shape other aspects of the translation process involving other social agents situated in various institutional contexts

(Wolf, 2006: 9). Among the cultural and social considerations are the ‘conditions of the social interactions’ and ‘the criteria underlying the creation of a product to be placed on a specific market’ (Wolf, 2006: 10).

These considerations and foci – institutional, socio-cultural and interpersonal in nature – are absent from both the polysystem translation proposed by Even-Zohar (1990) and Toury’s (1995) concept of translational norms as Gouanvic examines (1997: 126). Building on Sager’s notion of agents in translation as being ‘in an intermediary position between a translator and an end user of a translation’ (1994: 321), a range of research, the essays in *Agents of Translation* (Milton & Bandia, 2009) for example, brings into focus the whole gamut of social agents involved in the translation process, including translators, commissioners and patrons of literature with specific reference to literary agents, publishers and the media (newspapers and magazines and various types of publicity) (2009: 3). This approach has been steering translation studies towards an even more sociologically orientation (Inghilleri, 2005) given that it sees translation as a complex socially discursive activity involving various stages and agents operating within different institutional contexts.

To arrive at accounts of the translations, its agents and its institutional contexts from a sociological perspective, Bourdieu’s conceptual framework of field, *habitus* and the various types of capital is brought into translation and interpreting studies with a view to ‘offering a more powerful set of concepts than norms and conventions to describe social-cultural constraints on acts of translation and their resulting products’ (Inghilleri, 2003; 2005: 126; Simeoni, 1998). This sociologically-orientated approach in translation sees Bourdieu’s concepts as particularly relevant when it comes to the investigation of the activities of various participants, located in different social and cultural institutions, who interact and negotiate with one another with a view to producing the translated Chinese self-writings (more on this point in Section 2.2.1.2). Situated within this sociological paradigm of more agent-and process-orientated research, this study examines the translation production process of six Chinese auto/biographical writings in the British context. The focus will be on the selection process of the originals for translation, the translating activity of the texts as well as the representation of Chinese culture and society as outcomes of translating Chinese self-writings whose ‘witness’ voices go through the various stages of production process. By viewing translation as the enactment of textual and discursive practices, I will examine translation from the perspective of social agents and their interactive relationships within institutional contexts that shape the agents’ activities. In this research the translation process is thus

viewed and examined in terms of selecting the source texts for translation and the activity of translation which involves translating and editing the ST. The primary concern with respect to the examination of the selection process is around the motives and criteria standing behind the selection of the genre of self-writing with the thematic orientation of ‘writing Red China’ for translation; it is also around the ways in which the social agents involved (literary agents, publishers/editors, writers and authors) interact and negotiate, and the interconnected roles they play in order to yield the final product for the British book market.

Another focus of this research on the production process is around the actual translating process and the translator’s performance; the aim is to analyse their roles as social and cultural agents actively participating in the production and reproduction of textual and discursive practices. The questions that need to be addressed for this part are: how the translators are selected and instructed; how their translation performance is evaluated; based on what criteria and by whom; what other factors – cultural, ideological or circumstantial – act as shapers of the textual translation; and to what extent the social and professional interactions and negotiations between translators and other social agents – writers, literary agents and editors – affect the way translators translate? In addressing these questions, this research will also discuss the extent to which the production process of translated Chinese auto/biographical writings anticipate, construct and reshape the (existing) representations of Contemporary Chinese culture and society, and the implications for the role of translators and how the translation are perceived and received.

A clarification of terminology is in order at this point. The term ‘translation process’ is used throughout this dissertation to include the process of selecting, translating and editing, while ‘translating process’ is used to refer to the actual activity of the textual translation, i.e. of handling and processing the text for translation, which involves the author of the original, the translator and sometimes the editor as well.

Finally, although the press review is seen as part of translation production as it sets the parameters for the reception of translated texts in the target culture in ways that reflect how the translation is perceived (Venuti, 1995, 1998), in this research it is treated as a separate dimension of the translation process, methodologically and analytically. That is to say, the press review is considered to be one aspect of the reception of translated self-writings that reflect, to a significant degree, the cultural representation of China as a result of the translation process. To that extent, press reviews are examined through a textual analysis of

the press reviews of the selected six translated auto/biographical writings that have appeared in UK-based newspapers. In the following sections, I will set out the theoretical framework that underpins the research, as well as the methodology that has been employed in the conduct of this research.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

An essential aspect of the conceptual framework underpinning this research consists of Bourdieu's sociological concepts of field, *habitus* and capitals. Bourdieu's concepts will be delineated and discussed first. Then a case will be made for the usability and usefulness of Bourdieu's key concepts for the research task in hand, and their relevance to a cluster of key issues pertaining to the activities of the social agents embedded in the translation process. I will also discuss at some length conceptual issues surrounding the genre of auto/biography, particularly with respect to the questions of its truth and authenticity and their relations to the *self* and society. These questions will be approached mainly through the lenses and notions of *spoken* sides and *unspoken* sides (borrowed from literary criticism) as conceptualised by Pierre Macherey. This will help me examine the ways in which the six translated auto/biographies are framed and represented in the press reviews, and the interplay of the highlighted and overlooked aspects in these press reviews. In parallel, this will allow me to explore how the *truth* and *authenticity* of this specific genre of auto/biography are represented by the reviews.

2.3.1 Bourdieu and Social Agents in the Translation Process

2.3.1.1 Bourdieu's Concepts of Field, Habitus and Capital

For Bourdieu social life is constituted in social practice in and through which the individual's action becomes habitual and conventionalised as a result of his/her membership in some collective histories that correspond to the various fields that the individual inhabit and move across (Inghilleri, 2005: 128). The history of individual action is seen as the product of the incorporation of social structures that shape the various activities and fields that the individual is involved in (economic, educational, cultural, political, etc.). The incorporation of structures take the form of what Bourdieu calls the individual's *habitus*: the largely unconscious dispositions, preferences, modes of thinking and behaving and the rules, norms and values that underpin them, all of which are specific to each field that the individual operates in. These fields are driven by the various stakes and interests specific to each field at a given time. Each field can thus be seen as a space of a certain types of activities and a

certain type of stakes or capital that individuals involved in the field compete over. Thus, as Bourdieu puts it, ‘the social space, and the groups that occupy it are the product of historical struggles’ (1990a: 14). It is within the contexts of specific fields and through the individual’s *habitus* that ‘social agents establish and consolidate their positions of power in social space, where all have a stake in the acquisition of specific forms of capital’ (Inghilleri, 2005: 135). The concept of the social space is thus inseparable from the concepts of *habitus*, field and capital when it comes to the analysis of the role social agents plays in that social practice as well as their interaction with social structure.

Bourdieu views the social space as divided into fields and subfields defined by the type of activity and action people are involved in, and the goals people try to orient their action towards. The main fields constituting the social space are the political field, the social field, the economic field, and the cultural field. Each field is analytically divisible into (sub)fields, and these (sub)fields can be further divided into subdivisions. The defining properties and features of fields and their subdivisions, i.e. subfields, consist of

- a) the type of activity or social action performed and enacted within the space of a given field or subfield;
- b) the interests, stakes and rewards that structure, motivate and drive the field, and the various agents acting in the field.⁴

The literary field, the journalistic field and the academic field could all be seen as subdivisions of the cultural field. Bourdieu sees the field as dynamic and fluid rather than static, and he further argues that fields themselves are not autonomous and they are influenced by each other (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The boundary, therefore, between each field can be blurred and open to change; overlaps between the fields often occur. Only through empirical research can we obtain a valid description and characterisation of the various fields and how they operate in a particular socio-historical context. There are two factors that can explain the nebulous borderline between each field. The first one is to do with the significant similarities between each field in terms of the field-related *habitus* that shapes people’s practices which cut across various fields, and are thus shaped by the different logics of the distinct fields. The second is the set of power relations operating between the fields.

⁴ Field, capital and *habitus* are major concepts providing the framework for Bourdieu’s sociological work throughout his writings. A detailed and thorough discussion and delineation of these concepts can be found in the following works (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, 1991).

Bourdieu notes that in late capitalist societies the economic field tends to be the dominant field, and thus always tends to intrude into and impose itself, i.e. its logic, on the other fields (Jenkins, 2002: 86).

Moreover, the field does not exist in a stable and homogenous state. The agents involved in each field are constantly engaged in competition, or struggle, over the stakes, interests and rewards specific to the field. This competition and negotiation within the fields over these stakes shape the configuration of the field, the *habitus* of the agents involved, in other words, their dispositions, choices, actions, orientations, preferences and the ways in which they are most likely to go about their activities within the field, regardless of whether or not the agents involved are aware of this competition and struggle (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002).

Bourdieu characterises as *capital* what agents aim to obtain in pursuing the stakes and interests relevant to each field. Capital is a metaphorical description of the various rewards that agents aim to acquire within a particular field. Bourdieu offers what can be described as a relational view of capital. Essentially, for Bourdieu, capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange of different forms of stakes, assets and gains that are seen as worthy of being sought after (Harker, 1990: 13). Bourdieu identifies the four major types of capital – which operate all across the fields – as material capital (the economic rewards in the narrow sense of the term such as profits, revenue, salaries, grants, etc.), symbolic capital (prestige, status, authority and recognition), cultural capital (artistic taste, aesthetic property, acquired knowledge as well as qualifications), and social capital (the various kinds of valued relations with significant others) (1991: 229-31). Material capital is the most straightforward in terms of what it refers to, whereas symbolic capital refers to recognition of one's work, achievements, attributes and standing. In the case of literary and artistic figures, the recognition that feeds into one's symbolic capital is played out through public, journalistic and expert recognition of the literary, educational and/or entertainment value of their work. Cultural capital, on the other hand, acts as a social relation within a system of exchange, which exists in various forms: forms of knowledge, skills and educational qualifications that a person has (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital is acquired and accumulated over time, and it impresses itself upon one's *habitus*. It is worth noting that its accumulation is often unconscious and incidental, which is what can be described as the expertise or experiential capital, a variant of what Bourdieu would call the field-specific cultural capital which is accumulated through immersion and strategic action in the field. Through immersion in the practical work or professional context the social agent acquires, and seeks to accumulate,

enough theoretical and practical competences specific to the field, which will make his/her actions more effective (Bourdieu, 1986). Finally, social capital, for its part, manifests itself in the form of group membership, (professional) relationships and networks of influence and support. Bourdieu defines social capital as ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’ (1986: 248). In that sense, social capital is specifically about the mutual values, interests and stakes associated with social networks that bring together people with norms of reciprocity with a view to increasing the productivity of individuals and groups. Although each type of capital overlaps with the others, economic capital – the dominant form of capital – operates in such a way as to construct and distribute the forms of capital (cultural, symbolic and social) that shape relations and interactions between agents through practices within these fields.

In stressing the importance of the social practices in relation to the form of capital and the logic that drive human agency within each field, Bourdieu is concerned with what individuals do and their interaction with social structure in a given field. In order to explore these, Bourdieu introduces the concept of *habitus* to explain the relationship between what individuals do and social structures, and how individuals react and respond to the objective reality through the spontaneous and largely unconscious enactment of the views, conventions and dispositions gained through socialisation. Bourdieu defines *habitus* as ‘an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted’ (1977: 95). Central to the concept of *habitus* are dispositions and their generative property. *Habitus* not only refers to the way of doing things manifested in individual behaviour, but also refers to the modes and rules of thinking and behaving that individuals have spontaneously internalised and incorporated. Agents’ generative capacity for acting in a given field allows them both to respond to and accommodate the cultural environment which can be embodied in the ways of thinking, the ways of behaving, decision making and views and values. Bourdieu here emphasizes ‘unconscious choice’,⁵ but he allows for the possibility that the reservoir of *habitus* could be used creatively by the agents; that is to say, Bourdieu allows for the possibility of ‘rational choice’ in certain circumstances.⁶ This choice is, however, still restricted to the options that the *habitus* and the objective conditions could

⁵ Webb and Danaher use this term to describe ‘the unconscious character of practice logic and the existence of disposition as beyond consciousness’ (Webb et al., 2002:77).

⁶ By ‘rational choice’ Bourdieu means the consciousness that is, to a certain degree, involved in the process of making choices. The choices, however, he argues, are constrained and determined by people’s *habitus* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

allow for and make possible. Therefore, it is the dispositions embedded in *habitus* that produce practices and reproduce the views and values and naturalise its rules, knowledge and values within and across fields. In the next section I will outline Bourdieu's concepts of field, *habitus* and capital and the ways in which it has been applied in the existing research literature in translation studies. I will also specify the research gap that this research would fit into and how Bourdieu's concepts can be employed in my research to better address my research questions.

2.3.1.2 *Translation Activity at the Intersection of Several Fields*

Within the sociologically-orientated strand of translation, especially with the application of Bourdieu's concepts of field, *habitus* and capital, translation is conceived as a social practice in its own right located in several fields (Inghilleri, 2005). It is seen as a process and a set of enactments embedded within a social context (Gouanvic, 2005; Wolf, 2007); it features as an operational site where different *habitus* interact, influence one another and contest one another (Buzelin, 2005; Inghilleri, 2003). Common to this sociologically-orientated approach is the theorization of the relationship between objective social structures and the subjectivities of social agents based on their incorporated dispositions or *habitus* (Inghilleri, 2005). Thus, studying translation from this perspective involves analysing the structure of the various fields where translation activity occurs, the strategies and trajectories of the producers of the cultural production in question (i.e. the translated work), and the field of power that shapes the end product of the translations (Hanna, 2005). The object of study within this approach then consists of the various relationships between the *habitus* of agents who are involved in the translation process in a given target field, the textual factors operating in the translation process, as well as the trajectories of the source and target texts and the ways in which they are mediated by the *habitus* of agents; relatedly, the object of study also involves the configuration and *modus operandi* of the different fields that the translation process moves across (Gouanvic, 2005; Wolf, 2007).

Key to the scholarly debate around the usability of Bourdieu's concepts in relation to translation is the notion of translation as normative behaviour as proposed by the descriptive translation approach. Some, for instance, argue that the notion of *habitus* is more comprehensive than the notion of translational norms proposed by Toury (1995) in that it is 'structuring and structured' by social and cultural practices through the internalisation of the norm system (Gouanvic, 2005; Simeoni, 1998: 21-22). Gouanvic (1997, 2005) argues against

the idea that translators deliberately consciously and consistently use specific translation strategies with a view to conforming with translational norms. Instead he argues:

If a translator imposes a rhythm upon the text that does not originate in the source text and thus substitutes his/her voice for that of the author, this is essentially not a conscious strategic choice but an effect of his/her specific *habitus*, as acquired in the target literary field. (2005: 158)

The strength of the concept of *habitus*, he then concludes, is that it is able ‘to make descriptive theoretical approaches more “agent aware” ’(2005: 142) with methodological focus on contextual investigation which is something that is often overlooked by polysystemic framework for the study of translation (Hermans, 1999). In response to Simeoni’s attempt to replace the notion of norms in polysystem translation theory with the notion of *habitus* (Simeoni, 1998), Gouanvic criticises Simeoni’s theoretical stance on the ground that it excludes the notions of field and capitals from the examination. Gouanvic further reminds us that ‘recontextualization of *habitus* is required not just within specialized fields but in fields of power’ (2005: 149). That is to say, in order to understand the multifaceted nature of translation as a set of socio-cultural practices, the attention of empirical investigation should focus on not only the objective structure of the cultural field within which the translation is produced, but also the trajectory of the social agents who contribute to the making of these practices (Hanna, 2005: 168) as well as the power relations and the relational features associated with the type and volume of capital possessed by the social agents who are involved in the acts of translation and interpreting (Thoutenhoofd, 2005: 237). Translation is thus understood through the social practices that are embedded in specific fields, and comes to be viewed as a set of ‘functions of social relations based on competing forms of capital tied to local/global power’ (Inghilleri, 2005: 143). Within this paradigm, the *habitus* of translators and interpreters are given a great deal of attention and seen as the focus to be investigated through the cultural, biographical and social trajectories of translators/interpreters and the actualisation of their *habitus* in the translation of specific works (Wolf, 2007: 7-12). By looking at the discourse of translation and interpreting in relation to translators and interpreters’ *habitus* (Inghilleri, 2003; Simeoni, 1998), this socially situated approach arguably moves away from predominant consideration given primarily to the textual analysis of the end product (i.e. the translated work), and towards an examination of the social, political and cultural contexts in which translation and interpreting acts are constituted through the various relations of power and control (Wolf, 2006). Translators and

interpreters are thus seen as 'self-reflexively called upon as agents whose subjectivity is socially conditioned' (Pym, 1998) within the given field(s) of the target culture.

The social conditions surrounding the translators and interpreters that constrain or enable their performance are reflected in the interactive activities and negotiations with and among other social agents involved in the translation process. Translation, seen as social act and cultural product (Wolf, 2007: 15-17), hence not only is carried out by translators but also involves other social agents and institutions, which to the great extent determine the selection, translating strategies and distribution of translation. Looking at the translation process through sociological lenses requires that the foci fall equally on a) the social constraints imposed on the translation activity (with the translator taking centre stage as the object of study), and b) the discursive practices inscribed and manifested through the production process (Wolf, 2006: 12).

The translation thus moves through several mediating spaces within specific social networks that operates as a kind of web that exists between different cultures (Pym, 2003: 4; Wolf, 2007:3). Among the mediators in the translation process, the publisher's role has been intensively investigated in the more agent- and process-orientated type of approach (Buzelin, 2007b). The publisher as a key patron plays a central role in regulating the literary system, its rewards and sanctions (Bourdieu 1991), its censorship effects as well as the scholarly and educational activities relevant to literary works; the publisher thus to a significant degree shapes the end product of translation (Milton & Bandia, 2009: 2). Merkly (2006) has examined the place of translations in the publishing field during the social transformations of late-Victorian Britain; he has found that the publishing industry collaborated with morality leagues to anticipate the readers' expectations, and thus to influence the translator's strategies in producing the 'right' translation: i.e. a translation that conformed to the moral norms of 'good' British citizens in line with dominant Victorian values at the time (Merkle, 2006). Gouanvic has examined the power struggles involved in the importation and translation into French of American science fiction in France between 1945 and 1960 by looking at the roles played by critics, editors, publishers and translators at the various stages of the translation process, which has contributed to the creation of a new literary subfield of science fiction in France through translation (1997). The publishers' role, along with others, is examined as one of the most influential power dynamics in the production process of the translations; it exercises a great deal of influence on the selecting and importing of the source texts into the

target culture and its impact on the textual translation, which shapes and (re)constructs the specific literary ideology within a given target culture (Linn, 2003; Wolf, 2003).

Within the power dynamics inherent in the translation process comes from the role of the literary agent. As another important mediator in the social networks of translation, however, the literary agent, as Buzelin observes, has received little attention; Buzelin notes that the literary agent 'enjoys very little visibility in the literary field' (2005: 209). Overlooking the role of the agent in the translational production process would miss the networked dimension of the translation process. This results from giving too much attention to the end product (translated text, paratext, or the preface of the translation) (Buzelin, 2007a: 51). Consequently, the translator is located in the central place of the translation process and the decision-making that informs it; the translator is thus taken to be responsible for all the omissions, additions and rewriting as well as for enacting the translation ethics of fidelity. The collectiveness of 'we' in the actual translation activity, as Koskinen (2000: 48) reminds us, 'is not a harmonious group of identical 'I's, but a whole 'knit' together, and continuously knit together' in such a way as to make the decision-making favourable to the dominant interests. In this sense, the translation process needs to be investigated as a whole 'knit' that goes through several stages: starting with the selection/importation of the source texts into the target culture, the actual translation activity, to the editorial process that all the translation drafts undergo. From this perspective the focus of research is not only the translation's *habitus*, but most importantly, the *habitus* of the literary agents and publishers/editors, who hold sway in the decision-making regarding what and how to translate, which constrains and conditions the production of the translation in its various stages and contexts. In this sense, analysis of the role of international literary agents in the translation market would give a better picture of the strategies, negotiations, conflicts, alliances and stakes within fields where the literary agent's mediating role between authors, publishers and translators manifests itself in negotiations, bids, contracts, and building alliances and collaborations, all of which can help explain the reasons for bringing a source text or, a commodity as Todd terms it (2006: 30), to the target literary market. It is true that analysing the source and target texts can bring into light pertinent traits of the *habitus* of those involved in the translation, especially that of translators in the field, as Gouanvic notes (2005: 148). However, in the investigation of the whole production process, questions should be focussed on the channels through which the types of source text are selected for translation: who is involved; based on what reasons, considerations or objectives the source texts are selected; how the translators or editors are

recruited; and how the various forms of negotiation take place to yield the final product of the translation? (Buzelin, 2005). Answering these questions can highlight the power relations and the stakes that have shaped the constitution of the literary agents' as well as the translator's *habitus*.

Based on the above questions, this research aims to contribute to filling the analytical gap in the sociology of translation. It examines the translation process of Chinese auto/biographical writings starting, from selection/importation of the original source texts into the British literary field, and the way the Chinese texts are treated, translated and edited through six Chinese auto/biographical writings that have been selected, translated and published in the UK. Specifically, by viewing translation as an instance of social reproduction embedded in a British social and cultural context, this research looks at the actual circumstances and the complexity of the decision-making process, examining the role of social agents (literary agent, publishers/editors, writers and translators) and their interactive forms of social behaviour and negotiations at various stages, with particular attention given to the role of literary agents. The role of the literary agent is particularly crucial when it comes to examining the translation process within the British literary and publishing fields. Indeed, the mediating role of agents has long existed in the literary book market from as early as the 1890s, acting as a mediator between the author and printer-bookseller (Hepburn, 1968: 1-2). The co-operative and conflictual relationships among the author, the literary agent and the publishers in the intensely competitive book market are clearly captured in James Hepburn's book: *The Author's Empty Purse and the Rise of the Literary Agent*. The role of literary agents has become increasingly influential in the increasingly heteronomous British literary field since the late 1970s when British society experienced political, cultural and economic transformations (English, 2006: 3). These transformations have made translation very much dependent on economic determinants within the UK context. In theory, the agent's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, primarily advising on the author's literary career and negotiating contracts with publishers, thus acting as a mediator and counsellor on behalf of authors (Gordon, 1993). Apart from that, especially with the translation of foreign works, the literary agent is actively involved in the partnership with publishers, in the search for and promotion of potentially marketable literary books and writers for the target audience. This is particularly the case with Chinese authors, especially those new to the British literary system, who find themselves in a situation where it is in their interest to be dependent on the literary agents for their debut and sequence novels published in the UK. Literary agents

therefore occupy a unique position in the translation book market and the literary field, and their position requires a unique type of action and judgement that has to strike a balance between commercial and economic criteria on the one hand and literary criteria on the other.

In trying to examine and characterise the *habitus* of individuals, and of literary agents in particular, this research aims to explore the ways in which the participants (literary agents, publishers, authors and translators) interact, negotiate and enact specific rules, conventions, norms or type of ideology: such as the criteria for the selection of Chinese original texts for translation, what counts as a good translation, and what translation should aim at, and how it should be conducted. The translator's role is discussed in terms of its interplay with the roles of the author, the literary agent and the editors in the translating process where the translated draft undergoes the editorial process which is shaped by power dynamics and multiple inputs. This will make it possible to explain how their *habitus* is formed and constituted in this ongoing translation practice and how their translational capital is distributed and constructed. Moreover, these participants in the translation process are located and operate in distinct fields – the literary field and the publishing field. Within these fields, I will look at the various forms of capital the various participants in the translation process seek to acquire, which will enable me to explore the factors and power relations that have impacted on the translation of the auto/biographies throughout the translation process and its impact on the final product of translations. These questions have a significant bearing on the whole system that underpins the description of the translation practice; it is, as Inghilleri puts it, 'the system that accounts for what *is* rather than what ought to be' (2005: 142). By approaching translation as a social activity, this study will contribute to a grounded understanding of translation from a sociological point of view through systematic examination of several essential stages in the processes of producing the translation (importing, and translating and editing processes), focusing on the role literary agent plays in co-operation with publishers which has been little investigated in translation studies. This research additionally makes a contribution to the interdisciplinary paradigm that translation studies have moved to recently by approaching translation and an aspect of reception from sociological as well as literary criticism (analysis of press reviews) lenses; the aim is to apply an interdisciplinary analytic framework to the study of the translation process of Chinese auto/biographical writings and its cultural representations of Chinese culture and society.

Finally, this research has methodologically been informed by Buzelin's remarks on the methodological implications of studying the translation process via a sociologically-orientated approach. Buzelin (2005: 205) suggests the various methodological approaches to research on the production process of translation, such as observation, recording, interviewing people who work in the translation bureaus, and publishing houses. The advantage of generating these data, she notes, is to get a clear vision of who participates in the translation process, how they negotiate their position, how the translator is selected and how the translation is conducted. Inspired by her idea in this regard, the interactive relationships among the social agents/participants in the translation process and the social and professional events will be mapped out and analysed based on interview data. Using interviews to analyse individual activities within the field in which they are embedded will allow me to examine the logic of functioning internal to the field as well as the stakes and interests that drive the translation activity which have yielded the Chinese auto/biographies in a Western context. In the next section I will raise and discuss some key issues around the limitations of autobiographical truth to examine the way the translated Chinese auto/biographical writings are represented and framed in the newspaper reviews.

2.3.2 Conditions of the Auto/biographical 'Truth'

2.3.2.1 Authorial Intentionality: A Guarantee of the Truth

Of particular relevance to the attempt to characterise features of auto/biographical writing, as distinct from those of fiction, are the conceptual issues of truth, fact, selfhood and authority. These issues are cross-cut by questions around the notion of intentionality in autobiography (Marcus, 1994: 3-4). Intentionality, as Marcus points out, refers to the sincerity and seriousness of writers both in terms of their personality, their motives and truthfulness with regard to the writing of an autobiographical text. Intentionality thus is expected to guarantee what is called the autobiographical 'truth' (1994: 3); in this sense it not only signifies the authorial motives but shapes the way the autobiography is received; it shapes the reader response and the reader expectations about the autobiographical work (1994: 3). However, the question that remains is how to ascertain an author's seriousness and sincerity. In response to this question, Pascal argues that we should examine the author's standpoint, by which he means 'the actual social position of the writer, his [her] acknowledged achievement in any field, his [her] present philosophy' (1960: 9). The concept of standpoint is specific to the writers' past experiences and achievements and their current social and cultural positions and political and ideological views on the basis of which they interpret and represent their

lives in retrospect. It is what Marcus calls ‘the perceived cultural status of the autobiographer’ (1994: 4) that ensures his/her seriousness and ability to enable him/her to interpret his/her past self as something extraordinary and peculiar, which is worthwhile as an autobiographical effort. However, Marcus’s suggestion is not without its problems. It substitutes ‘cultural status’ for the truth-value of autobiography. It relies on the perceived reputation of the writer, and thus considers reputation in a rather unproblematic way. What is more problematic is its assumption about the writer’s name or symbolic capital – to use Bourdieu’s concept – as the guarantor of the value of autobiography which presumably resides in its correspondence to facts, to ‘what really happened’.

The truth-value of the autobiographical writing is, thus, *prima facie* based on a certain degree of trust towards the author. This requires what Lejeune (1982: 231) describes as an ‘autobiographical contract’, based on the author’s intention to ‘honour the signature’ (202). That is to say, writing autobiography involves ‘a contract’ signed by the author’s name which is to be implicitly taken by the reader as a guarantee of the ‘truth’ and ‘fact’. This reader-author contract is essential in the sense that it ‘determines how the text is read and produces the effects attributed to the text’ (Lejeune, 1982: 219). This implicit contractual arrangement distinguishes autobiography from other genres of writing. Expectations about honouring the ethical commitment frame faithfulness, sincerity and accuracy as the primary determinant properties and principles over and above other literary elements and criteria. The principles of truth-value and factual accuracy are so central to the reception of the genre of autobiography that, as Anderson notes, ‘autobiographies are seen as providing proof of the validity and importance of a certain conception of authorship’ (2001: 3).

However, as Lejeune (1982: 218) points out, the contract is culturally and socially anchored, especially given the fact that providing a writer’s name on the cover of a book that is specified as autobiography involves both authors and publishers who orient the reader in this (marketable) direction from the very start. Marcus makes this point more explicitly: when it comes to the question of intentionality he points out that the perceived degree of intentionality in autobiographical texts is determined for the most part by the dominant view in the publishing and literary market place at a given time and place (1994: 4). Indeed, this view draws attention to the process of production and circulation where the author’s cultural status and intentionality are represented through, for instance, the two overlapping processes of publicity and reviewing. This is particularly the case with the Chinese auto/biographies in which the author’s ‘signature’ of authenticity, as it were, is validated – through the means of

publicity and press reviews – by reference to their past experiences as well as their current positions (in both senses of position: cultural and ideological). It is important in this respect to examine how the writers' standpoints are (re)presented through promotional activities and 'practical reviews', to use Edward Said's description⁷, in such a way as to constitute an intentionality discourse that legitimises a certain type of 'truth' in their auto/biographical writings.

2.3.2.2 *Subjectivity: Reconstruction of the Past*

The autobiographical truth is further challenged when the past-self and current-self are in question, which brings out the problematic of authorship in time and memory. The truth-value underlying the past experience from the author's current cultural and ideological standpoint thus becomes unstable and open to questioning. Although the truth of autobiography can be defined and recognised as self-representation rather than literal veracity of the fact (Marcus, 1994; Pascal, 1960; Weintraub, 1978), yet viewing the autobiographical truth as mainly a matter of self-representation still does not settle some questions around the complex role of autobiographical subjectivity. This is so because autobiographical subjectivity is complex and fluid and it is often difficult to draw the boundaries between author, narrator and protagonist. Drawing these boundaries within the space of autobiographical subjectivity remains a challenge for the reader as well as for the truth claims of any auto/biography. Since the truth-value relies on the author's introspection, the debate over the temporality and the role of memories is focused on understanding of the interrelated roles and positions of the author, narrator and subject of the texts.

Critics like Lejeune see the role of author, narrator and protagonist as a unified subject by virtue of the nature of autobiography as a genre, which suggests that the primacy of the genre lies in truth-narrating (1982: 202). In contrast, sceptics about the notion of the autobiographical subject reject this simplified identification and emphasise the complex and problematic relationships between the author, the subject and the act of writing. Burke (1995) questions the notion of authorship by differentiating the author as 'subject-writing' from the subject as 'subject-written-about'; he suggests the autobiographical dilemma emanates from the element of temporality that mediates the experiences written about and the writing about these experiences. In Burke's view autobiographers have to inevitably face up to and overcome this dilemma by erasing this distinction (1995: 303-04). Montaigne (1995) in his

⁷ Said classifies book reviewing and literary journalism as a form of what he calls practical criticism (1983).

Essays also throws into question the notion of autobiographical subjectivity as he finds himself constantly facing an authorial dilemma in writing his own autobiography. He questioning runs thus: 'whether I am different myself, or whether I take hold of my subjects in different circumstances and aspects' (1995: 309). The point underlying his question shows that the self can only be regained through the selection and reconstruction of the past (memories) by the author from the vantage point of the present in the narratives of confession and conversion. This results in a situation where, as Burke puts, 'the autobiographical "I" is constantly divided in its search for a past self which is ever in flight' (Burke, 1995: 305). The separation between the self lost in the past and the self that is retraceable only through the memory arguably points to the impossibility of unifying the author and the subject as one complete, self-identical unity. This separation also deconstructs the self-authorial voice in which the sincerity of intentionality is taken as a promise for the autobiographical truth.

2.3.2.3 Literary Re-creativity of Factual Truth

The de-stabilisation of subjectivity which is seen as 'subject-in-process' by Julia Kristeva (1989: 128) not only makes autobiographical truth more problematic than it appears to be, but more importantly, it allows more room for the self-recreation. The re-creativity of the autobiographical self leads Helene Cixous to reframe the received definition of autobiography as a genre: 'All biographies like all autobiographies like all narratives tell one story in place of another story' (1997: 178). This remark deconstructs the bounds of autobiography as an autonomous territory in which the self is, like the protagonist in any other literary genre, thematised, dramatised, mediated and even distorted through the narrating of 'factual' incidents or 'fact-in-making' (Pascal, 1960: 16). This is in line with what Montaigne says about his self in autobiography: 'My history needs to be adapted to the moment. I may presently change, not only by chance, but also by intention' (1995: 309). The word 'intention' here betrays the writer's consciousness of selecting memories from the infinitely multi-faceted past, and the writer's attempt to selectively re-construct them in the process of the self-making where creativity in autobiography is an inescapable defining feature.

Nonetheless, the notion of creativity in autobiographical writing is disputable in relation to the nature of the genre. Olney points out the impossibility of speaking of an aesthetic form that is attached to autobiography; as a result, autobiographers would 'neither imagine nor admit that they were "writers"' (1980: 4). Olney sees as problematic Pascal's (1960) notion of half discovery and half creation in the autobiographical subjectivity as it undermines the

nature of self-writing. Olney notes that this problematic aspect of autobiography is in some sense inevitable and, paradoxically, it is a productive problem in that it generates questions that can be addressed only through literary criticism. It is the fact that literary criticism addresses questions raised by the problematic character of autobiography that lends autobiography its literariness as a genre. Within literary criticism, the narrative, rather than the mere description, is required in the form of auto/biographical writing (Starobinski, 1980: 73), which inevitably brings into light the literary nature and fictional creation in autobiography. In terms of narrative, John Freccero highlights a phenomenon of conversion of 'a moment of self-consciousness' into a form of narrative that serves to separate the 'observing self' from 'the observed' self (1986: 20). This involves past incidents being transferred into a temporal sequence in a form of story telling that leaves immense room for aesthetic creation. This aspect also suggests that individual personality can only be achieved in the self-writing, both traditional and modern, with its literary expression and linguistic rhetoric. This aesthetic nature of auto/biography was experimented with by a modernist group of writers such as Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey and Harold Nicolson in the early twentieth century in Britain. In their new literary outlook, biography is perceived and practised as an art and, thus, a 'selection and shaping of "facts" [in biographical writing] is all-important' (Marcus, 1994: 90-91). Their view is that writers of biography are to a great extent involved in writing autobiography because they cannot avoid an autobiographical element of self-projection and writing about other selves mediated through their subjective experiences, beliefs and active imagination. Thus, there is little room played by the biographer as an objective reporter; the biographer is thus viewed as an active agency who paints a self-portrait under the guise of biography. Not only do the new literary biographical experiments put the generic boundaries at risk, but also emphasise the aesthetic dimensions of the genre which lie in the process of selecting the 'facts', synthesising them and then creatively transforming them into an aesthetic literary form, a piece of art in Woolf's view (1966-67: 231).

2.3.2.4 Autobiographical Self and Historical Accuracy

Recognising the creativity involved in historical writing, Cam (1961) lists a number of literary properties inherent in historical writing that auto/biographical writings cannot achieve. One of these properties is the fact that historical events and circumstances are crucial as they form the very background against which the historical character manifests him/herself, whereas in auto/biographical writing this property is replaced with the significant self (1961:

302-04). Regarding the connection between history and the auto/biographical subject discussed by Cam, Pascal views the historical background, used in auto/biographical writings, as secondary but necessary, given that the self can be represented only in and through its relationships with the historical circumstances (1960: 8-9). That is to say, the way the writer approaches the outside world – where the self is alienated – gives an indication as to ‘why the writer approaches the self in that particular way, and even decides what kind of role the writer will choose for his/her “self” to play in his/her literary writing’ (Chen, 1996: 41). It is this very argument that leads to a critical discussion of the dualities of the self versus the historical outer world, the interior spaces of mind and personal being versus the public world, which are intertwined in autobiographical writing.

The ‘truth’ and ‘fact’ in autobiography, it is argued, are not to be assessed in relation to the outer world veracity (including historical facts). In Pascal’s view (1960: 67), the omissions or distortions of the facts that undermine the historical ‘truth’ can be tolerated as the outside world is not seen as of central interest to auto/biographical writing. However, the presence of the historical background, within its connection with writing the individual’s life and self, is necessary to the extent that it provides a context where ‘the personality finds its peculiar shape’ (1960: 9). It is the very value of inner self-growth and the autonomous status of autobiography that mark it out from the genre of history-writing ‘where history was and is defined as an “objective”, “documentary” approach to lives and events’ (Marcus, 1994: 5).

Verifying history through auto/biography also raises crucial questions about the relation of auto/biography to history. Felman (1992) highlights the problematic aspect of reading a literary work (including auto/biography) as a form of historical witness since its literary nature will inevitably blur the facticity of historical facts, although literary works can never be free from functioning historically and, therefore, cannot be prevented from inducing ‘real effects which can work independently of their intent’ (1992: 148). Historical reference in autobiographical writing opens up another alternative readings for re-conceptualising the personal voice as a form of witness to represent a certain mode of existence and guarantee its veracity through the circulation and operation of certain discourses within society (Harpham, 1995). The personal experience, in this context, is treated as both unique and representative – positioning the autobiographer as a representative subject who stands for those who are from the same cultural community. Therefore, autobiography – written in the first person singular and from within – offers a privileged access to experiences that tend to be left out of official mainstream historical documents. This is the case with the experiences of black people in

American history,⁸ the experiences of Mexicans in the United States (Gillmore, 2001: 5), feminine experiences (Anderson, L., 1997) and experiences of Communist China recorded in (translated) English narratives (Grice, 2002: 103-28), amongst so many other cases. The role of representativeness through personal experience prompts Felman to ask the question of 'how we know that the "personal" voice that the critic is speaking in is her own' (Anderson, L., 2001: 126) The question Felman raises suggests that within the representativeness discourse, the personal voice becomes blurred when it is transformed into a representative sample of public discourse. This particular issue is addressed by Susanna Egan (1999) in relation to the auto/biographies of diaspora/exile produced in English-speaking countries, which are seen as forming a 'collaborative project' involving publishers, editors and critics and readerships (1999: 121).

The question of how to read and represent the *self* and its relevance to historical, cultural and social circumstances in these diaspora/exile auto/biographies is just as crucial as the process of producing them. This processes of reading and representing combine to reflect the value system in the host country that shapes the literary image and trajectory of 'those who are constructed and represented as "indigenous" '(Brah, 1996: 209), or as representatives of indigenous, it could be added. This is particularly the case with writing and reading Chinese auto/biographies in the West where the personal and cultural narrative of auto/biography has been received through the English literary system. The notion of subjectivity in autobiographical writing in this context can be more complicated in that the writer's 'I' from a Chinese minority position in the West has to be justified as worthwhile in and through the target production and circulation assemblage, as it were. This is of crucial importance because autobiographical writing, especially translated autobiographical writing, cannot be assumed to have the inherent quality of transcending the individual experience of the writer and having some self-evident universal value and relevance. In other words, the typical sceptical reader may well by default ask the question of: if this auto/biography is about the writer's personal experience, whatever the nature of that experience, then what is to do with me? What relevance and significance does it have beyond some narcissistic navel-gazing or therapeutic or nostalgic reminiscing on the part of a writer who at the same time is in search of a literary reputation? Thus, autobiography's transcendence of the limited realm of personal experience needs to be explicitly established. The represented authorial voice and the

⁸ Black history has been recorded, preserved and circulated through autobiographies written by black writers, which completely overrun standard history writing (Olney, 1980: 13).

authors' standpoints ascribed to the representing discourse raise the question of who is speaking? Where is the 'I' speaking from? And for whom? In next section I will look at the role the press review as embodying an expert and authoritative voice exercising some authority over the means of diffusion with its impact on the interpretation, representation and reception of literary works.

2.3.3 Critical/Press Reviewers and Their Relations to the Reading Public

Criticism is defined by Pierre Macherey as an ambiguous term since it implicates both a gesture of denunciation and discrimination and at the same time a 'positive knowledge of limits, the study of the conditions and possibilities of an activity' (2006: 1). Within these seemingly incompatible aspects of a single operation, Macherey sees the denunciation aspect as a gesture, a strategic gesture that establishes an authoritative position in order to supply what is defined as the 'truth' of the knowledge or rules of a 'pre-existence' of a literary domain (2006: 7). While the knowledge of limits signifies the normative values to be applied to literary texts, through a system or 'model' of a judgement (2006: 19), by applying the rules of a prescriptive aesthetics to a literary work, it reveals 'the unconscious' of criticism, which reflects its hidden ideology in a given society. Criticism is not classified in terms of its function; in other words, in Macherey's view, it refers to both criticism as appreciation (the education of taste) and criticism as knowledge (the science of literary production) (2006: 4). The book critics and reviews in the press fall into the latter category according to Macherey.

Said characterises book reviewing in newspapers, along with literary journalism, as 'practical criticism', one among the four types of literary criticism that he identifies (1983: 1).⁹ Like Macherey, Said does not directly address the genre of book reviews, yet his concept of literary critics includes all four types of critics who are defined by their possession of literary expertise. Along the same lines, Maier notes that the difference between criticism and reviews is not clear-cut, although they are differentiated as distinct activities focusing on different aspects of the literary work (Maier, 1990: 21). Despite the various activities and forms of criticism, one shared view among these scholars is that the literary critic is positioned as an expert voice on the literary value of literary products that appear or about to appear in the market. The literary/critical practice is, thus, intertwined with the realities of power and authority as the activity of evaluation and discrimination serves to 'secure

⁹ The other forms of literary criticism, apart from practical criticism, are academic literary history, literary appreciation and interpretation of particular literature through classroom teaching, and literary theory (Said, E. W., 1983).

protection of systems of belief' (Said, E. W., 1983: 292) and contribute to the canonisation of particular literature in a given culture (1983: 2-5).

Regarding the influential role reviewers have exerted on the reading public, Genette (1997) talks about what he calls paratexts or paratextual elements which include book reviews, along with other phenomena such as interviews with the authors, private letters and other authorial and editorial discussions and publicity materials. He sees these paratextual elements as crucial factors that come into play to construct the *outside* of the text. The paratextual of the *outside* of the text, or 'the roles of the domain' as Macherey puts it, to a large extent shape the reception of a text in a given culture (Genette, 1997: 4-5). The reading of literary works is heavily marked, in Genette's view, by the paratextual elements to the extent that they function to contextualise and frame the text for the readers. It is through the (re)presentation of a literary text made by the *outside* of the text that a specific 'take' and the predominant ideology are brought into the public domain to define a literary work as worthy of people's attention, and to provide some implicit and explicit guidelines as to how it should be read. In this sense, the space of the *outside* of the text bears some resemblance in terms of its mode of functioning to what Bourdieu describes as the journalistic field which to a great extent shapes the ways in which people (can) relate to, interpret and understand a particular set of political issues or ideologies (1991).

Like journalism in Bourdieu's conception, book reviews exercise an authoritative voice over the means of diffusion, and over the public visibility of literary works, and seek to prescribe the way a literary work should be read (Genette, 1997: 8-12), although book reviews appear to stand at some distance from the reality of power and authority in the textual production process (Macherey, 2006; Said, E. W., 1983). The authoritative voice, in Macherey's view, is not meant to serve as a reflection of the literary work, or to speak the truth about the literary book; rather, it aims to present a certain form of knowledge where an object (literary work) 'is not a given but a product of literary criticism' that endows it with meanings (2006: 7). The meaning of a literary work depends on the views and interpretations coming from literary criticism, or the *outside* of the text in Genette's term; thus, the relationship between the critical discourse and the literary work is 'that between power and action, and the meaning and its expression' (Macherey, 2006: 86).

Within the context of critical discourse Macherey (2004, 2006) talks about the spoken and unspoken sides of the literary work in the critical judgement and interpretive commentary.

What the critics try to capture and render visible is the self-consciousness of the work, and through explanation and interpretation of this spoken side, critical analysis reveals the work's 'unconscious' and hidden side which lies in the 'not-said' of the work (2004: 254). What is spoken is 'symptomatic' of what is unspoken. In this sense, according to Macherey, they are two sides of the critical performance – implicit and explicit, 'the manifest and the latent, the discovered and the concealed' (Macherey, 2006: 92); both sides thus come together to reveal the pre-dominant ideology and its underlying logic. However, for Macherey, it would be wrong to assume that critics deliberately hide something in order to promote a certain type of ideology, since 'the work is not hiding what it does not say: it is simply *missing*' (Macherey, 2004: 254). In other words, ideology in Macherey's sense is defined as shapeless, unnoticeable and invisible, therefore 'unconscious'; it manifests itself in the activity of critical judgement and interpretation determined by the pre-existence of a domain.

Brown examined the book reviews that appeared in newspapers and literary journals in relation to reviewing Latin American novels published in West Germany in 1980 (1994). He argues that the value of the reviews lies in their function as an important source to inform the public about newly published books as well as about the writer and the writer's *oeuvre* (1994: 87). By mediating between a literary work and a reading public, 'the reviews therefore possess an integrative function of social cohesiveness as a shared experience and common opinions' (1994: 87). This social interactive role is also realised through their function as a form of publicity (Brown, 1994: 88), which may not affect significantly people's decision to purchase a specific book, but it nevertheless serves the purpose of disseminating literature by informing potential readers about the existence of a literary work as well as its worth. However, it needs to be noted that the impact of the reviews' role is not simply limited to the scope of circulation, the uptake and the economic success or failure of a given literary product; it goes well beyond that to affect, in subtle, indirect and mediated ways, people's receptions of the literary work. Additionally, through the process of the evaluation of the literary work, reviews in turn reflect the literary value system which is closely bound up with social, cultural and ideological indicators in a given society (Brown, 1994; Venuti, 1995). As Macherey puts, 'all criticism can be summed up as a value judgment in the margin of the book' (2006: 18). Although the reviewer's reaction to the reviewed work, as Brown warns, should not be fully taken as identical with that of the general reading public (1994: 89), yet acting as 'opinion-makers, opinion-multipliers' (Brown, 1994: 90), their reaction to the

literary work to a certain extent steers the readers' expectations (Brown, 1994) which, in turn, echo the prevailing values and ideology in a given literary system (Macherey, 2004: 252-53).

The role of book reviews becomes even more crucial when representations of non-Western cultures and societies are involved in the literary works that are reviewed, as is the case with the translated Chinese auto/biographies in this study. Since Chinese culture and literature are less familiar to the British reading public, the expert voice of reviews becomes indispensable for the contextual and textual information about the reviewed work. It is thus important to see how press reviews introduce the Chinese writers and frame their own interpretations of the essence of the Chinese auto/biographies, which to a great extent sets the terms of the debate and transmits to target culture readers a sense of the worthiness of reading a newly published Chinese auto/biographies. Macherey's concepts of the spoken and unspoken in the discourse of critical reviews of literary works are seen as the main conceptual tool to my analysis of the newspaper reviews. This analytic framework for the press reviews can yield insights into what is 'in' the reviews, some of which may be explicit or implicit, as well as what is absent or missing from the reviews, which is just as significant. By examining the press reviews, I will highlight the types of assumptions they have made about their readers' perceptions and expectations about contemporary Chinese culture and society. I will also point out the types of cultural and ideological tendencies in the British value system as they manifest themselves through the press reviews. In the section next I will outline the research methodology employed in the study.

2.4 Data Selection and Analytical Strategy

The research strategies and techniques that I will employ in this study consist of a) a textual analysis of press reviews of the selected translated Chinese auto/biographical writings that appeared in UK newspapers; and b) and qualitative interviews. I will start off by an account of how the six auto/biographical narratives along with their translations have been collected and compiled and the criteria for selecting and sampling the books that come under this study. Then I will expound the selection of the newspaper reviews for the textual analysis. Finally, I will explain how I have conducted the interviews, set out the ways in which I will use the interview data, and reflect on the ethical issues related to conducting interviews and using interview data in my research.

2.4.1 Data Selection

In this research I have selected six Chinese auto/biographies that have been translated into English, namely: *Good Women of China* (2002) and *Sky Burial* (2004),¹⁰ written by Xinran, and translated by Esther Tydesley (ET) (the translator for the former and the co-translator with Julia Lovell (JL) for the latter); *Village of Stone* (2004), written by Guo Xiaolu and translated by Cindy Carter (CC); *Red Dust* (2001), written by Ma Jian and translated by Flora Drew (FD); *Shanghai Baby* (2001), written by Wei Hui and translated by Bruce Humes (BH); and *Daughter of the River* (1998) written by Hong Ying and translated by Howard Goldblatt (HG). The selection of the six books is based on the thematic orientation and their genre, along with their classification as (self-)exile writings. I will elaborate on these classifications and set out the rationale for making them.

It is important to note at first that *Wild Swans*, published in the UK in 1991, is seen as a seminal pioneering work that set a positive precedent for the thematic orientation of subsequent works narrating ‘Red China’, both written in and translated into English (Grice, 2002); thus, subsequent works have built upon – in an intertextual manner – and as a result have enjoyed a great deal of popularity and commercial success. I have therefore selected the translated auto/biographical writings that appeared in the UK after the publication of *Wild Swans* up to 2005. There was a practical reason for this period (i.e. 1991-2005) as one of the criteria for selection: I set 2005 as my cut-off point on the ground that 2005 was the year my dissertation proposal with six of the selected books got formally approved by the panel of my first year review. Moreover, as this research primarily examines the translation process of Chinese auto/biographical writings in the UK publishing and literary field(s), the data accordingly is limited only to auto/biographical works by Chinese (self-)exile writers that have been published within the UK context. There are two reasons for limiting my focus to the UK context: first, there is the important factor of my location in the UK and thus the availability and accessibility of my sources of data (including the interview data gathered from my mostly UK-based interviewees); secondly, limiting the scope of the study to the UK makes my research focus more manageable, and makes it possible for me to conduct an in-depth study; so in that sense I have opted for depth for my study rather than breadth involving cases from countries other than the UK. Thus my study does not include other national contexts within the English-speaking world, such as the US context where writing ‘Red China’ by (self-)exile writers came out even earlier, and is seen as a major literary genre on the scene

¹⁰ *Sky Burial* has not been published in Chinese in the Chinese-speaking world.

(Grice, 2002; Kramer, 1999). Thus, using the UK context as an indicator and source for my selected books does not mean that the visibility and success of translated Chinese auto/biographies are exclusively a British phenomenon.

Second, another criterion for the selection of the six books is writing about Communist China as a primary theme. Here, on the basis of Grice's description of 'writing Red China', which refers to the narratives of the writers' experiences during and after the Cultural Revolution, I have selected three types of what I describe here as auto/biographies in the broad sense. The selection was based on the range of social issues within their thematic make-up. The new generation writings in the 1990s by a group of women writers have also drawn a great deal of attention in the West, with their distinctive and noticeable representation – in both senses of representation – of the new Chinese generation in the transitional period of the Chinese socio-economic system during the 1990s.

In parallel, the selection has sought to create a diversified sample of auto/biographies, with autobiography defined in a broad sense (as opposed to the narrow sense of someone narrating some episodes of their lives). Ma Jian's *Red Dust* (2001) and Hong Ying's *Daughter of the River* (1998) are autobiographies in the conventional sense of the term. I have also included two semi-autobiographical writings, namely: *Shanghai Baby* and *Village of Stone* by young (self-)exile writers Wei Hui and Guo Xiaolu. These two are written in the third person singular but are indeed based on writers' own personal encounters, hence their significant autobiographical dimension. In addition, my sample includes two biographies, namely *Good Women of China* (2002) and *Sky Burial* (2004), both written by Xinran where she narrates the life-stories of the women she encountered during her investigative journalistic journeys. Again, strictly speaking and based on the conventional conception of autobiography, *Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial* are not classifiable as autobiographies. However, my broad working definition of autobiography is in line with Virginia Woolf's and Helene Cixous's take on the nature of the autobiographical dimension as discussed above (Cixous, 1997; Gualtieri, 2000). Both Woolf and Cixous cogently argue that writing biography always involves an autobiographical dimension that permeates and informs the writing of biography. Further, in the case of these two biographies, what further warrants approaching them within the broad parameters of autobiography is the fact that the biographies were the product of a personal and in a significant sense autobiographical journey that Xinran went on. To that extent, these two books by Xianran, in the final analysis, document her personal

autobiographical journey into the heart of China, into these women's lives, and into the male-dominated territory of Chinese society.

I have thus included two semi-autobiographies and two biographies alongside the two autobiographies to widen the scope of the data and enhance the degree of representativeness of the case studies. Thus, underpinning the sampling strategy is a broad – rather than restrictive – conception of autobiography; the category of auto/biographical writing is loosely used to diversify my sampling criteria.

Finally, the (self-)exile context was taken into account as part of the sampling strategy since (self-)exile position is always in the spotlight and is seen, with some good reason, as closely bound up with the act of writing on Communist China in the West. The (self-)exile of Chinese writers has been for the most part associated with, and indeed caused by, the social and political upheavals that took place through the various stage of contemporary modern Chinese history which have acted as external forces and also created subjective reasons for massive Chinese writers' exile and self-exile. With regard to the Chinese writers included in this study, some writers live in self-imposed exile, and some in externally imposed exile, as it were, that dates back to one of the major waves of Chinese emigration due to social and political turbulence.

The external forces and circumstances, such as Deng Xiaoping's opening up and reform policy in the early 1980s where maintaining the political status quo under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party required restrictions on literary creativity and variety in the literary field, made China uninhabitable for a great number of writers and intellectuals (Kong, 2003: 550). As a result of this situation, Ma Jian fled to Hong Kong in 1986 and later settled in London where he wrote *Red Dust* which contained detailed descriptions of the 1980s social and political background in China, and it was published in 2001 in the UK. *Red Dust* is an autobiographical work that recounts Ma Jian's journey to deserts and deprived areas and cities during his flight from possible political persecution that was imminent in Beijing.

All the works that have been selected for this study were the respective debut publications of their authors in the UK with the exception of Hong Ying's *Daughter of the River* which followed her first translated novel *Summer of Betrayal* 1997, also published in the UK. Hong Ying's self-exile position is the result of another wave of emigration that occurred in the wake of the Tiananmen demonstrations in 1989. The personal experience of involvement with the Tiananmen demonstrations is narrated in *Summer of Betrayal*. Hong Ying came over

to London in 1991 and has consequently settled in the UK as a writer. *Daughter of the River* is an autobiography revolving around Hong Ying's mysterious birth, in parallel with the revelation of her mother's two marriages before 1949 when the People's Republic of China was established, and a turbulent affair after marriage. The personal story spans the historical periods of the Great Famine from early 1958 till 1965, through the Cultural Revolution and finally up to the Tiananmen demonstrations.

Xinran, for her part, moved to London in 1997 where she wrote and published her two biographical writings: *Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial* in 2002 and 2004 respectively. The two biographical writings are based on selected stories from her recorded interviews with Chinese female audiences while she was hosting a call-in radio programme, working for Chinese Radio Station as a journalist and broadcaster in the late 1980s. Chinese women's suffering and misery during and after the Cultural Revolution under the Communist reign are narrated in these biographical writings which are seen as capturing truthful witness voices of Chinese women under these adverse circumstances. Although she said she decided to write these biographies only after she came to the UK when she realised how little the West knew about China (Lambert, 13 July 2002), yet the fact that she brought the recordings with her to the UK suggests that it was a case of self-imposed exile motivated by the pursuit of a literary career, or at least the pursuit of a more propitious environment for literary productions and activities.

Wei Hui settled in the United States after her semi-autobiographical work *Shanghai Baby* was banned in China but successfully published in the UK. After the governmental ban on her first semi-autobiography in China that can be seen as a very significant external factor that made China no longer home for her as a writer, she continued to produce a sequence of novels in the United States.

The least political reasons for leaving China are found in the case of Gou Xiaolu who left China and moved into a form of self-exile in the UK with a view to pursuing her cinematic and literary career. In China she would not have found a propitious enough environment for her development as a cinematographer due to various forms of censorship. She thus moved away from the literary and artistic circles in China in the hope of living in a state of 'inner exile' in the UK that would be productive and self-fulfilling in terms of her literary and artistic achievement. She initially came as a student to do her Master's degree in film studies in a UK university, during which time she directed and produced her first film entitled *The*

Concrete Revolution in 2004.¹¹ Then in 2004 she set about attempting to get her semi-autobiographical writing *Village of Stone* translated and published in the UK. *Village of Stone* contains strong autobiographical elements based on Guo Xiaolu's childhood when she was living in a fishing town, a small coastal town isolated and remote from the rest of the world of China, which stands in striking contrast to the city life where she spends her adolescence. The narrative alternates between the protagonist's childhood story in this small fishing town and her adolescence through feverish and restless city life; she captures this contrast through the technique of flashbacks and non-linear narrative which accentuate the gap between rural and urban China, a gap that was exacerbated by the push for modernisation in China in the 1990s and its consequent social change. In the next section I will explain how the press reviews of these six Chinese auto/biographical writings have been collected and how they are approached and examined.

2.4.2 Gathering and Approaching the Analysis of Press Reviews

As Brown observes, the newspaper review nowadays also functions as a form of publicity (Brown, 1994: 88). Thus, reviews of a newly published book are often run in the UK newspapers right after the book comes out in the market and the reviews continually appear in the various newspapers for another one or two years. In this study, I have collected the reviews of the auto/biographies in my study that appeared in both the broadsheets and the tabloids from the time these auto/biographies came out and all through the following two years from the time of publication. Using the library databases of the University of Edinburgh, I have collected all the reviews of these six auto/biographical writings that appeared in the various UK newspapers both in the broadsheets and the tabloids. The search focused on the reviews of each book within two years starting from the time when the book came out, since the reviews are usually concentrated in that period of time; most, if not all, the reviews for a particular new book appear over the two years following its publication and appearance on the book market. The newspaper reviews are sampled and included into the primary data in this research on the ground that they serve as means of disseminating literary works, and my aim was to examine the ways in which the press reviews introduced, framed and represented the Chinese auto/biographical writings, the contextual socio-cultural circumstances surrounding the personal stories, their authors and the element of historical truth in

¹¹ The *Concrete Revolution* has received a Grand Prix award in The 3rd International Human Rights Film Festival of Paris in 2005. This documentary film portrays the reconstruction of modern China at the expense of age-old tradition and culture, which brings into light the acute dilemmas, dislocations and adversities attendant on the transitional period of China. More information on *The Concrete Revolution* is available at: http://www.guoxiaolu.com/REV_FIL_CR_reviews_distribution.htm

auto/biography. On the other hand, to keep the sample manageable and thematically relevant, the sampling criteria for the press reviews have been limited to reviews that have appeared in UK-based print newspapers, and thus excluded reviews that had appeared in electronic format on the internet as well as reviews that had appeared in literary magazines and journals and any reviews written from outside the UK. In the next section I will explain the interview methodology that is used as a source of data to examine the translation process of the six auto/biographical writings.

2.4.3 Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviewing is an interpretative and interactive research strategy. The objective of qualitative interviewing is to generate accounts, conceptions, explanations, in short narratives, from the interviewee's experiences and point of view, and to reconstruct and make sense of the socio-cultural phenomena that are under study (Warren, 2002). It is particularly useful in narrative and conversation analysis aimed at understanding a particular social or cultural phenomenon as experienced by social agents involved in that particular phenomenon (Warren, 2002). In conducting qualitative interviewing in this research, my aim is to elicit some first-hand accounts and information on the decisions, pressures, circumstances, motivations and stakes that come into play in the translation process prior to the emergence of the end product, i.e. the translated work available to the public in the book market. The meaning-making and factual exploration offered by qualitative interviews are of great importance and relevance to this research.

Kvale (1996) points out some of the issues that arise in various stages of the qualitative interviewing, ranging from the location of the interview, the themes dealt with, to ethical issues. Interviews yield very rich qualitative data, and often the data is more than the transcribed words on paper. As Gillham (2000) notes, interviewing techniques involve a very active type of listening and meaning-making on the part of the interviewer which involves verbal and non-verbal dimensions. In the next sub-sections I will address some of the issues pertinent to this research in connection with the interviewees who have contributed to the data, the location of the interviews, the interviewing strategies and the ethical considerations involved in conducting research with my type of interviewees.

a) Interviewees

I have intended to approach the interviewees according to the various professions involved in the translating process of the six Chinese auto/biographical books. This involves four distinct professional roles: namely, literary agent, publisher, translator and author.

The people who work in the publishing industry and whom I approached to interview were: Toby Eady, a literary agent from Toby Eady Associates,¹² who, as it turned out, dealt with importation and translation of all the auto/biographical writings under this study; Rebecca Carter from Random House, who was the editor for *Village of Stone*, *Red Dust*, *Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial*; Nick Robinson from Constable&Robinson, who was the editor for *Shanghai Baby*; and Liz Calder and Rosemary Davidson from Bloomsbury who were the editors for *Daughter of the River*. I additionally intended to interview the translators and authors of these six auto/biographical writings: namely, Xinran, the author of *Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial*, the translator of the former: Esther Tyldesley and co-translator of the latter with Juilia Lovell; Ma Jian and Flora Drew, the author and translator of *Red Dust*; Wei Hui and Bruce Humes, the author and translator of *Shanghai Baby*; Hong Ying and Howard Goldblatt, the author and translator of *Daughter of the River*; and Guo Xiaolu and Cindy Carter, the author and translator of *Village of Stone*. Most of the interviewees were approached initially via email except for Liz Calder and Rosemary Davidson from Bloomsbury who did not respond to the emails I sent them several times asking about the possibility of interviewing them as part of this study. Eventually most of the interviews were conducted in the year 2005 and several of them were done in 2006 with the editors of *Daughter of the River* remained undone due to the editors' lack of response to my invitations as I have indicated.

b) The Location of the Interviews and the Mode of Interviewing

Where possible, the interviews in this research were conducted in the form of face-to-face individual conversations in order to elicit the information desired from 'in-depth' responses (Gillham, 2000: 19). However, considering the places where each interview took place varied from case to case, depending on where the interviewees were based. Some of interviews were conducted over the phone or via email. I have conducted face-to-face interviews with the interviewees who were based in the UK (with the exception of Hong Ying whom I had a

¹² For more information, see this organisation's website at: <http://www.tobyeadyassociates.co.uk/home.html>

phone interview with). I interviewed Toby Eady, Rebecca Carter, Nick Robinson, Xinran, Esther Tyldesley, Ma Jian, Flora Drew, Guo Xiaolu in London; Wei Hui was interviewed in Edinburgh where she was invited to give a talk and reading at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2005. I interviewed Hong Ying over the phone in 2006 and I was taking notes of the content of interview. I resorted to the phone interview in this case after several unsuccessful attempts to meet with her in London due to her tight schedule. Email interviews were conducted with Julia Lovell who was based in Cambridge; I also interviewed via email Bruce Humes and Cindy Carter, both of whom were at the time living in China, as well as Howard Goldblatt who was based in the US.

c) The Interviewing Strategy

Gillham divides the interviewing exercise into four stages that each interview should contain: 'the introductory phase, the opening development of the interview, the central core of the interview, bringing the interview to a close' (2000: 37). He notes that the introductory and closing phases are often ignored and skated over by many people, whilst they should be seen as indispensable stages of the interviewing process (Gillham, 2000) This is particularly the case with the introductory phase where the purpose and remit of the research are explained; it is also an opportunity for the interviewer to explain why s/he thinks interviewing the respondent is of relevance and importance to the research; equally important, it is the stage where the interviewer requests permission from the respondent to record the interview and to ask if the respondent has any questions before the start of the interview.

I have employed the semi-structured interview as a research technique where the main questions are to a great degree left open-ended, although the order in which the questions get raised needs to follow a certain logical and systematic progression in accord with the researcher's well-thought-through conception of the themes and foci s/he aims to find out about (Gillham, 2000: 41). In such an interview format the interviewer brings up and develops the themes of the interview, and loosely and broadly sets the direction and the parameters for the interview content, although the actual answers very much depend upon the interviewees. Therefore, my interview questions were loosely designed for four categories of respondents according to the themes and issues around the participants' specific experience and the nature of their role and involvement in the translation process; the categories are: the literary agent, the publishers/editors, the translators and the authors (also referred to in this study as writers). However, even with the same category of respondents, each interview

schedule still differed from case to case to some degree due to the different individual books and my prior background knowledge about these books (for individual interview schedules, please see Appendix).

The main themes for the literary agent and the publishers revolved around the criteria for selecting a particular book for translation, and the circumstances and considerations surrounding the choice of a would-be translation. The broad questions that structured the conversations were the following: How did they find out about which types of books would sell well? What implications did that have for the selection of books for translation, and the translation process? To what extent did the publishers intervene to shape the translation strategies and the domestication – or otherwise – of the Chinese text for a Western audience? Additionally, with two of the two publishers who doubled up as editors, the conversations were also directed in such way as to engage with editing process. The questions were designed around the issues of what the editing job should be about, and how the translations of the auto/biographical writings were assessed, what kind of factors needed to be taken into account in the editing process, were there any general rules regarding what should be left out and what should be edited in regarding the six cases. In what circumstances the editing took place and how they negotiated with authors and translators about the major changes proposed and made. From the authors of the source language texts I tried to find out about their role in the translation process, and the extent to which they were consulted on the translation strategies and what type of input, if any, they made into it, as well as their assessment of the translation in relation to the original text. Finally, in my interviews with both independent and agency-sponsored translators who had translated the selected books, I raised questions around the role and scope of influence of the translation agencies they had worked for with regard to their translations of the books under study, the norms and criteria for a good translation, the people or institutions or any translational conventions that shaped or to some degree influenced these criteria/norms; and the degree and nature of cooperation with publishers and the types of negotiation and discussion with the authors when major changes were required.

d) Research Ethics

As my research is of the type that uses a methodological framework based on obtaining and analysing views and accounts which are, strictly speaking, personal data, ethical issues are major considerations that I had to give due attention to. Ethical issues in this respect can be seen as relevant to providing sufficient information to the participants; obtaining their

informed consent to participate; and ensuring the participants' right of withdrawal during or even after their participation and up until the time when the write-up of the research begins. From the very early stage of establishing contact and starting discussion with my prospective interviewees, I set out in detail the topic, remit and purpose of my research. I opened each interview by reiterating details about my research and how the interview with them would fit into my research. Equally important, I asked every time if my interviewees had any questions they would like to ask about the interview or any aspect of my research. Normally the ethical considerations should also include ensuring anonymity of the participants and confidentiality of the data. However, in the case of my research, anonymity and confidentiality had to be dealt with in an exceptional way given the nature of the research focus. Whilst in a sense it was pretty straightforward to ensure the confidentiality of the data as I have kept the data securely on my password-protected computer and I was the only person who had access to the data, maintaining anonymity was simply not feasible given the types of participants whom I have interviewed and their unique and publicly known roles in relation to publicly known and indeed highly publicised literary works. It is important to note that my interviewees participated in my research on the understanding that they would be identifiable in my research and the analysis and writing that would result from it. I made this point explicitly and I found they were already aware about it, and in fact they were used to being interviewed as public figures based on their roles in the literary field (agent, translators, writers and editors). So, to that extent, whilst it was impossible to meet the anonymity consideration in my research, I have obtained my participants' consent to being made identifiable in my research as something that is inevitable for the sake of my analysis.

Chapter 3 Importing Chinese Auto/biographies into the British publishing and Literary Fields

3.1 Introduction:

The stage of the selection of the source texts can be seen as the first step that sets the scene for the multi-faceted process of producing the target text within the target culture context. Thus, in this chapter I will make use of Bourdieu's three interrelated analytic concepts of field, *habitus* and capitals to explain the ways in which the six Chinese auto/biographical writings have been selected, the grounds on the basis of which the selection has been carried out, as well as the circumstances surrounding the selection. I will therefore first address the specific conventions and cultures in the network that is built and developed within and between the literary and publishing fields for the practice of selection. I will then focus on the role the literary agent and publishers have played and their interactions and negotiations within the networked processes of selection and translation of the six auto/biographies. Based on the interviews conducted with the participants, the analysis aims to explore how the specific cultures in the fields involved generate the participants' subjective dispositions that constitute their *habitus* which enables or facilitates the successful and efficient practice of selection. I will also explore and examine the criteria and grounds for the selection of the Chinese auto/biographical writings. Finally, I will highlight the types of capital gained from the process of the selection and translation by all the participants involved, which will allow me to examine the forces and motives that drive and steer the practices of selection and translation.

3.2 Networking the Translation of Chinese Auto/biographical Writings

The selection of Chinese auto/biographies for translation is a co-operative process in which various parties, especially literary agents and publishers, come together to make up a network where some form of chain work takes place and leads to the final production of the Chinese literary work within the British literary field. This network can be described as the interpersonal framework for the 'invested game' of importing Chinese literary works into the British literary scene; a game that is believed to be worth the investment by individual participants who compete for the stakes of the field (Bourdieu, 1990a). The participants who

are involved in this network often go through numerous delicate negotiations to arrive at some form of mutual agreement and a working decision. It normally starts with selecting and buying the potentially marketable Chinese literary work by the literary agent, and then selling it to an interested publisher. Within the network, although the decision-making is defined as an interactive negotiated activity where the movers and shakers also to some degree include people in the areas of publicity, marketing and sales (Graham, 1993: 128), yet the ultimate decision is to be made between literary agents and publishers who are the key figures in terms of the process or decision whereby a particular work of Chinese auto/biography crosses the threshold into the target public realm, and in the first place into the target book market.

3.2.1 Indispensable Partnerships within the Network

The fundamental difference between the roles of literary agents and publishers in the book production, as Gordon succinctly puts it, is that the publishers produce a book whereas agents 'represent' authors (Gordon, 1993). However, the role of agents has been gradually shifting and now it is seen as part and parcel of the literary production *per se*. This is so because, especially over the last few decades, the remit of their work, although variable in focus, has been extended to handling a wider range of business-related tasks, one of which is mainly to scout for would-be profitable material by authors to sell to the publishers. By actively participating in the various aspects of the production, literary agents are inevitably put in the position of the arbiters and evaluators of the literary manuscripts, thereby 'becoming the source of the valuation of copyright' (Gillies, 1993: 22). In theory, authors are the employers of their agents who normally get a 10 per cent commission fee out of all the deals they negotiate on behalf of the authors (Gordon, 1993: 168). However, in real situations the power relation is often reversed especially when substantial advances for the authors are paid by either the literary agent or the publishers, depending on the outcome of the negotiation.¹ In any case, paying money upfront to the author in a sense means a considerable amount of potential risk if the book turns out to be unpopular for instance, or if the whole process leading up to the publication for some reason or another starts to flounder or falls through completely. Simultaneously, upfront payments can also entail more control over the authors and more commission fees out of prospective sales (Gordon, 1993: 166). As the cases of the six books included in this study indicate, paying advances is not exclusively the publisher's

¹ An advance sum for a book refers to a certain amount of money paid to the authors before their books have been completed and produced. This sum serves in a sense as a living wage for authors to live on while still in the writing process. This sum will be recouped from the authors' percentage after the books have been sold (Gordon, 1993: 166).

responsibility; that is to say, the advances can be negotiable between the agents and publishers. The division of the advances paid to the author and the translator shows that the risk and profit would be more or less equally taken and shared between the publisher and the literary agent. In the cases of Ma Jian's *Red Dust*, Xinran's *Good Women of China* and Hong Ying's *Daughter of the River*, the advances were paid by the literary agent to the authors who, without an independent source of income, were completing their auto/biographical writings in the UK. In some other occasions, an advance can be paid to the author by the literary agent before a publisher has been found, which was the case with *Good Women of China*. The literary agent's taking (most) responsibility for the payment of advance fees is a sign of the literary agent's optimism based on an assessment of the book's prospects, including the economic risk involved; that is to say, he deemed these books to be promising in terms of popularity and financial returns. This involves, however, more control over the author (in terms of royalties and subsidiary rights, etc.) exercised by the literary agent instead of the publisher; it would also mean more revenue for the agent than the 10 percent of standard commission fees that will be paid to the literary agent after the book is sold.

Moreover, in relation to the Chinese authors whose works are part of this study, the literary agent's role seemed to be absolutely necessary and indispensable with regard to the decision on the publishable narrative stories, dealing with the details of the contracts, and choosing and negotiating with the publishers. One of the primary reasons for literary agent's indispensable position as a mediator for the Chinese authors is the authors' language and cultural barriers, especially within the British publishing system which presents a big number of cross-cultural challenges. Chinese authors thus find themselves in a situation where it is in their interest to be dependent on the literary agent for their debut in the UK. The dependent position, both culturally and financially, leaves more affairs for literary agents to handle, and at the same time gives agents more freedom regarding the decision making on behalf of the Chinese authors. The other side of the coin of the implicit delegation that the agent receives to act on behalf of the author is that this situation constrains the Chinese author's freedom to make decisions, choose and negotiate favourable terms with the publisher and weigh up their options primarily in the light of their own specific interests. In this case, the relations between the literary agents and the publishers tend to take the form of a partnership, which is thus part and parcel of the translation process itself from which both agents and publishers expect financial gains. Within the collaborative activities embedded within this interests-oriented network, and as a result of the power and authority over the authors, what used to be known

as the role of patrons is now played not only by publishers as Lefevere suggests (Lefevere, 1992: 15-16), but also by literary agents. Both of these roles exert a kind of tutelary power over authors and their work by commissioning the translation, assessing their literary worth and protecting their rights, and at the same time exert control over the literary production as a whole (Finkelstein & McCleery, 2005: 94-97). With respect to the six cases in this study, the literary agent, Toby Eady (TE), the editor Rebecca Carter (RC) at Random House and Nick Robinson (NR) in Constable & Robinson Publishers were the primary and decisive figures involved in the selection process. One of the most peculiar factors in the translation process of the six auto/biographical writings under study is that they were taken up by one literary agent, i.e. TE, who had also been the agent for the best-seller Chinese autobiography in *Wild Swans*.

3.2.2 Creating a Market for Translated Chinese Auto/biographical Writings

3.2.2.1 *Wild Swans: Opening up the Market*

In the 1980s the market for Chinese literary works was still in its embryonic stage, which was to some extent a reflection of the translation market which was very limited at the time. All three of the respondents, TE, RC and NR made this point. RC was most explicit about this aspect when she said:

In Britain ... I think it's very hard to get the British readers to read the books that are translated from other languages, they are more inclined to read the books written originally in English. (RC interview)

With a British readership whose reaction is difficult to anticipate (especially to new genres from unfamiliar socio-cultural territories), the translation in the publishing field is notoriously known to be an uncertain business with huge risks involved. The translation itself, for instance, would significantly increase the cost of the production; therefore, few in the field would be willing to 'gamble' on it. Under these circumstances, involvement with a Chinese translation project can be seen as pioneering and risk-taking move. On the other hand, it is also true that publishing translations was both an uncharted territory and also an untapped market and resource that seemed to have the potential to offer some attractive profits.

The opening up of the market for translation of Chinese auto/biographies can be easily traced back to the lucrative investment in *Wild Swans*. TE's first encounter with the project of *Wild Swans* has clearly shown the expanding market for Chinese literary works. The experience with *Wild Swans* had fed some considerable influence into the selection of the six auto/biographical writings. TE embarked on *Wild Swans*, working together with Jung Chang

in 1982, and eventually got it published in 1991. The editing and publishing process had taken nine years. The phenomenal success of *Wild Swans* brought about the sudden realization amongst people in the publishing industry that there was a big untapped market with a great deal of potential that needed to be explored (TE interview). It may not be very plausible to posit a straightforward causal link between the commercial success of the bestseller *Wild Swans* and the success of the subsequent translations of the six Chinese auto/biographies; however, it could be argued that awareness about this potentiality had motivated or encouraged involvement with the six projects. That is to say, by opening the door for *Wild Swans*, TE opened it for others who later exploited the market that *Wild Swans* had created.

The common belief in the potential profits offered by this emerging market and its stakes brings participants together in both collaborative and competitive work on the translation projects of Chinese auto/biographies. It is the belief or ‘collusion [that] is the very basis of their competition’ in the network (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The competition in this potentially lucrative business creates an ambivalent space of relations within the emerging sub-field of the translation of Chinese literary works. On the one hand, they seek to assert themselves in relation to fields, interests and stakes external to the field (mainly the broader literary field and the various sub-fields that populate it). Simultaneously, within the emerging sub-field they are necessarily engaged in a competition over the stakes internal and specific to the sub-field of Chinese literary translations. They thus compete for, and seek to accumulate and re-invest, three distinct types of capital – the material, symbolic and the expertise/experiential capital (field-specific cultural capital). For the sake of mutual interests obtained in the project, there is a sense in which their competition and cooperation presuppose each other, or necessitate each other; they cannot cooperate without competing, nor can they compete without cooperating. In this cooperative network, the British agent TE has played a crucial and formative role in the translation process as a whole and its commercial/marketing aspect in particular by taking the initiative in opening the gateway to Chinese auto/biographies by introducing them to publishers in the UK. Here it is worth dwelling on this decisive role he plays in creating the market of translated Chinese auto/biography in the UK and his expertise that has been obtained through this process of importation.

3.2.2.2 *Literary Agents: Bringing Home the Foreign*

TE has taken on many other Chinese projects either written in English or translated into English after the successful project of *Wild Swans*, most of which are auto/biographical writings, including the six cases in this study. His pioneering publishing adventure established his fame for expertise in importing Chinese literary works, especially with regard to the genre of non-fiction or semi-fiction. As he noted in the interview, TE is commonly recognised to be the agent with flair and intuition for picking potentially successful Chinese literary works for the British market, a quality that other publishers and literary agents lack. This intuitive and subtle ‘feel’ for the right book is rooted in a view of the translation project as a business adventure more than a case of importing culture, as TE put it in a conference speech.²

TE’s success in the selection of what turned out to be successful Chinese auto/biographies is due in great measure to his skilful navigating of numerous negotiations with publishers, in which his position was not automatically guaranteed any intrinsic power: in some cases the agent’s role is mediated or outweighed by other moments of selection performed by publishers, for instance. In this network, whether or not the literary agent’s role is perceived as indispensable to publishers depends on how much value is added to the chain of the production through the agent’s agency, so to speak. His ability, flair and reputation – or symbolic capital in Bourdieu’s terms – for ‘sniffing out’ is put to the test at this stage. This spontaneous ‘nose’, a certain embedded ‘feel for the game’, as Bourdieu would say, is an essential dimension of his *habitus*.

However, the literary agent’s ‘feel’ or ‘intuition’ for a book with some potential for success is not something that is completely subjective and mysterious. Rather, it corresponds to Bourdieu’s central notion of ‘a feel for a game’ (Bourdieu, 1990a: 61) in the social world, or in the social space that is metaphorically seen by Goffman as a kind of theatrical stage or a social game (1971) where individuals/actors not only face the circumstances but, importantly, they are part of the circumstances. Within the circumstances, ‘a feel’ is learnt and acquired from the actors’ cultural trajectory and professional experience, which is what Bourdieu describes as ‘the practical mastery of the logic of a game’ realised through ‘the generative basis’ of practice (1990a: 61). This learning process that happens largely at a subconscious level develops into the agents’ professionally acquired intuition that would enable them to

² In a speech given at the Harvard Club in Beijing in May 2004 where TE talked about how Chinese authors should get ready for their work to be published in the West (see: <http://en.jpvc/is/omdex.php?page=18&post=44>).

make the right choices about the genre and themes of books to be translated. The learning process here is manifest through the way the six Chinese auto/biographies have been selected where TE's *habitus* played a central role: *habitus* in this case is formed both through previous experience, and especially in connection with the *Wild Swans* case and its aftermaths, as well as through his involvement in the selection and even editing of these Chinese auto/biographies.

In the next section, I will describe how and why the six Chinese auto/biographical writings were selected for translation, and explore the translation practices which have shaped the participants' *habitus* (i.e. of the agent and publishers), and which in turn explain their dispositions and preferences. This will also show how the translational activity has been endorsed and how textual practice has been culturally produced in a particular field or context.

3.3 Process of Selecting Chinese Auto/biographical Writings

In order to explore the logic that shapes the way the books are selected in a recurrent pattern, it is important to look first at how the literary agent worked in collaboration with the publishers to select the six auto/biographical writings, and the reasoning behind the selection of the books. In the real situation of the selection process, there are in effect no cut and dried rules or rigidly structured procedures to follow in terms of the way of selecting books, and no explicit instructions to guide the selectors through to the final decision. On the contrary, the process is fairly flexible with a great deal of variations. The variations across the six cases, nevertheless, can be examined through the varied selection process and points of view that are articulated by the literary agent and publishers to explain and justify each case. A closer look at the process of selection brings into light the literary agent's implicit knowledge and 'feel' for a book and for handling projects, guided by a set of dispositions and an implicit knowledge of the practical logic specific to the field. I will, therefore, try to characterise the processes of selection of each book, and classify them in the light of the 5 models of selection (A, B, C, D and E) that I have identified through the data. My characterisation and classification are based on the circumstances within which each book has been selected and the way they go down the different routes of selection. These five models will be described and analysed to map out the whole gamut of the selection system and the criteria according to which the Chinese literary work has been imported into British book market. In so doing, I will be able to, first, explain the formation of the agent's professional *habitus* which has been acquired through experience and practice; second, I will highlight the ways in which the

literary agent relates to the publishers and the types of partnership that can be negotiated and formed between them.

3.3.1 Models of Selection

A) The Writer of the Source Text as Primary Selector

Attracted by the reputation already established through the phenomenal success of *Wild Swans*, many Chinese writers came to TE to make a case their own books as potential success stories in the book market following in the footsteps of *Wild Swans*. The author of *Village of Stone*, Guo Xiaolu, was the one who consciously selected one of her literary works written in China and presented it to TE. TE recalls when he first met with Guo Xiaolu to discuss her book:

She [Guo Xiaolu] went into a [British] book store, she opened up Chinese books like *Daughter of the River*, *Good Woman of China* ... and she rang me up and said “I would like to meet you”.

According to Guo Xiaolu’s further explanation, she brought her six Chinese books published in China to the UK and wanted to show them to TE. However, TE required several translated pages as a sample in English from one book of Guo Xiaolu’s choice. And after several meetings with TE, Guo Xiaolu finally came with one chapter of *Village of Stone* already translated by CC who had lived in Beijing for many years where she learned the Chinese language. TE introduced the book to the publisher and managed to sell it to Random House publisher immediately. Later, following its translation into English, *Village of Stone* was translated into several other languages.

In this case the selection of the original by the agent was mediated by the selection made by the writer of the source text. As Guo Xiaolu described in the interview, when she initially brought several of her books written in Chinese to TE, they came up against the language barrier as he had no knowledge of Chinese and needed to examine an English translation of several pages to assess the book. So Guo Xiaolu commissioned Cindy to translate ten pages of *Village of Stone*. In other words, Guo Xiaolu had already chosen this semi-autobiographical writing out of others to be translated by Cindy Carter based on her own observation of the Chinese genre and the thematic topics that had been translated and published in the UK and her awareness of the culturally specific preferences of the target audiences. It is not a question of how Guo Xiaolu has come to this choice; the point is that

Guo Xiaolu's choice is based on her observation which anticipates and accommodates TE's logic and interest. Although it seems that *Village of Stone* is Guo Xiaolu's choice and that she is the active agent on this occasion, yet the decision to take on this book and invest in it very much depends ultimately on TE's judgment.

B) Raw Stories Selected by Literary Agent after Encounter with the Author

The second model of selection is wholly centred around the role of the agent. Instances of book selection that fit into this model are more frequent. Examples within this model of selection are Xinran's *Good Women of China*, *Sky Burial*, Hong Ying's *Daughter of the River*, and Ma Jian's *Red Dust*. The common characteristic of this model of selection is that TE has *selected* stories that were still brewing in the author's head. In other words, following meetings between agent and author, the raw materials, so to speak, were selected at this stage, and then the writing and translation were commissioned by TE. The example that stands out in this respect is the process whereby *Red Dust* and *Daughter of the River* were selected. Ma Jian and TE were introduced to each other through a common friend of theirs, and so TE arranged to meet with Ma Jian as well as Flora who was Ma Jian's interpreter and translator. In the meeting Ma Jian was talking about his literary career in general with the intention of promoting one novel in particular, entitled *The Noodle Maker*, and thus tried to convince TE of its literary potential value as a Chinese narrative.³ However, what interested TE was Ma Jian's experiences of travelling across the inner outlying regions of China in the 1980s which Ma Jian had written about and published as memoirs entitled *Ma Jian's Journey (Ma Jian zhi lu)* in Hong Kong in 1987.⁴ Eventually they reached an agreement whereby Ma Jian would write *Red Dust* based on these memoirs which would then be translated by Flora simultaneously. TE commented on the encounter with Ma Jian and what aroused his interest:

I thought what interested me was that he has written a story about travelling out of Beijing in the early 80's, and it reminded me of Kerouac's *On the Road*.

Kerouac's *On the Road* (1958) is a series of accounts based on the writer's journey in search of the American dream in the 1950s, punctuated with the American underground themes of jazz, sex, generosity and drugs. The leitmotifs of drug-use and homosexual behaviour in this autobiographical writing create the image of Kerouac as a social rebel and an individualist liberal at odds with post-war mainstream American ideology (Martinez, 2003). By virtue of

³At the time Ma Jian had a complete Chinese draft of *Noodle Maker* which was to be published in Britain and the US after the success of Ma Jian's *Red Dust*.

⁴This book is illustrated throughout the book with pictures taken by Ma Jian on his journey to inner and remote area of China (see (马建, 1987)

lending a sympathetic tone to the portrayal of minorities and marginalized social groups, *On the Road* is also seen as part of ‘the literatures of dissent in Post-War America’ (Martinez, 2003: 3). As a result of the overnight – and indeed enduring – success of this autobiographical novel based on actual events from his journey and encounters, Jack Kerouac has become a counterculture celebrity, playing the role of the young Beatnik icon for the reading public (Theado, 2009).

The similarity between *Red Dust* and *On the Road* in TE’s view resides in the exploratory journey through places that are unknown, hidden and secretive; the most valuable aspects of the narratives are the encounters and characters that appear in these particular places and during a certain historical period. The contextual and intertextual similarities between these two travel writings also lie in the heroic and anti-conventional personae at the heart of both narratives, and in the central themes of coming up against and challenging mainstream dominant ideology and social injustices. Although Ma Jian expressed his admiration for Kerouac’s unconventional writing style in the interview, yet the question of whether Ma Jian’s writing style in *Red Dust* was influenced by or bore certain resemblances to Kerouac in terms of the aesthetic dimension has been hardly mentioned both in TE’s interview as well as Ma Jian’s interview. At this point, it is safe to say that the resemblances and intertextual associations between these two books are primarily contextual and circumstantial although the cultural and social background of China in the 1980s is clearly distinctive and peculiar. The association of *Red Dust* with Kerouac’s *On the Road* at the stage of selection shows that the least consideration is given to the literary value and the aesthetic dimension; and a selling point is therefore placed essentially on the exploratory physical and symbolic journey into the unknown, which creates a certain exotic feel that appeals to the selectors who anticipate its appeal to the target audiences.

Another typical case of this type is Hong Ying’s *Daughter of the River* which came out after her first novel *Summer of Betrayal*. Hong Ying had been in contract with TE since her first publication of *Summer of Betrayal*, and then she started to write her autobiography based on her childhood stories in Chongqing. When TE talked about how Hong Ying went about drafting her autobiography, he said:

I asked Hong Ying to write that book. What I did, I said ‘I’ll give you some money, I’ll give you a commission to write this book about your childhood, Chongqing’.

(TE interview)

In my interview with Hong Ying, she explained that her initial intention to write her autobiography was the result of her meeting with her biological father on her eighteenth birthday; however, she did not write her autobiography until 1996 when TE suggested the writing project. It is safe to conclude that she developed her preference for the topic she eventually wrote about in response to TE's evaluation and commissioning of the writing project.

Xinran's two biographies have gone down the same path: both the writing of the originals and the translations took place in the UK and the Chinese originals were published in Chinese-speaking countries, including mainland China, a few years after the English translations had come out (more on this point in section 4.2.1). This type of selection model goes to demonstrate the economic and cultural power that the literary agent wields, the power to make things happen, as well as the power to make things happen in a certain way, i.e. the role he played as an agent controlling the process of the writing, translating and publication of Chinese auto/biographies.

C) The Agent 'Sniffing out' the Source Text

Another variation within this model where the literary agent plays an all-important role in the selection process is the situation where the literary agent 'sniffs out', as it were, books that have the potential to sell very well as translations in English. The literary agent then takes the initiative to approach the writers of the originals. Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby* is a case in point here. Keeping an eye on the Chinese literary market, TE spotted books which he thought had great potential to appeal to the British readership. TE came across some information on banning *Shanghai Baby* in China in 2000⁵ on the internet, which aroused his interest in *Shanghai Baby* in the first place. He then had several chapters translated into English to assess the work and its marketability. He decided on this book and set out to make a case for it with the publishers but it was initially rejected by the big six publishers in London due to the uncertainty of its commercial success. Eventually, a newly established publisher called Constable & Robinson bought *Shanghai Baby* from TE, with the proviso that he would work as an advisor all through the publishing process of *Shanghai Baby*. Having sold around 200,000

⁵ Although the governmental ban was placed on *Shanghai Baby* in China in 2000, yet it has still been popular with the reading public, especially young readers, and it has been made available through pirated editions within China (Ferry, 2003).

copies in the first year, the success of *Shanghai Baby* has been credited, understandably, to TE's acumen and his 'feel' for successful translations.

It is worth noting that prior to *Shanghai Baby*, TE met with Mian Mian in China who is, along with Wei Hui, one of the leading figures of 'the sensationalism of a new group of woman writers' in the 1990s in China (Ferry, 2003: 656), and decided not to work with her for personal reasons (TE's interview). However, his discussion of the possibilities of publication in the UK with Mian Mian one year before *Shanghai Baby* was selected indicates that even before the appearance of *Shanghai Baby* TE had already noticed this trend of writings marked by an unusual degree of sexual explicitness, and authored by women writers in the Chinese literary field. Therefore, his selection of *Shanghai Baby* was not accidental.

There was a set of circumstances that can account for the emergence of this particular theme within the Chinese context in the 1990s. Within the trend of the 'new generation literature' of the 1990s, women writers such as Mian Mian and Wei Hui have touched upon cultural taboos and transgressed social norms in their writings by bringing into light the subjects of AIDS, drug addition, casual sex, homosexuality and prostitution. The production of these semi-self-writings in China written by women narrating their innermost experiences and sexual awakening reflects wider social transformations in the 1990s that have had an impact on the literary field and the publishing industry in China (Kong, 2005). Within the Chinese literary field, this so-called 'sexual revolution' (Farrer, 1998) has come under some severe criticism from the mainstream literary canon and was often subjected to a governmental ban as a result. This is the case with Mian Mian's first novel *Candy* (published in 2000) and Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby* which were censored in China (Ferry, 2003). The governmental ban on the themes of these books, especially on Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby* in 2000 which is arguably the most sexually explicit of its kind, can be interpreted, especially from outside China, as an attempt to suppress Chinese women's sexual awakening, and maintain the erasure of sexuality in general and female sexuality in particular, which is typical of the decades of socialism (Ferry, 2003).

TE opted for Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*, and the decisive reason for his choice of this book, as he noted in the interview, was that it was banned in 2000 due to what was seen in China as excessive graphic sexual descriptions with a potential immoral effect on society. Additionally, TE's strong enthusiasm for this book is based on the idea that, as he put it in the interview, 'sex

sells'. However, the idea of 'sex sells', presented by TE as a universal principle, has inevitably some specific cultural and historical dimensions attached to it which have been projected onto the context of Communist China (this point will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2.3.2).

D) Selecting Authors in China

The above three models are particularly pertinent to the six cases; the following two models came up frequently in TE's interview (which I will refer as model D and model E). Although these two models were not enacted in the selection processes under my study, their significance warrants some discussion because understanding them can help better highlight, at least by contrast, the specific characteristics of models A, B and C.

Model D describes selecting authors by going on a literary tour to China to seek potentially publishable authors and their works. This pattern of selection started to be taken up when translating Chinese auto/biographies had flourished after the publication of *Wild Swans*. Selecting books in China often means investing in writers, as TE notes. This investment becomes a 'key tool' (TE's interview) for the literary agent; it enables him to make sound selections of books and to control the risks in the market and all through the various stages of the translation process. Getting to know about the writers and their books is mainly through networking, targeted socialising and fact-finding tours. This can happen, for instance, through working with associations and through cooperation with Western and Chinese independent publishers, and through literary tours of China and taking part in book fairs. Here it is worth noting that since the 1990s, literary works in China have been oriented towards entertainment driven by an ethos of consumerism due to China's national policies that aimed to introduce market mechanisms into the economy and integrate China into the globalised world order (Kong, 2005). The commercialization of Chinese culture within a consumerist context has brought a variety of literary genres into the publishing field, which has opened up the space for diversity for the reading public (Ferry 2003). As a result, commercial motives and the market logic are now the basic driving forces in the publishing field, and even more important than ideological dictates and restrictions. Cooperation with Western literary agents and publishers on a global level has been well underway through various means and forms: organising international book fairs in China; taking part in international book fairs abroad; building up and connecting with international networks to seek international partnerships for the importation and exportation of literary works. As a UK-based literary agent with a reputation for successfully importing and publishing Chinese auto/biographical writings in the UK, TE was

invited to the 2004 Beijing book fair as a high-profile participant to give a speech to an audience that included a great number of writers and Chinese publishers (Drew, April 11, 2006). TE had noticed the commercialised climate of the Chinese literary field and quickly took advantage of this trend by keeping in close contact with the Chinese publishing world and writers.

This model of selection is initiated by introducing a contractual arrangement typical within the British publishing system which stipulates that the writer will publish his/her work as well as subsequent works with a particular publisher. As Richard Todd observes, the agent plays a more significant role at the debut stage in promoting the writer's work and introducing the author to potential publishers (Todd, 2006: 27). After this stage, the writer and literary agent working together would be bound by the terms of contract although the duration of the contract is pretty flexible and negotiable, and depends on the agreement between the writer and literary agent. As TE explains in the interview, in terms of collaboration with British publishers the idea of contract 'is to get continuity for Chinese writers if they stay with one publisher in the West so they have a backlist.'⁶ The idea of 'investing in a writer' has been introduced into the selection process and put into practice in cooperation with an independent Chinese publisher in China. By the time of the interview in the context of this research, TE was already working with an independent publisher in China to select authors and enter contracts with them so that selected books published in China would be simultaneously selected, translated and published outside China. The logic of investing in writers involving a British literary agent and Chinese publishers, in fact, is concerned primarily with minimising or controlling the risks by closely examining both the Chinese as well as British book markets. The aim of this activity, as he explains, is:

to build the sense of going on working with the same people and the same publishers because you will take the same publishers to take you to the literary magazine [to do the publicity] ... This [publishing Chinese books] is the risk we'll be taking, and I'll control that risk for them by my contract with the author ...

In accord with the terms of the contract, the writer is first under an obligation to write what is deemed by the agent and publisher to be culturally appropriate and potentially popular and

⁶ A backlist, as TE explained in the interview, refers to the older books by an author who has just got a new book published. When a newly published book comes out in the book market, a list of older books by the same author would be made available from the publisher so that more copies of the older books would also be sold while selling the new book.

commercially successful. Second, it seems that this contractual arrangement keeps the risk under control for both sides as TE notes.

The writer depends on all these ‘stakeholders’, so to speak, for his/her recognition as a writer. This constraint can apply to all the models with all the Chinese writers who have published their work in the UK. Under these circumstances, investing in the writers would require a dynamic adaptive attitude on the part of the writer towards the target cultural rules. This is something that TE sees as vital for the potential success of the investment in writers. In the interview TE stresses the importance of the writer’s willingness and capacity to learn the culture and language that are specific to the target context; when he lists the criteria for selecting writers, he said:

The Chinese writer I select in China should be having a Western language, whether it’s English or French. And it’s also working with someone who is prepared to learn the customs of the country and not being impatient with them and not being frightened about losing face or knowing how to work here ... They will have to learn how to do the publicity in the West ... They have to learn how to work with a Western editor.

From what he says, it is clear that writer’s adaptable personality and socialising skills, which are practised and realised only through communicating in English or French, are at least as important as their writings. This has become all the more important after Chinese translated books and their themes have gained a great deal of success in the West. This success of previous works translated into English can work in two ways: it opens up the possibility for new Chinese writers to follow suit and publish in a similar vein by building on the recognition and success that previous works have had; simultaneously, however, it creates a field of fierce competition between emerging writers who have to have the willingness and the skill to promote their work very well, in addition to producing writings with some qualities that can appeal and sell very well.

The emphasis on the writers’ social and public skills suggest that whatever the source text language reads like, it will after all go through the translation process and will be packaged by the target text culture and language. This was captured by TE when he said: ‘I am not only an agent, I am really a book packager’ (TE interview). The packaging process makes the literary agent, therefore, operate as a mediator between the market (publishers) and the literary text that will come out in the Western market. This process raises a serious challenge and places some

enormous pressure on novice Chinese writers who are going through this process as they are expected to possess not only the literary and cultural capitals but also social capital and advanced interpersonal and communication skills.

E) Cooperation with China Specialists: the Agent's Reader

This pattern of selection is centred around the 'publisher's reader' (Finkelstein & McCleery, 2005: 94) or in the cases of this study the 'agent's reader' when specialist knowledge and judgement are required, which is especially the case with the process of assessing and producing foreign literature in the UK. Finkelstein and McCleery identify two subcategories in terms of the function of the specialist readers in the British publishing system: 'either serving as individuals who actively sought out, worked with, and encouraged potential additions to particular publishing "list" or as individuals providing assessments based solely on material passed to them' (2005: 94). With the second function, the readers are contacted whenever a particular task is required at some point during the process of selection. Examples from the data in this respect can be found with TE and RC who worked with their specialist readers at various stages during the selection of Chinese auto/biographical writings. In terms of the first function identified by Finkelstein and McCleery (2005), it seems that it started to occur in the selection of Chinese literary works only when the business of this particular book trade had already signalled its lucrative future, and the market for this type of books was clearly in need of more diverse and enterprising approaches to explore a variety of themes and genre-related variations. This sought-after diversity needed a certain degree of deviation from the old themes of the Cultural Revolution. This was evident in an interview with TE and his associate Daniel Watts in mid April 2006, when they were on a literary tour around China. Watts said: 'we're interested in contemporary China ... works on the Cultural Revolution have been "exhausted".'⁷ They thus turned their eyes to memoirs and mainstream fiction, and sinologists are generally in a better position to give expert advice on these genres. Therefore, calling on the assistance of sinologists, especially those who specialise in contemporary Chinese literature, is TE's consistent choice to keep updated about the latest works coming up in China that are potential 'big hits' on the UK literary scene.

In order to prepare the British readership for the reception of the new genre of Chinese literary works, Penguin Books Ltd for the first time compiled a list of mainstream Chinese

⁷ The interview and information about the literary tour can be found at:
<http://www.cnn.com/2006/SHOWBIZ/books/03/30/china.literary.hunt/index.html>

writers in modern Chinese literature with the intention of re-publishing them in a series of Penguin Modern Classics. Sinologist Julia Lovell⁸ from the Department of Chinese Studies of Cambridge University was brought in to play a key role in advising on and promoting canonised Chinese literary works in the context of this venture. She wrote an article⁹ to review and publicise the publication of Penguin Modern Chinese in *The Guardian* (June 11, 2005) where the translated books of Penguin Modern Chinese Classics were listed, and extensive detailed information about the books was presented to the reading publics. The works,¹⁰ except for Ma Jian's *Red Dust*, were all from the mainstream of mainland Chinese literary work, which have been translated since the 1980s in the West. Some of the writers were from the 1930s and 1950s and their works had been translated into English as early as the 1980s. For example, some of Lu Xun's work was translated and published before 1985; Xiao Hong's *The Field of Life and Death* in 1979 and Yang Jiang's *Six Chapters From My Life "Down under"* in 1984. However, unlike *Red Dust*, none of them was made known to Western reading publics. In the article Julia Lovell raises this issue of the Chinese literature that has been overlooked in the British literary field in an attempt to highlight the value of the Modern Chinese fiction on the Penguin list. Compiling this list also indicates that there is a process of canonisation of some Modern Chinese literary work in the West.

Besides, Julia Lovell entered a crucial form of collaboration with TE to hunt for Chinese literary work, providing advice on particular writers or books and evaluating and assessing

⁸ Julia Lovell is the translator of a Chinese biography entitled *A Dictionary of Maqiao* by Han Shaogong published in 2003; she also translated novellas by Zhu Wen published in 2004 (both published by Columbia University Press)

⁹ The article also raises the issue of Chinese literature that is neglected by most British publishers, and therefore remains inaccessible to the British reading publics. See Lovell (2005) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/jun/11/featuresreviews.guardianreview29>.

¹⁰ The list of Penguin Modern Classics includes: *The Story of the Stone* by Cao Xueqin, translated by David Hawkes (Penguin Classics, 1973); *Lu Xun' Selected Works*, translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Foreign Languages Press, 1985); *Red Dust* by Ma Jian, translated by Flora Drew (Chatto & Windus, 2001); *Fortress Besieged* by Qian Zhongshu, translated by Jeanne Kelly and Nathank, Mao (New Directions Publishing Corporation (February 2004)); *Bittersweet Nostalgic Tales* by Shen Congwen, translated by Jeffrey Kinkley and others (University of Hawaii Press, 1995); *The Field of Life and Death* by Xiao Hong, translated by Howard Goldblatt (Indiana University Press, 1979); *A Dictionary of Maqiao* by Han Shaogong, translated by Julia Lovell (Columbia University Press, 2003); *Six Chapters From My Life "Down Under"* by Yang Jiang, translated by Howard Goldblatt (University of Washington Press, 1984); *The Golden Cangue* by Zhang Ailing selections from *Modern Chinese Stories and Novellas, 1919-1949*, translated by C.T. Hsia et. Al. (Columbia University Press, 1981); *I love dollars and other stories of China* by Zhu Wen, translated by Julia Lovell (Columbia University, 2007); *Children of the Rice* by Lu Ling. This book has not been translated but is on this list for the recommendation for the translation.

material in the Chinese literary scene. In 2004 she recommended Chinese writer Zhu Wen¹¹ and arranged a meeting between TE and the writer. It is clear that TE eventually commissioned the translation of Zhu Wen's novella entitled *Love Dollars and Other Stories of China* which was translated by Julia Lovell and published by Columbia University Press in 2007. In 2005 when TE talked about his future plans in terms of his cooperation with Julia Lovell with the aim of finding and selecting 'good Chinese writers who need to be published in the West', he said:

What I am going to do is to create a publishing list from a major publisher with Julia to create a sort of scholarship list of Chinese writings so that people become more and more accustomed to Chinese classics or modern Chinese writings, such as someone like Mo Yan, who needs new translation, it's such a terrific book, so wonderful a novel that teaches you more about Chinese society, about the twenties and thirties.

There is no mention about the scholarship list of Chinese writings created by TE and Julia Lovell in the interview with TE. From his comments on Mo Yan's novel, *Big Breasts & Wide Hips*, what TE values the most about his writing is that Mo Yan's novel can 'teach [the Western readers] more about Chinese society in the twenties and thirties'. Chinese modern classics are clearly marked by their simple realism whereby the literary work reflects the social reality of a certain historical period within a certain national context. Here it is important to note that Mo Yan is considered to be one of the avant-garde writers emerging in the 1980s whose work has gone right against the mould of realist portrayals of social reality (Kang, 2004). With the perception of Chinese literature as conveying the reality of Chinese society, the rediscovery and retranslation of Chinese classics could also mean that Chinese modern classics will be reread differently by non-Chinese audiences, partly as a result of going through the process of selection, translation and review (this could be a topic for further investigation). It remains to be seen whether or not TE's steering to the direction of Chinese classics will bring the same success as the translated Chinese auto/biographies in the West; in any case the packaging process may give a new face to these Chinese modern classics. Here it should be noted that by considering Mo Yan's work as an important contemporary literary classic in China, TE does not mean to say that he would be enthusiastic about selecting Mo Yan's work for re-translation. Rather, TE in any case has to go with the market flow and the trends in the UK readers' interests.

¹¹ A controversial freelance writer in the Chinese literary field whose first published short story *Wo Ai Meiyuan* (*I Love Dollars*) was denounced by some Chinese critics as a "shameless and indecent novel of a hooligan" . http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhu_Wen).

3.3.2 The Literary Agent's Professional *Habitus*

The models described above are manifest in the ways in which the Chinese auto/biographies are selected and commissioned for writing and/or translation. For people in the publishing field, according to TE, endorsing the translation of a literary work in the West involves many economic considerations:¹² risks and balances that need to be examined and weighed up to minimise potential failure. It is the ability to strike this balance, and to have a feel for how the balance should be configured in each case, that constitutes what can be described as the literary agents' *habitus*. As all modes of selection of the six auto/biographical writings indicate, this *habitus* cannot be explained as a set of fixed rules; nor can it be explained with explicit reference to a set of codified pieces of knowledge (Jenkins, 2002) that determine the literary agent's choice. Rather, *habitus* seems to be composed of a set of dispositions that are flexible and adaptive to each case since there cannot be a definite recipe for how to assess the likelihood of success for a potential work to be introduced into the market. The ability to judge what factors are relevant for the potential success or failure of a given work at a particular point in time is itself a key element of the literary agent's professional knowledge or 'feel for a book' as TE himself put it. This professional knowledge, however indeterminate and incoherent it might seem, is central to the constitution of the literary agent's *habitus*, and it consists of several dimensions.

First, the literary agent's professional knowledge includes some good knowledge about the history of the field or the history of the overlapping fields involved; in this case, knowledge about the literary field and the publishing field of both target culture and source culture with some awareness about current literary trends in the literature of the source culture for instance. This is exemplified by the importance of knowledge about the literary and social context of *Shanghai Baby* in model C as well as model D. Having practical knowledge of the specific relevant field(s) also means knowing how to bring together different pieces of information, make sense of them in a holistic synthetic way, and draw out their implications for practice, and what course of action this knowledge entails in practice (of selection for instance). TE grasped the new trend of 'New New Generation Literature' (Ferry, 2003) in the 1990s Chinese literary field, and the social and cultural background to the taboo topics, and it was on that basis that he was fully convinced and confident that *Shanghai Baby* would sell very well. This is particularly evident when TE was trying to explore a new genre and new themes

¹² The commission fees to the translator and writer as well, if the writing process in original Chinese happens in Britain.

in model E when he predicted that the themes of the Cultural Revolution in Chinese auto/biographies had been exhausted in the West. He was gradually familiarising himself with Modern Chinese classics through working with sinologists and going on several organised literary tours to China where he got to know Chinese writers and thus formed a judgment on who he wanted to work with and how and what kind of classics he would work on. His emphasis on the flexibility of the author's personality and socialising skills suggests that he has been aware about how to address and successfully handle different contextual issues between the two cultural and literary fields.

Second, some practical knowledge, or know-how, is also essential to the formation of his professional *habitus*, which can be used to make a persuasive case to potential publishers about the lucrative potential of a book as well as its cultural and literary value. As he mentioned in the interview, his job is to 'take a Chinese project and get it right for the publisher'. Risk assessment from both sides is always involved in the decision making before the project is undertaken through the cooperation between the two parties. Publishers in most cases are very reluctant to take up a brand-new theme or genre of a translated book for fear of possible failure as in these cases there are no precedents to go by (TE interview). In order to make a case to the publisher, TE had to show a sample of one translated chapter or at least some pages to the publishers, usually after some editing done by TE himself to make the sample more appealing. This is something that TE described as an essential step in the process of 'packaging the book'. The typical example here is the translation draft of *Good Women of China* written by Xinran, which took three months of editing on the English translation draft simply to make it presentable to the publisher, and the editing was done by a Malay-Chinese editor commissioned by TE. Judging by what he said, editing can happen at any stage of the translation process whenever it is thought to be necessary, and there can even be multiple editing for one book as in the case of *Good Women of China* where TE himself has contributed to the editing process. The point here is that his practical knowledge about how to make a strong enough case to sell the book to the publishers also depends on a set of dispositions and 'take' on the situation that allow him to anticipate the expectations that publishers would have towards the translated textual narratives.

Finally, the ability to open up new niches in the market is essential to the formation of the literary agent's professional *habitus*. This ability is in turn based on his practical skills of dealing with publishers and the ability to predict and anticipate the expectations of potential readers in the target culture, which necessitates a good mastery and knowledge of the history

and existing patterns and trends with respect to the target literary field, market and readership. This practical knowledge becomes all the more important when a new venture is embarked on and a new genre or new sub-genre is introduced into the market. This is so because in these cases there is more risk involved, but at the same time there is more potential for much more profits and financial returns if the risky adventure comes to a happy conclusion. A niche in the market can thus be carved out and can be a source of enormous profits given the high potential for demand because of the appealing novelty of the new work. The calculation of the risk in the investment in a Chinese auto/biography is, in this case, based on assumptions and informed predictions about the cultural and social factors that will come in to play; and it is these considerations that are brought to bear on the literary agent's decision making. As in the case of *Wild Swans* when it was first taken up as a new project, the fact of not having a market niche already existing in the UK book market at the time for such a type of works would have had to be assessed against three major factors. First, the fact that China was a closed country makes it possible for this type of semi-fictional, semi-realist work to compensate for the near complete lack of knowledge about Chinese society from an insider angle, which adds to its mystery and exoticism.¹³ Second, there is also the fact that the Chinese Revolution was such a key event not only just within China but in the world history of the 20th century and little is known about it from the points of view of people on the ground. The genre of autobiography, which operates with the implicit claim to guaranteeing the voice of authenticity and faithful narrating of events through 'insider' eyes, would be thus be much sought-after. Third, China's bad human rights record (Ching, 2008) also is a major factor, especially with the Tiananmen events of 1989 which brought China and its authoritarian regime to the TV screens of every household in the West; this happened only two years prior to the publication of *Wild Swans*. The subsequent publication several years later of *Daughter of the River*, *Red Dust*, *Good Woman of China* and *Sky Burial*, classified under the now recognisable rubric of Chinese auto/biographies with similar themes, are assessed on the same grounds and based on similar assumptions.

The practical, action-oriented side of the literary agent's professional knowledge consists of the ability to make a persuasive case to the publisher that there is already an audience waiting for the specific genre and themes to come out. Thus, knowledge and practical skills of how to deal with a project in the literary market, which TE has learnt through the selection process,

¹³ When Jung Chang speaks of her intentionality of writing *Wild Swans*, she has 'captured' the provincial side of China at the time; she says 'Chinese lives during this century are stranger than fiction, they are so dramatic and so strange to an outside eye that you don't need to embellish them' (see Grice 2002: 103).

are essential to the formation of the literary agent's *habitus*. Therefore, exploring a new market is not an impulsive activity; it is, rather, based for the most part on the literary agent's knowledge about the literary field and publishing field and how the parties involved would be interconnected within a co-operative venture across field(s) to achieve a goal.

The formation of the literary agent's *habitus* is thus embodied most clearly in a cumulatively acquired professional knowledge that informs a certain mode of judgement, assessment and action which are the product of the field, and are simultaneously attuned to the requirements, stakes and logic of the field in which he operates, or more precisely the two fields which he straddles, i.e. the literary and the publishing fields. This set of 'generative dispositions', as Bourdieu describes *habitus*, are 'not wholly conscious' although the weighing up of risks and the setting of goals for the action or venture are carried out at a conscious level, based on the literary agent's own practical interests or strategies, as Bourdieu would put it. However, in the light of the way the literary agent has selected the Chinese auto/biographical writings and the way he interacted with the various parties involved, it is arguably the case that these strategies deployed by individuals are not merely conscious actions to conform to or confront the specific norms, as Toury suggests (1995). They are, rather, 'designed to locate the source of their practice in their own experience of reality' (Bourdieu, 1990a: 60) – their practical sense of dealing with the Chinese project or the internal logic of the two overlapping fields in this case. However, while a conscious choice of these selected Chinese auto/biographies have been made by the individual – i.e. the literary agent – from within a specific location within a specific field, the individual, as Bourdieu reminds us, does not 'choose the principle of these choices' (Wacquant, 1992: 45). The cultural options for the selection are not only made available by the target cultural norms (Hermans, 1999), but importantly as Bourdieu notes, 'it is *habitus* itself that commands this option' (Wacquant, 1992: 45). The literary agent's professional *habitus* has, in turn, been formatted through and by the practice of the selection of these auto/biographies, and has accrued more expertise in this regard.

3.3.3 Publishers: Literary Agents' Counterparts Around the Negotiating Tables

3.3.3.1 Competitive and Collaborative Partnerships

As the primary partner of the literary agent, or as the initial purchasers of the products (i.e. the Chinese auto/biographies), the publishers' considerable inputs into the process of selection are of equal importance. Around the negotiation table the literary agents and their negotiating counterparts, i.e. the publishers, are not always eye to eye with each other especially over the books that would be seen as potentially sellable, and over practical

strategies of approaching a given project, although they may have the same ‘nose’ for certain type of books. The competition between them can take explicit and intense forms, just as it can happen at a subtle and mediated level. In a sense, the explicit and implicit bargaining negotiated between the agent and the publisher is itself a form of competition. And so is the subtle jockeying for advantageous positions, and manoeuvring for a better deal on better terms. The question of who gains an advantageous arrangement, and who ‘wins the game’, always depends on the dispositions constituted through the players’ social trajectory and the capitals that have accumulated to them from their professional records. TE’s agent role has become indispensable to the production of translated Chinese auto/biographies only when he has been involved with several positive outcomes of Chinese auto/biographical writings. His reputation of dealing with Chinese projects certainly puts him in a strong position to negotiate with publishers, which does not mean, however, that his voice will automatically override that of the publishers. The fact that the rejection of his preferable project of *Shanghai Baby*, for instance, by the publishers even after his proven experience in handling several successful projects, shows that the publishers’ decisions do not only, or automatically, depend on the agent’s views. The reason for the rejection of *Shanghai Baby* in the first instance is, as TE indicated, that they were uncertain about the market, based on their presumption that the British readership generally tended to be not readily disposed to explore new thematic topics and areas in foreign literature; instead, British readers were assumed to be more inclined to read a ready-made model – such as of the *Wild Swans* type. Thus in the light of such considerations it would generally be wiser for publishers to play it safe and aim for ‘books that fit into a tried and tested pattern in terms of market need they are fulfilling’ rather than another deviation (Davies, 1995: 13). This approach in a way explains the high visibility within the British book market of Chinese works that are in the same genre and thematic vein as *Wild Swans*. Although the specific cultural circumstances around *Shanghai Baby* ‘aroused their interest’ as NR put it in the interview, yet the market is the ultimate decisive factor based on which the assumptions regarding the potential UK readers have been made. In other words, if the publishers are uncertain about a new genre or a new thematic area to be introduced through a translated book produced within a different cultural milieu, they would prefer not to step into the relevant co-operative network as the risk is assessed to be rather high.

The complexity of competitive and collaborative relations between the publishers and literary agents are further exemplified in RC’s purchase of *Red Dust* and *Good Women of China*. *Red*

Dust was RC's first Chinese project; it resembles many ways *Wild Swans* in terms of its thematic orientation. Whilst *Wild Swans* is animated by the 'absolute' insider voice of Chung on the political and social persecution that Chung's privileged family was subjected to in Mao's China, *Red Dust* narrates equally grim 'authentic' stories from witness perspectives in the post-Mao China, representing people's misery on an even broader scale in terms of social class and geography. From what TE's interview, it seems that *Red Dust* was chosen and sold without any obstacles or lengthy intense negotiation or contested decisions. The straightforward selling of *Red Dust* to RC suggests that the grounds and reasons for the choice of *Red Dust* were shared between TE and RC in this case; this is not to say, however, that mutual agreement over a decision can be arrived at with ease in other cases. Even after the successful publication of *Red Dust*, RC showed a great deal of hesitation towards TE's attempt to sell *Good Woman of China*, and rejected the project of *Shanghai Baby* despite TE's already established reputation with regard to dealing with Chinese non-fictional works. RC did not take up *Good Women of China* until two editions had been done by TE and his hired Malaysian Chinese editor, for which she expressed, in retrospect, her regret for not having seen the potential profit early enough in it (TE's interview). TE estimated that RC could have saved seventy-five thousand Pounds in one year that she had in effect given away to TE if she had been able to see the large potential sales of *Good Women of China* in the first place before it had been twice edited. This would nevertheless involve more risk and responsibility on TE's part in return for taking more percentage of the profit, which conforms to the logic of "no risk no gain" in the business field of the publishing world.

Within this network, the more accurate your 'feel' for a book is, the more profit you are likely to reap and the more influence you are likely to gain. After TE further demonstrated his skill for choosing successful books by insisting on *Shanghai Baby* with very good results, RC readily bought Xinran's biography *Sky Burial* and Guo Xiaolu's *Village of Stone*.¹⁴ The quick purchase of Xinran's *Sky Burial* indicates that once the author gets his/her first work accepted, their subsequent works are usually much more readily taken up by the publishers who seek to capitalise on the already established popularity and recognisability of the author which is seen as predictor of how the next book will fare. Xinran was very surprised to be informed of the successful sales of the book and the enthusiastic reviews the book had received since she did not expect *Sky Burial* to be as popular as *Good Women of China* (Xinran's interview).

¹⁴ Ma Jian's subsequent fiction books *Noodle Maker* and *Stick out Your Tongue* have also been taken up and edited by RC.

Regarding the selling of *Village of Stone* by young writer Guo Xiaolu to RC, in theory it involved many risks given that it was written by a young writer, new to the scene and still trying to break through. However, as RC noted, her awareness of TE's expertise in this respect and previous successes had a big impact on his decision to work with him on *Village of Stone*.

In short, the smooth selection of subsequent books is an indication of the wide recognition of TE's increasing field-specific capital that had been accumulated through previous successful selections of Chinese projects. What also facilitates the selection is the participants' familiarity with Chinese themes as a result of previous experiences which serve as a learning process that forms and informs their dispositions and stances within the network of the selection process. These dispositions or *habitus* that are formed through their professional experiences increase their practical chances or 'objective probability' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 20-21) determined by their place in the field and the various forms and degrees of capital acquired. In other words, their increased probability is generated through the social agents' 'feel' for a book (attained through practical experience), social connections and therefore their positions as holders of expertise as far as Chinese projects are concerned. These factors, brought into play in an interconnected way, render cooperative negotiations or deals practically more efficient and smoother than when the participants first step into the field or embark on a new venture. This increased 'objective probability' corresponding to a certain set of dispositions enable them, in turn, to adjust their expectations of various gains and profits gleaned from Chinese projects, and to decide on consequent projects with speed. Additionally, it is clearly the case that the process of selection comes to function as not simply a cooperative exercise but also learning process for all the participants involved. The participants' strategies pursued in the multi-faceted selection process are bound up with the chances and probabilities that are a function of the participants' 'social trajectory and of the dispositions (*habitus*) constituted in the prolonged relation to a definite distribution of objective chances' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 99). The constituted *habitus* can be collectively and interactively acquired to inform and form the participants' social and cultural trajectory through the interactive activities and networked co-operative chains and numerous negotiations involved in handling and conducting translation projects. In the next section, I look into the professional backgrounds of the two chief editors, RC and NR's, and the way they go about selecting the Chinese projects to see how both of them seize their chances or 'objective probabilities' through their 'feel for a book' to collaborate on Chinese projects.

This in turn constitutes their practical competence and professional *habitus* as experts who can better handle Chinese projects and turn them into successful outputs.

3.3.3.2 *The Constitution of the Publisher's Professional Trajectory*

In relation to the professional backgrounds, both RC and NR have been working in the UK publishing field since graduation from university. In the case of RC, having completed her MA degree in comparative literature, she started her first job in the publishing field, working for a literary scout whose job was to inform European publishers of the books published in English. She acquired her Italian through her work experience in Italy for several years, which has gained her credibility for dealing with the translation of European literature with Random Publishing House (RC interview). However, her involvement with the first several Chinese projects was not an easy task due to her language barriers and lack of experience in working with Chinese authors. Her way of assessing Chinese literary works for selection is as follows:

If I want to buy a book in Chinese, I have to rely on the reader who I would maybe give that book in Chinese to a reader, maybe write me a report, and on the basis of that report I will decide whether or not I want to publish the book, and then I have a moment when I will have to wait for the translation to arrive and I finally can read it in English. (RC interview)

In dealing with Chinese projects, RC's general approach in the first stage of the selection seems crucial and applicable to most of the Chinese cases taken up by her. The requirement of the report on the book by publishers' readers and translation sampling are two basic approaches that could help her to understand the textual significance. This is not, however, the only method she uses to come to a judgment about the worth of the book. The contextual factors, such as the *Wild Swans* phenomenon that has put the Chinese auto/biography on the map for the publishing world, certainly made her aware of this potential lucrative opportunity. This was a very significant factor, if not the determinant one, in her involvement with the Chinese auto/biography project. On the other hand, making use of the experts' reports and translation samplings would help her in many ways to arrive at a more informed view and assessment of how the textual narratives could better fit into the existing popular genre and literary themes in the UK context. This approach has also been used by TE as he on many occasions sought some advice whilst considering his options, especially with regard to new genres. Therefore, employing their own readers in order to understand the book from a textual point of view is seen as standard practice which is crucial for the evaluation of the book in advance.

For NR, the decisive factor for the selection consists of meeting his criteria; he set them out as follows:

My criteria would be ... two. One, how much visibility has it got? How successful has it been in its own country? ... Second, can I get publicity for it? Because in the current publishing climate in England I have to know I am going to get publicity to be able to get the book in the book shops. If I can find a way to get the book publicity then I will publish the book. (NR's interview)

He took up *Shanghai Baby* based on his two criteria when six big publishers in London had rejected it. He is the only interviewee who pointed out the importance of visibility in the source cultural context. This in some way echoes the 'feel' that TE had for *Shanghai Baby* based on the fact it was banned in China; that is to say, the fact of being banned in China was thought to have given it visibility, albeit this is a negative form of visibility. *Shanghai Baby* had sold over eight thousand legal copies and probably several hundred thousand pirated copies before it was banned in China (Farrer, 1998). The information about *Shanghai Baby* passed on to NR through TE lent itself to being interpreted as a sign of visibility. NR recounts how TE first introduced *Shanghai Baby* to him:

I have a book which I'd heard of in China called *Shanghai Baby* and it's just sold, It's been banned in China, and it's sold on the pirated editions by all accounts over a million copies but we don't really know what's happened. It's written by a girl in her mid-twenties and it's about a love affair and it's been banned' and all I [NR] have got is a summary of the plot and two very badly translated pages. (NR interview)

In the conversation, all TE said about *Shanghai Baby* can be associated with visibility in China: it was banned in China, and then sold in the pirated editions over a million copies. What made *Shanghai Baby* a very attractive project is the mystique that had been created around it, perhaps linked to the irresistible allure of the illicit (the illicit here doubles up as both that which has been banned by law, and the sexual themes which are tabooed by custom). Additionally, TE presented a summary of the plot and background of *Shanghai Baby* with emphasis on a love affair of a girl in her mid-twenties. The story background summed up by TE implies that it is by no means an ordinary love story, which is confirmed by what NR described:

from his [TE] description like a woman coming of age novel in the same way that Françoise Sagan's *Bonjour Tristesse*. (NR interview)

Thus *Shanghai Baby* was construed and received as having a precedent in the recent history of translations of erotic literature. The erotic and exotic facets of *Shanghai Baby* were emphasized in TE's interview through the association with Françoise Sagan's *Bonjour Tristesse* (TE interview). This is also clearly echoed by NR. *Bonjour Tristesse* (Sagan, 1977) was written by an eighteen year old French writer, Françoise Sagan, and published in France in 1954.¹⁵ *Bonjour Tristesse* conveys a scandalised image of the younger generation with their fashionable rebelliousness in post-war Europe. The intertextual connection of these two books indicates that the decisive factor in TE's and NR's considerations to embark on the *Shanghai Baby* project was not so much considerations to do with aesthetic value, narrative technique and translation-related aspects, but it was the combination of an eroticism that can be understood in terms of an existing model of literary eroticism in the West (typified by *Bonjour Tristesse*) and an exoticism that emanates from the fact that the woman at the centre of this eroticism is a Chinese woman, not the familiar Western woman, and she is located at the heart of the as yet mysterious post-Mao China.

The summary of the story and two very badly translated pages are all that NR has got from TE, apart from TE's personal views and account about this book, based on which NR made his decision to take up this book, without being able to read the book very closely and assess its various technical aspects. The 'badly' translated pages did not play the negative role that they usually do within the selection considerations for NR. He himself, as a result, got involved in the editing process of *Shanghai Baby* to make up for the 'bad' translation. In the interview he explained his involvement with *Shanghai Baby*, the editorial director at Constable (the publisher) and the editor at Simon Shuster in America, who simultaneously bought *Shanghai Baby*, refused to edit it due to what they saw as an accurate but inaccessible translation which would need a great deal of time to make it readable from the point of view of English readership. It seems what is judged as 'bad' translation constituted the very motivation that drove him to be involved in this editorial work. Here it may be worth mentioning a few details about NR's background, which can shed some light on the reason underlying his willingness and ability to take up the editorial job when everybody found it daunting.

¹⁵ The sexual sensationalism of *Bonjour Tristesse* made the young writer commercially successful overnight. It was translated into twenty languages, sold two million copies and was made into a movie in 1985 (more details are available from: http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=86081:04-07-08).

Like RC, NR started his career in the publishing industry, working for a literary publisher called Chatto and Windus after his first job at an arts magazine when he had finished his university degree in art history. After setting up his own publishing house in 1985, he bought a publishing house – Constable – in 2000 and soon after that he took up the project of *Shanghai Baby*. During the years he worked as an employee, or for his own company, he had worked mostly as an editor (NR interview). So he still has editorial expertise although he currently does not edit many books while running his own company. Based on his editorial experience, he was aware that what an editor sees as unsatisfactory translation could be compensated for to a good extent through the editorial process; the translation aspect is thus seen as not of primary importance as far as the selection of this book was concerned.

Regarding NR's second criterion for selection, i.e. publicity, it is in many ways related to visibility in the source text culture. TE also sees the author's ability to engage in publicity as essential for the Chinese authors and their work to be successful in the West. The publicist is one of the people working in the sale and marketing sections who can influence the publisher's decision on the acquisition of a book, Graham explains the crucial situation where 'a publisher is in two minds about whether or not to buy a book, the author will be invited to meet the editor and publicist and their personality and promotional potential will be a significant influence on the acquisition decision' (1993: 129) (the issue of publicity will be discussed in more detail in the next section). Putting emphasis on the possibility for publicity as a criterion, however, suggests that the situation would also involve the assessment of the book based on the views of people working in the publicity and selling sectors in the publishing house.

The above discussion of the dynamics of selection and the assessments that go with it shows that what counts as decisive for a book to be selected for translation is mostly un-literary in nature. Involvement in the complex, multifaceted and often uncertain process of scouting for information about potential translations, evaluating and negotiating Chinese auto/biographies with certain preferred thematic topics serves to inform the shared knowledge that underpins assumptions and perceptions about Chinese literary works that are seen as worth translating. The shared views and professional knowledge in turn constitute the overlapped dispositions that have been learnt by the participants through the process of selection. In the next following sections, I will focus on these forms of shared knowledge in the publishing field in terms of perceptions of the literary work and how these overlapped dispositions and *habitués* are constituted through this particular learning process of selection.

3.3.4 Interlocked *Habitus* in the Practice of Selection

The concept of ‘interlocked *habitus*’ has been used by Inghilleri to refer to and explain a set of multiple *habitus* of the participants from the inter-related field(s) within the US court context where interpretations, traceable to multiple *habitus*, come into conflict and contradiction in the struggle over establishing the legitimacy of particular norms (2003: 259-62). The concept of ‘interlocked *habitus*’ can be used and applied to the case of the translation process. In the context of the translation process where various parties work and interrelate at the different stages of production, it is particularly useful to look into the ‘interlocked *habitus*’ of the individuals involved to explore the way interrelated networks operate to influence and generate the dispositions, interpretations, values and norms of the individuals involved, which combine to make possible and perhaps even necessary the selection and production of particular Chinese literary works.

First, the interlocked *habitus* are reflected in the uncodified rule of considering the economic capital as the primary mover in the publishing field, based on which the Chinese auto/biographical writings are selected. As TE puts, they are merely salesmen rather than literary persons. This professional identity – salesmen in the first place – in a sense operates as an unspoken norm for one’s self-understanding and one’s actions in the publishing field. Within this network, it seems that the economic imperatives govern what is to be selected and how it is to be translated. However, the economically motivated struggle and the surface of interactive actions among the participants are underpinned by deep-seated norms and views pertaining to how the literary work is perceived and evaluated. It is important to note that the criteria on which the would-be-translated books are evaluated and selected are not primarily linked to literary and stylistic value. This is exemplified in the processes of selecting the six Chinese auto/biographies. It is the business-oriented logic *modus operandi* in dealing with literary works in the field of publishing that TE describes as a ‘feel for a book’; this logic pertains to the extra-linguistic and extra-literary level or contextual evaluations of the Chinese auto/biographies. Economic imperatives have become the main forces governing the book and textual production in the book production cycle in the current publishing culture in the UK (Adams, 1993). Prioritising considerations about the profitable dimension in books based on market demands now shapes the sets of dispositions shared by all the players within the publishing field. The interlocked *habitus* or sets of dispositions, which are to a great extent the result of these structural tendencies that are incorporated and shared by all the individuals involved in the selection, would frame Chinese auto/biographies as an object no

different from the commodities; the marketable properties and commercial revenue are seen as priorities over the literary value. This can in part explain why it is that some Chinese literary works of very good literary quality have not yet been translated, or might not be popular if they were to be translated and introduced into the UK target context.

Moreover, the set of judgments on Chinese auto/biographies supported by the market to a certain extent echo common ways of receiving and understanding the content of these auto/biographies in the target culture: mainly as ‘eye-witness’ narrations or merely victimised voices (Zarrow, 1999). Background information and understandings, values and ways of evaluating, and the overall professional competences that are brought to bear on the selection process are acquired through participants’ immersion in a range of experiences and interactions such as transmitting ideas and information within the network, book fairs and negotiations. The interlocked *habitus* therefore refer to the shared values and the common understandings of the rules of the game and its logic and stakes, which is reflected in the way the individual’s ability to negotiate conditions and context moment by moment and case by case. The interlocked *habitus* have been constituted and at the same time manifested primarily through, apart from the negotiations among the participants, the activities and contexts of transmitting information and publicity.

3.3.4.1 Networked Socialising: Transmitting Information

The network involved in selecting Chinese auto/biographies, the social activities, professional events and teamwork within publishing houses (including arranging meetings and negotiations etc.) are all about sharing, exchanging, receiving and circulating information about books and authors that can be used as basis for a certain course of action. This instrumental information circulates through the network connections, through what Bourdieu would describe as ‘social capital’, i.e. the network of relations and connections that can be mobilised to serve as assets and resources ‘to get things done’; one of the main functions of social capital networks is to serve as information channels. In the case of the selection and production of the Chinese auto/biographies, the field-specific professional social capital – the connections and networks – can support a more efficient and successful production, dissemination and consumption of a literary work. Through the work of these networks transmitting information is of paramount importance, and seeking, obtaining and exchanging information can take place a conscious as well as implicit level through teamwork and negotiations of various types taking place within the publishing field (Davies, 1995). The information is disseminated through interactions in the network of interconnected individuals,

in the context of professional events (such as book festivals, books fairs, various publicity activities), or casual meetings and personal conversations where the participants interact to affect, influence and inform each other, wittingly and unwittingly. All of these information transactions do, too, make an input into forming the *habitus* of individuals in handling Chinese projects. RC in particular talked about the shared information and exchange of ideas through the connections she had formed as a result of her previous experiences in Europe:

Because when I worked for her [a literary scout], I made lots of friends with publishers in Europe. Now I know a lot of people in Spain, Germany or France who tell me about good books in those countries that we can translate into English. (RC interview)

The speciality area RC works in is the publication of translations. Thus the appropriate socio-cultural circles she had created from her previous professional experience were of great assistance to her current work. The importance of this network is manifest in the fact that the more detailed and quicker the information one gains through the network connection, the more likely one will make a timely informed decision about whether or not to commit oneself to a translation project and under what terms and conditions.

3.3.4.2 *Publicity Activities*

Publicity in the British literary and publishing field is in a sense the key knot in the chain of marketing and sales activities for a literary work to be commercially successful. It has, along with marketing and sales, become ‘integral to the whole publishing and editorial process’ (Graham, 1993: 128), as a result of the severe competition in the current British publishing industry that has become “transatlanticized” (Graham, 1993: 127). Further, publicity is a very important mode of networking and circulating various types of relevant information. At a conceptual level, it can be seen as a distinctive way of forming and informing the interlocked *habitus* of all the interconnected individuals involved in both the literary and the publishing fields, including the authors. It is a key stage in promoting a literary work nowadays. It is clearly the case that the quantity and quality of publicity affect the marketing and the sales of the book; but another more subtle function fulfilled through publicity is a certain form of initiation and socialization of the participants, including the authors, into a number of dispositions and publicly oriented aptitudes in relation to the Chinese projects.

The possible range of Publicity is one of the crucial conditions for considering the author and his/her literary work to be sellable in the target market, which is particularly the case with Chinese projects where the authors adaptability and flexibility can be seen as a significant

bonus. This is perhaps because the perceived cultural and linguistic distance between the Chinese source context and the British target context can be seen as in particular need of some mediation and ‘bringing home the message’, as it were, where the author can play a big role. The underlying logic seems to be that putting a human face on the story, especially an auto/biography, will put more ‘life’ into it. This seems to be premised in part on implicit assumptions about authenticity in auto/biography, and the authenticating value of the human face of the author/narrator/experiencer of the documentary content of auto/biography. The variations in the genres of autobiography and fiction call for different marketing strategies to fashion different well-attuned images of the writers and their books to be put across to potential audiences. With the genre of auto/biographical writings, the way the writer is perceived and evaluated in terms of his/her personality traits will very likely affect the way his/her autobiographical writing will be received and the likelihood of its good or bad reception by reviewers, critics and wider audiences (Marcus, 1994; Pascal, 1960). These assumed claims are rooted in a certain normative expectation about autobiography and its relation to self and society; i.e. what is called ‘autobiographical intentionality’ (Marcus, 1994: 3-4) which all writers of autobiography have to confront one way or another. Thus, when a writer of auto/biography manages to gain credibility for their personality through the publicity stage, that will serve as an asset for the marketing of his/her book because the common positive perception of their personality can reinforce his/her implicit claim to truthfulness and verisimilitude in what is depicted and narrated in the work, and thus adds to the kudos of the work as a whole. These publicity activities within an English-speaking context require a staging of the Chinese author’s presence and visibility, centred around the author’s own verbalizing – in English – their intentions behind writing his/her autobiography as well as the personal, political and social circumstances that surrounded and prompted and shaped the writing of the autobiography.

Thus, talking publicly about their selves and intentions behind composing their auto/biographical writings in the West on various occasions seems to be indispensable for the assurance of the ‘truth’ value and ‘authenticity’ element of their writing. Where the Chinese writer is not able to make an input into the publicity process, most likely because of the language barrier, then the absence of the writer of the auto/biography on the publicity trail by default is thought to be a negative factor that is very likely to undermine or at least limit the chances for success for their work. The success cases cited by TE are Xinran and Wei Hui who had so aptly handled the publicity situations that they had gained a great deal of

credibility, and indeed credit, for their auto/biographical writings. Their English may not be excellent; however, their enthusiastic involvement and availability were very instrumental in imparting their standpoint and intentionality that directly have gone into the making of their self-images as ingenuous, dependable and wholehearted personalities. As TE notes, Wei Hui's commercial success is to a certain extent owed to the effective publicity activities she had been involved in. Accompanied with representatives of the publishers, she toured the USA and the UK, taking part in a broad range of publicity activities and turning up in international book festivals.¹⁶ The publicized image designed for her has been framed as a representative of the new Chinese generation and her active involvement in the publicity has gained her some fame as an international writer, thus helping the sales and building a name for herself along the way. TE commented in this respect: 'she is unbelievably good at publicity. She really knew what publicity is.'

Wei Hui's case exemplifies both the durability and adaptability that Bourdieu associates with the ways in which *habitus* is formed and put to work. Wei Hui first experienced the publicity activities in China when *Shanghai Baby* was first published in 1999. In China publicity associated with and targeted at the media, marketing and sales has increasingly become important in the literary field as a result of the commercial transformations that took place in the Chinese publishing industry since 1990s (Ferry, 2003; Kang, 2004; Kong, 2005). The visibility of Wei Hui and her semi-autobiography in China has been achieved through marketing and promotional strategies via a combination of media, critical reviews and internet exposure in China through which she was represented as the authorial voice of female authenticity (Ferry, 2003). Working in collaboration with the Chinese publishers, she put herself across through publicity as a shocking figure and a totally anti-traditional selfhood. Indeed, the publicity that has surrounded Wei Hui in Britain has been emphatically focused around image as a young anti-traditionalist girl challenging Chinese patriarchal society. Despite the variations in the form of publicity between China and Britain, the publicity in Britain was engineered in such a way as to induce perceptions of Wei Hui as the authenticating face, a personalized recognizable human face, of her life-story to embody the imaginary narrated protagonist.

¹⁶ Wei Hui has been invited to various book festivals and fairs as a representative of Chinese young writers. She was also one of the speakers in Edinburgh International Book Festival in August 2005 where I met with her and conducted the interview with her.

As the example shows, publicity activities in Britain serve a public platform that all the authors have to take on board as active participation would be a great deal of help to sales figures as well as to establishing a public image and name for the writer. It is also a site where people primarily from the literary and publishing fields, besides enthusiastic readers and other interested people, come together to interact, socialize and establish, wittingly or unwittingly, useful socio-cultural circles. Involvement in such socializing events can also have the incidental effect of reinforcing a communal ethos despite differences and conflicts of interests and visions, or perhaps because of these differences and conflicts. These socializing events help create some form of interpersonal bonding, and a form of social capital, that can act as a welcome countervailing force to the competitive ethos that governs the professional dimension of their *habitus*. This would help carve out, to use Bourdieu's term, a *modus vivendi* (1992: 5) for the competitive interests and outlooks of people who occupy different positions within and across the literary and publishing fields. This can even counteract or at least tone down the element of cynicism and distrust that can by default colour the ways in which competitors within the market deal with one another.

Considering the chain of production of literary works, the publicity activities would produce more experienced people in various specialized areas such publicists, literary reviewers and bookstore salesmen who are involved in series of various stages in the publishing process. The translators and authors, who primarily belong to the literary field, would find themselves learning and coping with different situations better as these events go along. Every individual working in a particular quarter within the various sectors in the book industry and literary field, if s/he is to act successfully and efficiently in the field, would have to develop a certain well-adjusted *habitus* that would enable him/her to develop a situated sense for arriving at quick answers with regard to a number of practical, action-oriented questions which Bourdieu succinctly captures thus: 'what needs to be done, where to do it, how and with whom, in view of all that has been done and is being done, all those who are doing it, and where' (1993: 95).

3.4 Multiple Capitals in the Translation Process

In the translation process, the social agents compete for obtaining rewards that can be converted into various forms of capital in their corresponding fields: such as revenue and profits (material capital), acquired knowledge of a specific area such as Chinese literature for instance (cultural capital), authority and recognition of one's competence, ability or knowledge (symbolic capital), and social networking (social capital). From the point of view

of the literary agent as well as the publishers who are located primarily inside the economic field, the success of a given Chinese autobiography, often signified through high sales figures, directly yields material capital – i.e. a good return on their financial investment. The authors have consequently become best-seller authors, and their success has in itself become a credit and an asset to the publishing world and the book trade in general. Within the publishing house, the editor would enhance and secure his/her position in the publishing industry as a result of being involved as editor with a book that has made it to a best-selling position. This can be seen in RC's case. Following her success in editing *Red Dust*, she continued to take up editing Chinese authors' works in Britain: these include Xinran, Guo Xiaolu and some other Chinese authors such as Dai Sijie's bestseller work. Having constantly edited Chinese literary works, she has consolidated her position as an expert in working with Chinese writers, with the requisite knowledge about Chinese culture and people. This aspect has come up very clearly in RC's interview.

At a surface level, the revenue and profits are the ultimate stakes for the agents to compete for in the publishing field. In other words, the economic is the primary capital; however, the profit coming from successful books is also convertible to other forms of capital which, in turn, indirectly facilitate the gaining of economic capital. Bourdieu stresses the instability of the dominance of different forms of capital within their corresponding fields (e.g. the dominance of economic capital in publishing and of literary capital in the literary field). Under certain circumstances there is a high degree of convertibility between economic, cultural, symbolic and social forms of capital (Bourdieu 1991). For example, the distribution of capital within the publishing and literary fields is not always regulated in a consistent way; it is rather variable and fluid as a result of this convertibility between different forms of capital. In the case of the translated Chinese auto/biographies, the Chinese writers, the editors, the translators and the literary agents have all developed their own respective multiple capitals, each of which can be converted from material to symbolic capital and vice versa. The most obvious examples are those of the literary agent and Chinese authors who have benefited from multiple capitals which have been converted from one to another.

3.4.1 The Literary Agent's Convertible and Multiple Capitals

Among the all participants, the literary agent's position has become even more noticeable at all levels. Successfully importing Chinese auto/biographical writings and introducing Chinese authors to the UK readership have enhanced the TE's symbolic capital, i.e. his reputation and

name in the market that follows from recognition of his prowess and ability. This is something TE talked about in the interview with a sense of self-fulfilment and pride:

I know how to make this book succeed, anything from China that I put my marker on, people believe in it, all of the world, publishers believe in it.

In fact, as the quote clearly indicates, he is aware of not only his reputation *per se*, but the fact that the mere fact of his name being associated with an unknown book adds to the chances of its success in the market, or at least invites demand by publishers based on previous undisputed successes. In other words, the name of TE comes to be seen as a guarantor of success and of the value of the work (not necessarily literary value but certainly its market value). This market value follows to some significant degree from the belief in the value of the works introduced by TE, i.e. their association with TE, rather than from their intrinsic literary and thematic properties. In a sense, the name of TE comes to have what Levi-Strauss (1972: 24) would describe as ‘symbolic efficacy’; this is clearly rooted in an inductive form of reasoning whereby what has been true in the past is to retain its true value in the future; an assessment of the future in terms of the past. And in some sense success makes for self-fulfilling prophecies about future success; in other words, the very fact of predicting a work’s success, based on previous successes, contributes to its success, i.e. demand by good publishers with good amount of resources and expertise to invest into the translation. Thus the credit the agent has acquired will easily convert into the recognised capital specific to the publishing field, which is most manifest in publishers’ willingness worldwide to invest in the agents’ future proposals. The literary agent therefore comes to act as a proxy literary critic, so to speak, an authority on what counts as literary value from the point of view of the prospective readership. Simultaneously, the market value can displace literary value such that the work’s literary worth is collapsed into its commercial uptake, or even reduced to its commercial uptake.

Besides, it is also important to take account of the literary agent role as a mediator – between the publishers and authors – who handles and mediates the conflicting demands, offers and opportunities on the author’s behalf. This layers yet another important dimension onto TE’s position from the point of view Chinese authors; TE also has a very good reputation for his expertise in handling Chinese authors’ affairs. Generally, the function of mediating and negotiating in the literary production process is seen as essential to the agents’ line of work. The extent to which they can successfully handle the dilemmatic situations is one way of evaluating the quality of their work and their competence. This of course takes on an especial significance when the agent is visibly and recognisably successful in negotiating and

mediating with positive outcomes in relation to and on behalf of authors from different cultures. This will go to show their ability to not only negotiate the usual tricky situations involved in the publication process but also their ability to negotiate across cultural barriers and differences, and to overcome these barriers. This acquired culturally specific knowledge enables TE to interact with Chinese writers in an efficient way, and to bring about very satisfactory outcomes. This, in turn, results in the formation of a very specific type and form of capital which can be described as a cross-cultural/mediating capital, as it were. This cross-cultural/mediating capital, along with his ‘nose’ or ‘feel’ for a potentially successful book, have made him into an indispensable business partner to many publishers both locally and internationally.

Further, his cross-cultural/mediating capital is also both activated and reinforced by the Chinese authors’ reliance on him in understanding the UK book trade culture and the readership culture. Thus he serves an important facilitator for them to step into the UK literary field. In the case of the Chinese projects and their specificities, it would be important to add the choice of the right translator and of the right newspaper reviewers. All of these ‘right’ choices would be impossible to be achieved without the proper intermediating work done by literary agents. TE’s cross-cultural/mediating capital accumulated through his experience with Chinese authors has developed into a marker or brand inseparable from his symbolic power as an expert in Chinese culture.

3.4.2 Chinese Authors’ un-Literary Capitals

The ability to promote their work in different cultural and linguistic contexts is increasingly seen as critical to Chinese writers who hope to see their work published and recognised in the Western context. This non-literary requirement, under these circumstances, includes knowing ‘how to get first noticed’ (TE interview) by literary agents and publishers in the first instance, co-operating with Western editors and all the way through to the activities of publicity such as interviews, giving talks in book fairs and festivals etc. The socialising skills, a form of social capital, are gained and exhibited in all the events, professional gatherings and publicity activities. Social capital in relation to the authors is in effect part of their literary achievement. English and Frow (2006) convincingly capture this phenomenon: authors’ presence in concerts, coverage in British newspapers and appearance on book-chat TV programs and signing autographs etc. all combine to create a literary celebrity status that authors need for their

literary success. They note that what they a literary celebrity culture has long been in existence, and its existence has been ‘intertwined with construction of the British literary canon’ (English & Frow, 2006: 40).

Having found themselves faced with this culture, the Chinese authors have come to realise the significance of the phenomenon of publicity and also make a good use of this opportunity, putting their image cross not only as literary writers, but as representatives of a specific cultural group in China. For example, Wei Hui and Guo Xiaolu are seen as representing the new generation in China; Xinran speaks for the repressed Chinese women in patriarchal society; Hong Ying lends a voice to the deprived class; and Ma Jian is representative of intellectuals and exiled writers. In the publicity and press reviews, their un-literary positions seem to have shaped positively their literary evaluations. Xinran’s ‘ambassador’ image has been established as she took a literary tour around Europe at the time; TE said in this regard:

People like her, she is very warm ... She’s become an ambassador; she is showing herself, she is presenting modern China.

Her ambassador position is tied to her success as a Chinese author. But the ambassador and representative roles played by the writers are very likely to morph into cultural capital: an insider voice that is associated with authentic knowledge about China’s political, ideological and cultural situation. The author’s international recognition for the literary value of his/her work, as well as the social and cultural capitals that they accumulate, are convertible in the long term into material capital as a result of market success of future works, or the future success of previous works i.e. works that have been published previously. The convertibility of capitals can thus work retrospectively, as it were, and feed into the success of works that came out several years earlier.

The translators’ position is quite unique since their capital, or their recognised aspect of their capital at least, is constituted through the power relations they are involved in, especially vis-à-vis the literary agent and publishers who have a considerable weight in determining the recognition of a good translator. In the practical sense, the translator will gain recognition for the ability to produce high quality translation from Chinese into English, which is a very rare skill in the English-speaking world. This of course will open up new possibilities and opportunities for her/him to negotiate – from a stronger position – with literary agents and publishers about future work. However, what constitutes a good translation, and the criteria and norms that have to be internalised by the translator to inform their translation skills, is a

very delicate matter, which will be discussed in the next chapter. This will relate back to the question of to what extent the domination of the economic field intervenes in and colours the translation process, and to what extent it can have an impact on shaping or steering translational norms.

3.5 Conclusion

Selecting and importing the Chinese auto/biographical writings into the UK and investing in the translation activity are impacted by the *habitus* of the literary agent and the publishers, the two decisive figures in this process. Their choices and activities reflect the current cultural and social trajectory of the publishing and literary fields. Importing Chinese auto/biographical writings is thus to a great extent the outcome of the power relations in the network, with the literary agent playing a prominent role which is underpinned by his good grasp of the logic of British literary and publishing fields as well as his understanding of the dominant cultural and ideological tendency that are echoed in the taste of the British audience. In parallel, the literary agent's role draws upon his familiarity with the Chinese literary and publishing fields, a familiarity that he has developed through his networking with people located within the Chinese context as well as his experience of importing Chinese projects into the UK. His professional knowledge, a set of dispositions and a *habitus* formed as a result of his immersion in and exposure to the publishing and literary fields, is reflected in the five models of importation which contribute to the achievement of the desirable outcome of popularity and commercial success for the Chinese auto/biographical writings within the British target context. The process of selection also shows the homologies and collaborative nature of chain working relationships such as: the collaborative relationship between the literary agent and the publisher as well as publicists in dealing with the authors and their literary works, which involves the formation and coordination of overlapping *habitus*; and the author's cooperation in the various stages and activities of promotion and publicity in order to anticipate and guarantee receptive audiences and sympathetic critics. Based on the governing logic and stakes in the publishing and literary fields where the network of importing Chinese auto/biographical writings is constructed, all the social agents demonstrate an engagement with competition and struggle over the various forms of recognition and capital. This can be exemplified by the cases of Chinese authors and the literary agent. In the process, Chinese authors found themselves facing various forms of promoting and publicising their work. Involvement in these activities required developing and acquiring a non-literary type of

capital, namely, social capital. In addition, they had to acquire a specific form of cultural capital related to their role as representative voices of specific groups through their witness voices rather than through literary creativity. Simultaneously, the literary agent's economic reward is converted into multiple forms of capital: his reputation and the widely established recognition for his 'knack' for spotting the right Chinese books have enhanced his social network within the publishing and literary fields (social capital) which in turn has brought more lucrative contracts and deals (economic capital). His commercial success has established his reputation as the Chinese authors' ally or champion who acts on behalf of the authors to negotiate favourable deals, in part based on his proven experience as an importer of Chinese literary works, and in part based on his acute understanding and wide knowledge of Chinese culture and the expectations of Chinese authors. The credit he has gained from the accumulated publications of Chinese projects has made him globally recognizable in the publishing world with respect to coordinating and managing the translation of Chinese projects.

Chapter 4 Translating Authentic Voices: Negotiation and Mediation

4.1 Introduction

As shown in Chapter 3, the translated Chinese auto/biographical writings in this study have been determined by a specific culture and an operating set of embodied/embedded dispositions in the publishing field in particular. The tendencies and preferences that are expressed by the literary agent and publishers/editors can have a significant impact on the end product of translation. In this chapter, I will first highlight the cultural and social circumstances within which the translating activities occur and examine the authors' expectations about translating their auto/biographical writings. Second, I will move on to delineate the roles played by the literary agent and editors, as influential and powerful participants in the translation process, to examine the extent to which their supervising and mediating power can have an impact on the content and form of the translation product. Then I will look into translator's *habitus* that has been formed through the interactive and cooperative relationships with the other participants involved in the discursive practices of translating process. Finally, I will focus on the editing process that all translations undergo to highlight and examine the role the editors play in the translating process.

4.2 Authorial Attention Towards Translation

4.2.1 The Interactive and Collaborative Nature of the Translating Process

The translating process of the five auto/biographical writings, except for *Shanghai Baby*¹, has been conducted to a significant degree through its interplay with the writing process. In other words, the five Chinese texts on the basis of which the translations were conducted were the authors' manuscripts rather than the published Chinese texts; thus the manuscripts were subject to alterations by the authors while translating. In this case, the close working interactive relationships between translators and authors have to some degree influenced the character of the translating process. This is firstly due to the social and cultural circumstances in which the writing and translating activities were commissioned at the same time; that is to

¹ *Shanghai Baby* is the only case that follows the common model of translating a literary work in which the published source text in the source cultural country is bought by the literary agent and/or publishers, and is subsequently translated into English. The commissioned translator produces the translation based on the published ST which is hardly changed at all.

say, the writing act was undertaken for the purpose of translation in five of the six cases under this study. However, the simultaneous undertaking of the writing and the translating did not happen with all of them. *Sky Burial* and *Red Dust* are the examples of simultaneous writing and translation. Regarding *Village of Stone*, *Good Women of China* and *Daughter of the River* although the Chinese manuscripts had been completed before they went through the translation process in the UK, yet the authors' inputs, especially with *Village of Stone* and *Good Women of China* in terms of considerable additions and deletions made to the original manuscripts, were made in the light of the translators' and editors' suggestions which took account of the target English-speaking readership, and thus contributed greatly to the end product (more late in section 4.3 and 4.4). The interactive nature of the translation is seen as common practice when the writing and translation are commissioned and conducted (TE interview). Ma Jian describes this process while writing *Red Dust*:

。。。在我写的时候，差不多写了一部分，就开始翻译了。那么这一翻译的时候就出现了一个问题：她要不断的问我，提出的问题就导致尽量写作要简单化。。。。

这种写作过程对我来说，我希望永远不要发生，那就是一边在写一边在翻译。那压力太大了，因为我在写的过程中我都会变得，突然这个人物我就不要了，这段我需要在前面再加一万字。很多问题都牵涉一个翻译对吗？那么翻译也跟着动，最后我写什么她翻什么，我们俩找不到一起。。。我现在这本小说，我不完全写完，我根本看都不给她看，因为我不想有任何东西参与进来了，最后变成双人创作的感觉。

During the process of my writing, I wrote a part that was translated almost simultaneously. The problem with this type of translation was that she [the translator] constantly asked me questions, which in a way caused the simplification of my ongoing writing.

I hope this type of writing process, where the writing and translating happen at the same time, will not happen anymore since it is too stressful: in the process of my writing, I was constantly required to make changes to my writing. For instance, it could be suggested that one of my characters should be removed altogether or that I should add something like ten thousand words to explain before starting a plot, and accordingly the translation had to make changes too. The outcome of it was often that we both lost track of what I wrote and where she got with the translation. The novel I am writing at the moment will not be given to her to read before I have finished the whole lot since I do not want any interference coming into play while writing, otherwise it would become co-writing between the writer and translator.

(Interview with Ma Jian, my translation)

The interface between the writing process and the translating process indicates the contextual circumstances in which the writing/translating interplay acts as constant influence and

interference with multiple inputs that shape the end product. This would also mean that the interaction between the authors and the translation will influence the authorial voice and intentionality. At this point, the question that needs to be raised is around the authors' views towards translation: what they expect from the translation to ensure their authorial voices, what is the substance that they expect from the translation to capture? In this section, in addressing these questions, I will explore to what extent the interactive relationships (including that of literary agent and editors) and interferences coming from outside of linguistic renditions would diminish the authorial voice and intentionality that they expect to convey.

Translation is the primary concern in relation to the authorial voice that has received a great deal of attention from the authors who are aware of the complexities arising from the interactive process of writing and translating, and their impacts on the authorial voice in the non-Chinese target context. All of them expressed their anxiety, in the interviews, about authorial intentionality that might have been lost in translation since these multiple layers of linguistic mediation would have likely worked against conserving their literary craftsmanship. Although getting their writings published outside of China and consequently obtaining the international recognition are seen as the primary objective (as discussed in Chapter 3), yet what they intend to achieve in the first place in their self-writings – factual representation or aesthetic value of literary works – is personal, which can be observed from what they say in the interviews. Looking at this aspect is also crucial in examining their expectations towards translating their authorial intentionality to see to what extent their expectations are met or disappointed in the process of translating with multiple inputs coming into the end product.

4.2.2 Aesthetic Considerations and Faithful Translation of the Inner Voices

The solitude is the ultimate experience that all the (self-)exile writers have to face, an experience of going through 'the deprivations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation' as Said puts it (1990: 359). Their situation as political dissidents and disillusioned individuals has alienated them from the seemingly consensual home culture, but also from the host countries as outsiders to British (literary) culture, writing about specific thematic topics and within a certain genre that has been described as a mix of realism and semi-autobiography reflecting on the Communist reality in China. The deep feeling of displacement and nostalgia mingled with pain and anxiety during their (self-)exile have put them into a dilemmatic situation: it is a situation of no return to home on the one hand, and of

feeling a certain unease with the British literary system as well as facing the readers' expectations that they would have to adapt to, on the other.

In their writing the first challenge they face is the confusion related to the genre classification where their writings belong. In the interviews, a couple of issues have been raised that could be seen as common ground shared among authors including Ma Jian, Wei Hui and Guo Xiaolu in relation to the dismissive attitude towards the genre of autobiography which contradicts the presumption about the intentionality of telling the truth as publicised through media. Ma Jian's view of autobiography exemplifies this shared attitude. For him, autobiography is the genre of the accurate recording and documenting of fact without literary modification or mediation attached to it, whereas the novel is the literary work that can involve various ways of literary devices and forms of fabulation: the selection of settings and characters and constructing the plot and narrative, amongst other things. He had at first rejected any label associated with the factual realist descriptions constitutive of the genre of travel writing and autobiography as known in the UK before publication (FD interview). The final negotiated agreement with the publisher was that he would still consider the book as a novel regardless of the label that was to be imposed on *Red Dust*, to render the inner spiritual growth and search through his trip to the final destination of Tibet:

我当时写的时候旅行文学这个概念也不很清楚,我对他们说我只能写成一本小说,至于这本归于什么类我倒是没有兴趣....只是在风格上没必要与任何人重复,我就以我自己的愿望去写。(Ma Jian interview)

When I started writing *Red Dust*, I had no idea about what travel writing was all about. Thus I told them I could only write it in the form of a novel and I had no interest in knowing how this novel would be classified. What I wanted to ensure was that I would not want to repeat what other people had already done in terms of style; I would write in my own style. (My translation)

Ma Jian initially designed *Red Dust* in the form of a novel which, he thinks, is the only genre which could fulfil his literary and novelistic ambitions. His intention and objective behind writing *Red Dust* was clearly informed and shaped by literary considerations and the attempt to get across a certain genre (the novel) with a certain set of thematic leitmotifs. Hong Ying compared her self-writing with *Wild Swans* in terms of the stylistic dimensions, emphasising the literary value of *Daughter of the River* in differentiating it from the type of popular genre that put narrating historical events as the central theme. She points out that, unlike *Wild Swans* where the events follow the chronological order, *Daughter of the River* unfolds in an unconventional way of narrating along two temporal threads: her mother's story in the past

uncovered through accounts by her eldest sister, and her own stories starting with her own childhood and tracing her growth up to her eighteenth birthday (her mysterious birth and alienated position in her family). Guo Xiaolu goes even one step further to overtly express her contempt for autobiography as a genre that lacks and indeed does not require any imagination; she says:

Whatever the media or journalist ask me ‘is that autobiography?’ and then [I was] thinking ‘shit! You think I don’t have imagination and I am not a story teller?’

(Guo Xiaolu interview)

Village of Stone is based primarily on Guo Xiaolu’s life experiences. However, in order to demonstrate her capacity to engage in imaginative and creative application of sophisticated literary techniques to her writing, she re-constructed her auto/biographical fragments into the form of novel (Guo Xiaolu interview). For Guo Xiaolu the ‘factual’ story in *Village of Stone* is treated as background materials that are transformed and woven into the story which is told through flashbacks interspersed with an adult present-time of city life (Guo Xiaolu interview). Their accounts indicate that for them demonstration of aesthetic value and artistic craftsmanship through their self-writings is ultimate achievement that they wish to convey in their writings regardless of the compromises they might have made to make their work publishable in the UK.

In some ways related to the aesthetic dimension, most of the authors (except for Xinran) place great emphasis on the inner subjective dimension of their writings as demonstration of their highest literary value and their attempt to deviate from the established documentary themes of Chinese auto/biographies (on pre- and post-Cultural Revolution). Ma Jian’s trip to underprivileged areas, in his view, takes on a more personal and subjective dimension to the extent that it prompts an orientation towards an abstract, philosophical investigation into the meaning of life (Ma Jian interview). The realm of the self has been clearly circumscribed and the self is developed on his desolate trip/escape (due to the ruthless reality) so that the self/personality has been enriched. This is clearly captured in his statement in the interview when he describes his trip as follows:

我的旅行就象一杯水, 当它烧开了, 他还是那杯水, 这个变化就在这个过程中.

My journey [to deprived areas] is like a cup of water on fire, after it has boiled, it is still that cup of water without turning into anything else. However, the change did happen and it happened in the process of boiling. (My translation)

What happened is not in the appearance, but the inner self has been transformed and fulfilled via the search for spirituality. The literary creation of the self as designed through the fictional structure reveals the focalization in *Red Dust* on the self-realization through the reflective and contemplative process.

In these authors' discussions with translators, the central issue around the translation is whether their stylistic aspects have been faithfully transferred into English and whether the inner self occupies the foreground in the translation as they expected (interviews with the authors), which would mark a key difference from the *Wild Swans* type of writings. Guo Xiaolu's and Wei Hui's semi-autobiographies are framed by the authors as literary creations, with great emphasis on the inner signs and inner manifestations of femininity. Wei Hui, for instance, who claims to be the undisputed representative of Chinese youth culture in the 1990s, emphasises the essence of her novel as revolving around the inner struggle of the female psyche which takes place against the background of the modernisation of Shanghai in the 1980s. In the same way, Guo Xiaolu focused on her typical feminist writing of the inner self when it comes to the translation of *Village of Stone* (Guo Xiaolu interview). What we can see here is that what they prioritise is the inner subjective substance animating the original texts which they are anxious to transfer intact through the translation.

Quite different from the other authors, in her interview Xinran highlighted the primacy of veracity and faithfulness to factual details in all her biographies that have been produced in the UK,² positioning herself thereby somewhere between the writer and the journalist/broadcaster. She upholds the idea of the objective reporting on the facts with minimum subjective interference (i.e. subjective views) that may cloud the objectivity of the detached reporting. Her claim about veracity in her writings is based on the first-hand interviews that she had obtained over eight years through interviewing more than two hundred women in China. The narrative of *Good Women of China* is basically made of the interviews, the personal correspondences and tape recordings, along with considerable diegetic summaries of events and explanations and personal comments on the cultural and historical background. Therefore, her view of faithful translation is more concerned with

² After publishing *Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial*, Xinran started writing a regular column for the British newspaper *The Guardian Unlimited* from 2003 to 2005 on the topics of Chinese culture and the various aspects of the cultural shock Chinese people are likely to experience in the UK. The selection of these articles was compiled and published in 2006 by vintage publisher, entitled *What the Chinese Don't Eat*. In 2008 her first novel *Miss Chopsticks* and another interviews-based biography *China Witness: Voices from a Silent Generation* were published by vintage and Chatto & Windus respectively.

accuracy about the historical events, place names and her journalistic style without literary modifications.

In the next sections, I will look at the translating process and focus in particular on the constant interactive inputs not only from authors and translators but also, more importantly, from participants (other than translators) who do not possess the linguistic capital (Chinese language), but still shape the way the translation is dealt with through selecting the translators and evaluating their early drafts of translation.

4.3 Intervention and Mediation

4.3.1 Selecting the Translators

4.3.1.1 *Experiencing the Natives*

Before the actual translation process takes place, selecting the translators for the task is seen as one of the decisive factors for the success of the Chinese translated works. The various ways of choosing translators also bring up the issue of what a 'satisfactory' translation is as perceived in the publishing world. Dominant perceptions of what constitutes a satisfactory translation can act as tacit guidelines exerting influence and authority on the translators. Here I will explain how the translators of the works in my study were selected. The reason for this focus is that the way they were selected would follow from as well as induce some explicit and implicit rules and expectations, operating at the subconscious or/and conscious level, and pertaining to the process of translating Chinese auto/biographical writings.

The translators of *Village of Stone* and of *Red Dust* were decided upon when the writings were commissioned as a result of what were deemed to be satisfactory samples that had been translated for the assessment of potential publication in the UK book market. The translator of *The Good Women of China* was selected and evaluated by the literary agent and the author; the translator subsequently was chosen for the translation of *Sky Burial* which was done in collaboration with another translator JL. As for *Daughter of the River*, it was thought that its translation would require a sinologist who would have better knowledge of Chinese history and Chinese literary styles. The translator of *Shanghai Baby* was selected through self-recommendation and later assessed and was given the job of this translation. There are no specific written guidelines available for the translator to follow; however, the assessment procedures employed in selecting the right translator seek to shape a specific translation approach that would be more likely to meet the parameters of what is deemed to be 'good'

translation based on criteria that are often defined on commercial grounds in the literary agent's and publishers' views.

The task of selecting the translators can be performed by either the literary agent or the publishers according to some form of agreement and negotiation between them. Although generally there was little consideration accorded to the aspect of translation during the selection of the source texts, yet both the literary agent and publishers acknowledged that the issue of translation occupied a great deal of their attention. The general principles of selecting the translators for these translation projects are agreed and shared between the literary agent and publisher. This was captured in TE's interview:

[The] really key thing you want in translators is someone who learns Chinese in China in the last ten years, who is part of that generation like Julia Lovell or Cindy Carter or Esther Tydesley because they were in China. You don't want academic translation of Chinese.

In his view, one of the most eminent criteria is that the translator should learn their Chinese in China in the last twenty years or so, the period from the 1980s onwards. This requirement, as TE said in the interview, would bring the translator closer to the ST by bringing their own experience of not only the contemporary language but also of culture and society into the practice of translation. In a similar vein, but from a different type of experience, BH, the translator of *Shanghai Baby*, also speaks emphatically of cultural experience in the interview:

A good literary translator is highly capable of 'experiencing' the world created by the author ...
(BH interview)

Experiencing with the quotation marks also reminds us that the world that the author has created is different from the outer reality; it is rather bound up with personal experiences created to convey in the literary world. According to what the literary agent and publisher (NR) stressed in their interviews, this experience primarily refers to both the linguistic and socio-cultural dimensions; it does not refer to the prior experience in the literary world, neither as a writer or even as a literary translator. Experience in and knowledge of the literary world, paradoxically, in the views of the literary agent and publisher (NR), can even be seen as undesirable as it could make the work too literary, as it were, and could make the translation too elaborate (more on this point in the next section).

The emphasis on the translator's experience of being in China suggests that what the translator needs is, as Asad puts it, the quality of 'learning to live another form of life and to

‘speak another kind of language’ (Asad, 1986: 149) in order to ‘write’ up the *Other* for the UK audiences. In this case, it is the idea of bearing witness, as it were, to the transitional socio-political turbulence in China that matters the most; the events that are watched, observed, recalled, (re)captured, rendered, and (re)presented; this is expected to be achieved through the translators’ lenses, speaking in the voice of the original authors, duplicating their authorial act of ‘bearing witness’ and speaking about something that in a sense speaks for itself because it belongs to the outer documentary reality. The translator thus serves to relay the author’s voice ‘bearing witness’ about self-evident facts that need to be reported in an objective way and without stylistic modifications.

In stark contrast to the TE’s views of experience expressed in the interviews, Birch (1995: 9) suggests that the translator not only needs to have knowledge of the complexities of historical and linguistic dimensions but also, most importantly, knowledge of Chinese literature and the culturally specific literary techniques of writers of the original (to be able to convey rhetorical and stylistic aspects of language such as chatty, stately, vulgar, pompous, nervous, virile, lyrical, and sentimental modes of writing and speaking).. He thus suggests that ‘future translators from Chinese should be blessed not just with linguistic skill but with a passion for literature’ (1995: 8). The passion for Chinese literature here is also stressed in the interview with the translator of *Village of Stone* in connection with what is seen as one of the qualities that make up a good translator. She further points out that a good literary translator also needs to familiarise herself with the literary work of the writer’s contemporaries; she thus sums it up:

The passion for Chinese literature, a broad knowledge of Chinese literature, past and present.

As Gouanvic (2005: 158) argues, it is the literary stylistics of each writer, or the ‘writer’s discourse’ or *habitus* in the literary field of the source culture that needs to be actualised in the translation to the extent that the author’s unique voice is the one that differs from all others. It acquires its uniqueness from its differential relations with all other voices that share the literary field at a given time and place.³ These competences cannot be obtained unless the above qualities are possessed by the translator, which is completely missing from TE’s criteria. The absence of this point from TE’s conception of the profile and traits of the

³ It is in a way analogous to the way Saussure defines the value of the sign as deriving from its negative differential network of relationships within which it is embedded; in other words, the value is relational; it is not intrinsic to the sign in itself (for more on this point see Holdcroft (1991)).

good translator indicates that the priority is given by TE to the translator's ability to transform the historical, political and cultural 'truth' they have observed into textual form, rather than retaining the substance of the writer's voice that the translator is capable of transferring. In this way, translation is equated with what Asad describes as 'anthropology writing/translation' (1986) where the translator is seen as an ethnographer (Sturrock, 1990: 996) who is required to recapture experience of an 'alien' culture by using her/his language that has already acquired 'the necessary concept with which to represent another culture' (Asad, 1985: 173). Consequently, the translation strategy would inevitably entail an 'act of violence' (Dingwaney, 1995: 209; Venuti, 1993) in the translating process that is located within the specific field of a given culture (the publishing field in the British literary system). The act of *violence*, embedded in the power relations that relay it, refers to the considerable amount of changes made to the source texts in order to make the translated culture comprehensible for readers in the target culture. The varying degree of violence entails primarily a re-writing (Lefevere, 1992) whereby the forms of alien culture are translated through the process of assimilation by divesting the ST of the traces of foreignness in order to constitute the culture of the *Other* (Dingwaney, 1995: 3-4). In the same vein, this mode of translating echoes TE's and NR's perception of translation, that is, essentially a form of re-writing, including deletions, additions and re-organisation of the ST which are initiated by the translators and then further done by the literary agent at any moment and/or editors during the editing process if the translators' drafts are seen as falling short of meeting the criteria for what is seen as a 'satisfactory' translation that appeals to the readership (TE and NR interviews). In other words, the domesticating process is required and monitored with a great deal of input from other participants apart from the translators – the literary agent and editors (whose intervention sometimes occurs even before the editing process) – in order to ensure a 'satisfactory' translation in the final product. This is clear in the example that TE gave to explain how the translating process has been carried out with regard to *The Good Women of China*:

She [ET, the translator of *Good Women of China*] understood what Xinran was writing about but she had no idea what happened after that, so I took her translation which was literal, and I rewrote it. (TE interview)

'Re-writing' is explicitly used in this context. What can be seen as an 'act of violence' is here seen and indeed valued as an integral step in the procedures of translation; it can happen at any stage and can be done by anybody who occupies a dominant position from which editing/rewriting decisions can be made. The translator's work, thus, was treated as *raw*

material or *first* draft written in what TE called *fundamental* English, based on which a certain degree of re-writing was done to meet expectations about *readable* narratives.

4.3.1.2 Competence and Skill in English Writing

Along with emphasis on the readability of the English text, TE additionally includes the translator's writing skill in English as another crucial criterion on the grounds that this skill enables the translator to have a good grasp of the codification of the writing system in the target culture in order to re-account/re-write the stories. TE further comments on the qualities of those whom he would see as 'good' translators:

What you're looking for in the translator – someone who is a writer but has no stories but knows the language or her own language. (TE interview)

The idea that the translator is 'a writer without a story' indicates that the translator's sought-after competence consists merely of his/her English language writing skills in conjunction with an awareness of the literary, poetic and stylistic norms and conventions of the (target) English-speaking literary system. Additionally, if we unpack TE's witty and almost proverbial statement, we find a number of interesting assumptions and perceptions about the translator's role in the process of translation, as well as about translation in terms of how the ST should be treated.

From TE's implicit view of the essence of English writing in translation, we can infer the gist of TE's practical and embedded philosophy of translation. If the translator is a writer without a story,⁴ the writer is someone with a story worth writing about. In other words, what constitutes a writer is two-fold: a literary writing style only recognizable in the source cultural system; a worthwhile story about China to tell, a story with some thematic substance not yet written in a literary style in the target culture. The translator, on the other hand, takes

⁴ It should be noted that this view of the writer as someone who has a story is built on certain normative assumptions and expectations about the novel: it is a story that must contain an initial situation, an action/event, and an outcome linked by the temporal and causal connections (Prince, 1987: 53); this is especially the case with the established model of Chinese autobiographical writings (e.g. *Wild Swans*) as received in the UK where an 'I/eye witness tells the stories based on the chronological sequence of historical events. However, the normative and indeed limited conception of writing – which seems to be well-attuned to the dynamics of the market – becomes evident when the model of the novel contains many complexities related to metonymical displacement and metaphorical condensation (Herman & Vervaeck, 2001: 105). For example, some stream-of-consciousness novels cannot fit into this conception of writing; a good case in point is some of Samuel Beckett's novels that do not really have a story, certainly not in the established sense of the term anyway, but portray or perform a non-linear unfolding of a psyche or a thought process.

care of the English writing style, capturing the essence of the story from the STs and then re-writing and re-organising the Chinese narratives in English for the English readership.

In this way, the writer is reduced to a story teller (with no emphasis on the literary craftsmanship), and the literary writing skill in the English writing system is emphasised to give the translator more freedom in re-organising the story; the translator thus functions primarily as a ghost-writer⁵ as it were. With regard to the role the translator plays in transferring the source text, Gouanvic (2005: 158) makes a pertinent observation from the point of view of translation ethics: ‘the translator is not, and cannot be, a writer’ in that the translator’s task is to actualise the author’s idiosyncrasy as well as the literary characteristics of the source literary tradition which should be reflected in the translation. If the language is to embody the style of the source text, then the translator should be capable of transferring the latent traits of the source text. In his view, the ST literary system and the writer’s stylistic characteristics are seen as the substance that the translator ought to transfer into the TT. The view of the translator as not a writer and the clear demarcation between the writer’s and translator’s roles thus place some constraints on the translator’s freedom in re-writing in the target language while translating.

In the same vein, Robinson also speaks of the normative views of the translator and sees the translator as a writer only in the sense that the author is believed to be the ‘sovereign subject [who] intends the original text, and leaves that intention lying immanent in the text; the translator occupies that intention and “writes” the target text’ (2001: 4). By ‘writing’ the target text, Robinson does not mean re-writing, rather he merely refers to the act of translating the writer’s intentionality. The author’s intention here is understood to be ‘the accurate and complete deliverance of a meaning to a receiver’ (Davis, 2001: 53-54) and the translator then takes the position from which to capture the authorial intention and transfer it into the target language. In this view, the translator can be a writer only to the extent that the ‘discourse of the writer’ or the ‘author’s literary *habitus*’ (Gouanvic, 2005: 158), as it were, are captured by the translator, so that the style and literary devices the writer applies in the ST can still be traced in the translation.

TE’s view of the translator as being a writer without a story reflects the common perception of translation as a transparent relay of a self-evident body of meanings or a message to be

⁵ A ghost-writer is a professional writer who is usually commissioned by celebrities and public figures to write their autobiographies and memoirs which are officially credited to the patrons. That is to say, the ghost-writer receives no official credit for writing autobiographies; they merely sell their writing service.

transferred by translators into English. Translators, thus, serve as ‘borrowed bodies’ for the authors’ writings (Robinson, 2001: 3). Additionally, in the case of the Chinese auto/biographies the author’s intention, due to its neglect of the literary considerations and norms of the source text culture, is often perceived primarily as a victimised oppositional voice that relays a truth or a true story that the oppressive powers that be in China have sought to suppress. In this context, authors serve as cultural informants. Eventually the source texts get translated into the stylistic/linguistic forms drawn from the English literary repertoire by the translator *qua* writer-minus-story. This view also suggests the relevance of what Venuti calls ‘the dominance of transparent discourse in English translation’ (1995: 187). The outcome of the translation approach required is to re-create the text in a complete English form with no trace of the fabric and literary stylistics of the original writing.

4.3.2 Assessing the Translation

4.3.2.1 *Assessing the Translation through English Lenses*

Evaluation of the translation takes place primarily on the draft by the translator first submitted to literary agent and editors, although checking the translator’s draft could happen at any stage in the translating process. The outcomes of evaluation decide how much editing work by the editor will be required. The extent of editing deemed necessary for a given translator’s submitted translation draft will to a great extent affect the translator’s future career and his/her chances of being commissioned for the next translation project on the grounds of what the literary agent and publishers regard as the quality of previous work. Translators are in fact becoming more and more aware of the parameters of what is seen as ‘good’ translation as determined by the literary agent and publishers who possess a certain type and volume of capital or capitals specific to the field within which they operate. The judgement of ‘good’ translation of Chinese autobiographies by the literary agent and publishers reveals how Chinese literature and auto/biographical writings in particular are perceived, read and received; it is also indicative of the dominant expectations about them. This is, in turn, a most decisive factor in deciding on the specific translation approach.

Academic translation is mentioned several times in TE’s interview to directly refer to the English translations of Chinese literary that have been done by sinologists, which are equated to what he calls, in a rather derogatory way, *laboratory translation*. This is the type of translation that is thought to be, as he points out, formally learnt from the classroom in contrast to *natural* language which is spontaneously picked up through daily conversations and through immersion in everyday life and culture. In the following section I will elaborate

on the opposition between the natural versus academic translation and the factors underlying these classifications.

4.3.2.2 *The Natural Translation Versus Academic Scholarly Translation*

It is noticeable that most of the translators in this study can be described as ‘inexperienced’; and ‘experience’ seems, on the other hand, to be associated with the negative connotations of academic and scholarly work that can retain the originality and complexity of the ST but may well fail to produce a translation that can have a wide appeal. ‘Experience’ thus, based on the views of the literary agent and publisher (NR), refers in fact to expert experience with a scholarly and academic slant relevant to the study and specialist knowledge of Chinese literature, history and culture. Indeed, we should make an analytic distinction at this point between two distinct types of experience which are valued differently: the embedded experience of everyday life in China as a learning context for both language and culture which is valued by the literary agent and publishers, in contrast to the scholarly and academic experience which tends to be devalued, or at least tends to be viewed with a great deal of caution and concern about its likely impact in the form of a ‘dull’ and unpopular translation that will not sell very well.

FD got to know Ma Jian during his exile in HK in the 1980s, after which she started to learn Chinese in earnest in Beijing on her own (FD’s interview). Translating *Red Dust* was her first experience and later she became a translator for Ma Jian’s subsequent work in the UK. Selecting *Good Women of China* was a longer process since TE reviewed a version done by an ‘academic’ translator, which was judged to be ‘dull’ by TE (TE interview). Choosing ET was based on her four years’ experience of teaching English in China in the 1990s, and in the process learning Chinese ‘on the street’, as TE’s put it. She was recommended to TE and ended up taking up this job with no initial intention of becoming a translator. BH spent many years in China, learning Chinese and working in the field of business and management in the 1980s and 1990s. Getting the job of translating *Shanghai Baby* owes much to his immense interest in this book, which he happened to find in one of the bookstores in Shanghai. His experience as a business consultant living in various cities in China during the transitional time (the 1980s and the 1990s) is believed to have gained him both inside and outside visions of China, which could be brought, he believes, to the translation of *Shanghai Baby*. Of the translators of the six auto/biographical writings, HG⁶ is the one who falls in the category of

⁶ HG is a professor in Chinese studies and a distinguished translator who has translated a number of modern literary writers into English such as the novels of Jia Ping-wa, Mo Yan’s, Xiao Hong and Yu Hua. He is also a

the academic translator, whose interest in translating Hong Ying's first novel *Summer of Betrayal* was declined by TE based primarily on his academic background. HG's immense prior experience in translating numerous Chinese literary works seems to have worked against him in this context, for the books he had already translated were mostly seen as 'serious' works of literature, as TE put it. JL is another sinologist who was involved in translating *Sky Burial* in co-operation with ET. The reason of choosing JL was, as TE emphasised, because of her excellent English writing skill apart from her knowledge about Chinese language and culture (more on this point in 4.5.2).

TE's perception of academic translation and translators echoes the comments made by the publisher (NR) on the inadequacy and dullness of academic translations as exemplified in the translation draft of *Shanghai Baby*. NR says:

What I felt went wrong [with this translation], and I don't know the translator, but when I saw the translation, it seemed to me to be translated by someone, a man, who lived an academic life and liked reading 19th century books.

The immediate association between what is seen as a colourless translation and old-fashioned language with academics shows that the concepts of *experience*, *highbrow literature* and *academic training* in the eyes of the publisher and literary agent are intrinsically undesirable, or at least factors that do not necessarily lead to a commercially desirable translation in the target market. NR's comments on the translation draft of *Shanghai Baby*, to a certain extent, indicates that 'academic' translation is perceived as representing out-of-date literary values rooted in the literary past of 'serious' works which have been translated within the academic field for the purpose of academic research. As a result, the language the 'academic' translators produce in their translations is assumed to be too literary and serious (NR's interview), and therefore 'laboratory' and 'unnatural' (TE's interview), and would be of interest only to specialists and their peers. Academic translation, associated with scholarship and serious literature, is in this context considered to be the opposite of the marketable translation that targets and appeals to a wide range of readership.

Regardless of the criticism towards sinologists whose Eurocentric ideology affects their readings of Chinese literature (Chow, 1991), it is true, as Kramer notes, that 'Western sinologists in the literary field are not only critics of Chinese literature, but also translators

critic and an active promoter of Chinese contemporary literature worldwide, and has published extensively within the area of Chinese studies; he has compiled two anthologies: *Worlds Apart: Recent Chinese Writing and Its Audiences* and *Chairman Mao Would Not Be Amused: Fiction from Today's China*.

and promoters of Chinese writers' (1999: 172). They have been actively involved in the translation of contemporary Chinese literary works from mainland China into English over the decades. HG is a case in point here: a sinologist who has contributed significantly to the massive translation activities. Here it is also safe to say that the sub-field of translating Chinese literature is very much bound up with the discipline of Chinese studies in terms of the objective of promoting Chinese literature. Within this field, the translators of contemporary Chinese literature are by and large sinologists in the area of Chinese studies inside English-speaking academia. With their knowledge of Chinese literature and their experience of translating Chinese literary works, their approach to the Chinese source texts has thus been shaped by their scholarly *habitus*, in Boudieu's sense of the term.

Translated literature in the English-speaking world is often assumed and perceived to be associated with 'academic' scholarship and specialist expertise. Jaquemond (1992: 154) has observed the France-Egypt interface and formulated the following hypothesis:

When a hegemonic culture does translate works produced by the dominated culture, those works will be perceived and presented as difficult, mysterious, inscrutable, esoteric ...

The France-Egypt interface represents the way the translated literature is treated, viewed and read as rarefied and inaccessible to common reception in the hegemonic (target) culture. This Eurocentric attitude can explain the association of the translation of Chinese literature with *academic culture*, and the perception of the translators as old scholars in Chinese studies. Contemporary Chinese literature is generally perceived in the English-speaking world either as a matter of specialist academic text books, or as a resource for studying contemporary Chinese history with primary focus on the historical 'truth', therefore lacking distinguished literary qualities (Chow, 1991). The perception reveals 'the West's indifference to literatures and languages outside hegemonic parameters' (Chow, 1991: xii), which in part explains the classification of Chinese auto/biographical writings in the UK as 'non-academic' and a 'popular genre' (TE and ET interviews). Given that reading the Chinese literary genre of auto/biographical writings is centred around the notion of 'truthful' and authentic voices reporting what really happened in the historical past, the translation is accordingly required to fit into what Chow calls a 'naturalistic reading' (1991) with minimum knowledge of Chinese history and culture, and hardly any traces of the literary tradition of China. This is seen as a smooth and accessible translation, as opposed to the *academic* translation which is perceived to focus too much on historical and literary references and subtleties that would block the

readers' enjoyable reading process. This also resonates with the editors' views and accounts (more on this point in Section 4.5).

This reminds us of Venuti's critical point regarding the dominance of transparent discourse in English language translation (1995, 1998) that is predominantly based on a dismissive view of the ST and a certain ethnocentric ideology. He therefore proposes foreignization strategy as an alternative approach that the translators should adhere to in order to challenge the passive reading public in English-speaking countries (Venuti, 1995: 307-13; 1998). What is at stake here is not only translation as technique, but also the ethics of translation: i.e. translation as a dialogical arrangement between different cultures and the ethical implications of this arrangement. Eugene Chen also suggests transforming the habits of the readership from the passive reception to a mode of reading that is interactive with and critical of translated texts in order to change the position of the translated literature in the Western literary field (1993: 76). However, these provocative proposals cannot be seen as an alternative in the real situation of this case. With the problematic and ambivalent application of foreignization to the real situation of the translation (Koskinen, 2000: 52-54), what can be overlooked is the fact that the power relations and the implicit cultural norms within a particular field (the publishing field and the literary field of the target culture) to a great extent determine the domestication of translation as the only option available.

Moreover, these perceptions of translation and 'good' translation in particular by people in power expose the interrelationship with the English readership and the Eurocentric attitude towards translated Chinese literature, which to a large extent determines the translators' secondary position and their invisibility. This is clearly reflected in NR's interview:

... To give the translators enough recognition? Taking *Shanghai Baby* as an example, and then if we made a big thing about the translation here, half the audience for this book would go 'Oh my God, it's a serious work of literature.' There's a real problem ... 'Oh it's a serious work ... The translation ... Oh, it's not for me.'

This clearly indicates that, paradoxically, the invisibility of the translator is the outcome of what is seen as a 'good'/preferred translation. A 'good' translation is linked to the reaction and perception of the British readership with regard to the translated Chinese auto/biographical writings which should read as if they were written originally in English and with no trace of translation. In this sense, the visibility of the translator would work against the desirable way the translation should be perceived; the translator's signature is thus

removed from the end product of the translation. The task of achieving a degree of foreignization that aims to bring readers closer to the ST is not merely a matter of choice by the translator; nor is it merely a question of whether ‘audiences are getting the translations they deserve? Or translations are getting the audience they deserve?’ (Eugene Chen, 1993: 71). It is rather a question of what type of translation strategy is desired, sought and implemented to produce a worthwhile version of translation to fit into an expected model of translation in the British (target) culture and literary system. In next section I will look at the extent to which the literary agent’s and publisher’s views of the preferred translation act as a normative code that has an impact on the performance of the translators and on how the translator’s *habitus* is constituted through the processes of translating Chinese auto/biographical writings which are shaped by certain power relations and specific norms and values in the British (target) publishing and literary field.

4.4 Formation and Realisation of the Translator’s *Habitus*

The translator’s role is very complicated in the translation process of Chinese auto/biographical writings. In theory s/he is an expert in both languages, i.e. Chinese and English, and thus the translator is – in principle and by virtue of his/her rarefied and esoteric expertise – an authority in translation. In reality, however, the translator’s symbolic authority – based on his/her esoteric expertise – is not reflected in his/her position within the translating process. The translator tends to occupy the status of mediator or intermediary between two texts, and at the same time needs to be aware and take account of the readers in two senses: the immediate reader who evaluates their draft and the target readership. The activity of translating Chinese auto/biographies doubles up as an ongoing learning process; it involves learning about whom they write for, within what contexts, and with a view to what optimal outcome. In this learning process the translator is the active agent who engages in the game based on his/her own calculation and motivation to obtain and accumulate certain types of capital (translation capital). The translator’s active role is reflected in the stage of choosing a chapter out of the text as a sample for the initial evaluation of his/her translation in an attempt to obtain the commission for the translation task. This is a key step for the translator to get involved and venture into what Bourdieu calls the ‘game’ in the field.

4.4.1 Getting Commissioned for the Translation

Although it is the literary agent and publishers who select the translators, yet the selection is a two-way action: translators in these cases also have to make themselves selectable, as it were,

and need to acquaint themselves with the SL text, judging whether it is worthy of translation, and what they think they can bring to the translation in the light of what the agent and publishers expect. The process of getting commissioned often consists of sending in a translated excerpt from the novel, a commentary on the novel and a chapter-by-chapter synopsis of the book (in BH's case). However, sometimes the translator's understanding of the novel can be presented either in writing or orally. In the case of ET, she was sent to the author for a long conversation, during which she was asked various questions about China. However, the one procedure that seems to be absolutely necessary is that of submitting a translated sample excerpted from the novel to be evaluated by the literary agent and publishers. BH, the translator of *Shanghai Baby*, gave a detailed account of the process of the decision-making on the sample he had chosen to translate and submit for evaluation:

I selected a chapter I felt sure to titillate foreign publishers – the one in which Coco first passionately kisses a foreign woman, and then later in the evening goes off with her German sex-machine Mark for a round of more conventional, heterosexual sex. This, plus ‘*The Shanghai Baby Phenomenon*’ which positioned the author as a rebel and her (banned) book as indicative of a trend toward more open sexuality in the ostensibly “prudish” People’s Republic, all helped to sell this ‘semi-autobiographical’ work and its author to publishers in the West.

(BH interview)

The Shanghai Baby Phenomenon is the translator's review of *Shanghai Baby* that was submitted, along with the excerpted translated chapter, for assessment in an attempt to obtain the commission. Within the submitted papers, the translator is required not only to show understanding of the text, but also to demonstrate a good grasp of the wider context of the text in order to ultimately capture the selling points that can appeal to Western audiences. BH made the first contact with the writer showing his immense interest in translating *Shanghai Baby* into English and he consequently went through the evaluation process and was approved by another buyer, an American publisher who agreed to be in charge of selecting the translator for *Shanghai Baby*. In BH's case, the review written by the translator as well as the carefully selected sample seem to have played a decisive role in the translator's success in being selected. According to BH's account of the reasons for selecting a particular chapter for the translation, it is clearly the case that what to select is as important as how to translate. The part to be translated as a sample is not picked at random although it seems to hinge entirely on the translator's decision. It shows, rather, their justified awareness about audiences and great concern about particular social and cultural dimensions attendant on the text. Showing such awareness and sensitivity makes it more likely for them to convince the commissioners

about their translation. The extra-linguistic dimensions and the specifications pertaining to the audiences constitute the ‘prerequisite to deciding what needs to be explained, elaborated, or stressed’ (Kolias, 1990: 217). These extra-linguistic and extra-textual aspects, coupled with the way the translation is conducted in the chosen samples, determine the type of translation approach that would be authorised to apply. In this regard, the translator’s sampling is examined not only in terms of linguistic competence but in terms of their sensitivity and adaptability vis-à-vis norms and values that operate in the literary and publishing fields as well as the target culture; in other words, in a sense their *habitus* comes under assessment too, albeit in oblique and mediated ways.

4.4.2 Mediated Status

The translators’ role in the translation process is vital since they occupy the position of the privileged reader working closely with the text as well as the authors. In the context of the target culture, they need to negotiate various constraints and norms in order to ‘create a space in a new environment for a foreign text’ (Kolias, 1990: 214), which requires not only working on the text but also acting as a mediator – mediating within and between cultures, and mediating between authors, editors and readers as well as the literary agent. Kolias (1990: 214) speaks of the translator’s status, quoting an established translator’s remark: ‘a translator must satisfy several masters: author, editor, critic and reader’. The statement indicates that the translator’s work is not defined within their own field in an autonomous way. Rather, the translator’s work stands in what Bourdieu would call a relation of heteronomy vis-à-vis the publishing and literary fields where various types of constraints and conditioners on their work come into play and are mediated by the translator’s interaction with the other players from these fields. Serving ‘the masters’, in short, can be seen as ultimately about accommodating authorial voices and anticipated readerships.

4.4.2.1 Constituting a Sense of the Readership

Venuti argues that the translator, for the most part, is not aware of whom the translation is produced for, while making decisions that impact on the translation, since their voices are presented in the target text largely unconsciously through their unconscious choices (2002: 216). His argument is based on the idea of the translator’s internalised normative behaviour, which overlaps in many ways with the notion of *habitus*. However, seeing the translator’s sense of the target readership as unconscious misses out, analytically, on the translator’s interactive role with other ‘masters’ outside the texts. The interaction that the translators go through contributes to constructing their awareness of whom they translate for; this is

particularly the case with the translators who have been involved with the works in the present study. During the translating process, with regard to the translator's learning process, the greatest benefit for the translator is to learn how the translation is to be carried out, processed and produced in the cooperative process given that getting a feel for the readership is a primary type of competence for a translator. The translator of *Daughter of the River* (HG) makes a distinction in terms of the fundamental function between the writer and the translator as far as writing is concerned; he says:

Translators have at least a sense of readership [...] while some poets/novelists may write only for themselves ...
(HG's interview)

HG's remark makes it clear that having a sense of the readership is an essential part of the translator's *habitus* through which they would know how and what to choose. This also shows that the translator's awareness of the readership is conscious; however, the way of going about the strategy to meet and appeal to the expectations of a given readership tends to take the form of unconscious spontaneous and almost mechanical action. Both are integral parts constituting the translator's *habitus*; and they can only be obtained through the textual and contextual factors that are embedded in the translating process within and across the specific field(s). The activity of translation, thus, cannot be explained merely through the translators' conscious strategic choice governed by the target norms (Gouanvic, 2005).

In the interviews, the translator's beliefs, sense of readership and loyalty to the source text feature as key to the translator's validity claims, as it were, about his/her translation. However, the question should be pinned down to the following point: the extent to which the sense of readership would be taken into account and what the translator would choose when both the readership and the ST have to be considered and balanced against each other, or even when the two clash with each other. This can potentially throw up some tricky dilemmas that the translator would have to grapple with and negotiate efficiently and successfully. Although it is not entirely decided by the translators since the final decision rests with the editors (more on this point in Section 4.4), yet the way translators go about solving such problems and dilemmas through their 'incorporated dispositions', as Bourdieu would say, highlights the translator's unconscious choice based on 'linguistic and cultural resources' that have been internalised through immersion in the professional practice (Venuti, 2002: 215). ET gave an indicative example with respect to the problems she faced in translating Xinran's two books:

It seems that some sentimentalism in Chinese literature in the way that just makes the Westerners slightly uncomfortable so I almost routinely tone that down and that's interesting to see in the final draft that usually the editor had to tone that down again, so obviously I didn't do that too much in that regard.

ET's toning down of the sentimental tone in Xinran's two original texts obviously indicates her awareness of the particularities of the target UK readership. The word 'routinely' suggests the unconscious and almost automatic nature of her action. It further shows that the translator's *habitus* and dispositions come into play and are re-enacted and reinforced at the moment she made her choice to some degree unconsciously. This is especially true when the translator's final draft in this regard overlapped with the decision of the editor who further toned down the emotional charge of the voice that echoed the original.

It has also been noted that translating Xinran's biographies was ET's first experience of literary translation, and thus her close working relationship with the literary agent and the author became absolutely necessary. TE's supervision of her translations came into view when she answered the question about who her important reader was:

Well, the immediate audience is of course Mr Toby Eady and the editor and beyond that, in as much as I have thought about it, people like me or you ...

The order of the readers for whom the translation is produced manifests her learning process where her close contact with the literary agent in the early stage of her career played a vital role in building her awareness of the norms and preferences of potential readers. It further indirectly highlights the fact that negotiating with the other participants involved is something translators will inevitably encounter, which to a great extent affects and mediates the translator's decision, especially given the power dynamics that mark these negotiations.

4.4.2.2 Mediating Between Cultures: Translator-Author Relationship

The mediated status, further, is manifest in the translators' roles that in some circumstances can be seen as a decisive factor in facilitating the smooth initiation and progress of the collaborative activity. This is particularly the case with respect to their interactive relationships with the authors, the translators' immediate collaborators whose work depends in the first instance entirely on the translators' cultural and linguistic competence. The author-translator relationship in most cases is vital, considering the circumstances where the writing and translating occur at the same time, which was the case with *Red Dust* and *Sky Burial*. For writers, their anxiety is centred around the linguistic stylistics and literary characteristics in the STs that might be misrepresented, compromised or somehow lost in translation (on the

writers' authorial intention in relation to the translation of their works, see Section 4.1). Thus, communication with translators – which could happen in person or via email – about the substance and spirit of the STs takes on paramount importance; it is the stage and aspect of the translating process where the authors can feed a formative steering input, as it were, into the translation activity. Their primary concern is whether the translators have faithfully transferred their voices from the ST into TT. For example, Wei Hui and Guo Xiaolu both believe that their feminine voices and the language of youth culture are essential defining traits of the narrative voice of their source texts which should be kept intact and conveyed in the translation; the translator's rendering of authorial voices in this case, they thought, ought to vividly capture the issues of gender and age. Guo Xiaolu consequently concluded that her translator's good grasp of the inner voice of femininity in the ST was due, to a certain extent, to the combination of the translator's youth and her gender position, whereas Wei Hui complained about the loss the femininity-related and youth-related codes of language in the translation of her work as a result of the lack of these two advantages on the translator's part. However, in TE's and RC's views, the good translation results of *Red Dust*, *Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial* are partially due to a close working relationship between the translators and authors, whereas Ma Jian's view in this regard in some ways contradicts TE's; in fact, he views this working relationship as one of the major constraints that set some limitations to his writing process which was constantly interrupted by the translator. This is typical of the situation of all authors in the study: most of the time they are more subject to the translator's advice since the translators are seen as the ones in possession of the combination of the linguistic expertise and knowledge of both cultures. In this case, the translators are seen as being in possession of the power of bi-linguistic and bi-cultural competence and expertise.

The case of translating Guo Xiaolu's *Village of Stone* demonstrates the influential role the translator played to contribute to the creation of the ST writing. The situation with Guo Xiaolu's *Village of Stone* is slightly different from *Red Dust* where writing and translating happened at same time, Guo Xiaolu gave the complete version of the Chinese draft to the translator to translate. While translating, the translator suggested to Guo Xiaolu to add two chapters to the source text to build a link between the past events and the present for the sake of meeting some logical expectations on the part of the UK readership. Guo Xiaolu recalled:

When she [her translator] started to translate she got worried. She said 'I am going to worry whether the English readers are going to accept it, because there is a big gap between the past and present'. So I wrote two chapters in between: one chapter is about this little girl's grandmother, who died, and emotionally the reader would accept something moving – and I added another chapter about this girl growing up.

Guo Xiaolu's original intention was to inject a contemporary and topical flavour into this novel through the presentation of the past and present in alternate rhythms woven into the narrative (Guo Xiaolu interview). Therefore, the traditional understanding of logic needs to be broken and contradicted here to exhibit the narrative that is not meant to be coherent. That is to say, the fragmented memory comes out through the parallel storytelling of the bleak and rough landscape of the fishery town in the past and a hectic and agitated city life in the present through the grown-up 'I's voice. Here when the translator talks about logic in the narrative, what is meant is the chronological sequencing of events that are 'meaningfully connected in a temporal and causal way' (Landa, Garcia, & Onega, 1996: 3) in line with the traditional way of storytelling. However, causality and temporality are debatable notions with respect to the story thread since the connections are not necessarily causal and sequences of events are not always chronological in some of the modernist novels (Herman & Vervaeck, 2001: 13). Within this view, the simultaneity of different time frames in the narrative is interpreted by the readers who use their contextual knowledge of the social and culture in their actual reading experience (Herman & Vervaeck, 2001:112). It is clear that the translator's primary concern is the readers' capacity to understand Chinese culture and society: her target is not the literary experts who would value the author's literary devices and techniques; the translation is rather pitched at a wide range of non-expert readers. As the two chapters have been added, the narrative is thought to read as a smooth and 'logical' piece of work; however, what has been lost in the process of the production is Guo Xiaolu's original intention of creating a unique voice different from the type of traditional chronological autobiography associated with *Wild Swans*. In other words, what Bourdieu calls the 'pursuit of distinction' (1984: 226) in artistic and literary creativity is here reshaped by the value system of the economic field – represented by the commercial considerations of the literary agent, the publisher and the editor. Bourdieu argues that what the work of art seeks to achieve is what he calls the artistic 'creative deviation' (1993). This is achieved through positioning the work of art as a recognisable creative departure and deviation from previous works. In the same vein, Guo Xiaolu's attempt to achieve this creative deviation from the previous landmark work of *Wild Swans* is countered by the prioritisation of the economic logic that governs the publishing field.

Translators further play a mediating role between the author and editor, since the translator's sensitivity to the target UK readership often owes a great deal to the editors' advice, which is the case with FD who acted as a communicator in the writing-translating process. In terms of his writing process, Ma Jian's view seems to be underpinned by a certain view of literary value that takes little account of the reception side of the process and how popular and appealing the work of art will be based on non-literary criteria (Ma Jian interview). This is also because of his little knowledge of the target English language and culture (he speaks little English, for instance, and his translator Flora Drew (FD) acts as his interpreter all the way through), which created barriers in the communication with the editor. Under these circumstances, the translator acted as an agent playing the mediating role between the editor and the author whenever the communication between the editor and the author required this mediation. The editor (RC) described the communication process as follows:

If I said, I think this bit of the book actually gets a bit boring she [the translator] could say 'Ma Jian, how would you feel about taking out this bit of the book', and if I said 'I think I need to know a little bit more about this', she could say to him 'what about writing a little bit more'. (RC interview)

From the communication process described above, it is evident that the translator acted not only as a mediator and an intermediary at the textual/linguistic level, but also in a sense as a cultural broker or cultural mediator who is partially involved in the writing process. The author under these circumstances was forced to write for the reader, which somehow compromised the author's intentional voice and organic/creative quality of the source text from the author's point of view. The translator's position as an intermediary reader rested on the author's trust, which certainly made the translating process smooth, but simultaneously added multiple voices to the ST, interrupted the author's intention and complicated the authorial dimension in its various facets.

The interaction and negotiation between the translator and the author does not happen occasionally or incidentally; rather, it takes places with the encouragement of the literary agent and the publishers as this interaction and negotiation are seen as a contributor of an important input into the preferred/desired translation. In this relationship the authors are in the less powerful position due to their outside position vis-à-vis the target culture as well as their lack of sufficient fluency in literary English as far as the assessment of the translation of their work is concerned. Thus, they have to be subject to the norms of the target culture. Wei Hui remarked on the translator of her second translated book:

Sometimes I hated the way she [the translator] twisted my work, it sounds so great in Chinese but why she made it so plain in English. But she said it is English, it's different, so I have to compromise.

It seems that the compromise is the only option left for the author under these circumstances where the translator plays the role of the agent, mediating between the target culture and the source culture, exerting some form of power, with their bi-cultural and bi-linguistic *habitus*, over the author who is in a kind of relation of dependence towards the translator. The translator's mediating/mediated status demonstrates not only the translator's power over the author; more importantly, it is an effect and a relay of the formation and actualization of bi-cultural *habitus* that enables the translator to act as advisor who makes some input into the author's creative process, and negotiates the source text with a view to appealing to the target readership.

4.5 Editorial Process: the Final and Decisive Step for the End Product

The editing process is the last requisite stage of the translation and it is generally considered to be 'an integral part of the process of translation' (Seguinot, 1982: 151), acting as a complement to make the translator's final draft come close to linguistic 'perfection' (Cunningham, 1971: 136-37). The function of the editing is therefore seen as absolutely indispensable but the editor's role is theoretically seen as secondary in relation to the translator and writer. Two editors in this study thus defined the editor's job as follows:

The editor's job is to bring out the best in that writer ... The editor must have no style of their own. They must try and get under the skin, to work out what is the voice. If you are translating someone in English, what is the voice they are going to have. Then your job is to bring out their personality and character.

(NR interview)

Another quality of editor is to be the perfect reader for a book to understand what the author is trying to do and try to help the author to communicate with the reader in the best possible way.

(RC interview)

Based on the definition given above, the editor's role is to act as a collaborator whose work is coupled with the translator to 'get into the writer's frame of mind' (Seguinot, 1982: 152) and to ultimately bring out the writer's voice for the target culture readers. In that sense, editors have to work closely with translators in order to get what is seen as the gist and spirit of the writer's voice to come through and manifest itself in the TT. That is to say, getting the final product completed is not merely the translator's task; it unfolds in the form of a chain of sequenced and simultaneous tasks where responsibilities are shared by the translator and

editors in the end. The editorial responsibility becomes clearer when another function of the editing is taken into account, that is: to serve as an evaluation system in which the translator's final draft is closely scrutinized and evaluated before the draft undergoes the editing process (more on this point under Section 4.2.2). Here, the question that comes to the fore is how much responsibility the editor should take for the final translation product, and in what way the complementary roles are played out to make an input into producing the final translated work for the readers since the final translation is no longer the single-handed effort of the translator. To address these questions, I will start by highlighting how the editors go about editing the translation draft.

4.5.1 Checking Language and Beyond

The general assumption is that the editor's job consists merely of checking the linguistic errors of the translator's draft and ensuring the accuracy of the translation (Cunningham, 1971: 138), without changing the writer's style, as NR states. This assumption is based on the premise that the translation is essentially a linguistic activity with a straightforward translation whilst the editing processes are conducted separately and with different objectives (Cunningham, 1971). However, on some occasions, the editing act can be more complex than it appears to be, as Cunningham (1971: 138) observes, in that the 'acts of translating and translation editing can occur as a single simultaneous process'. This is clearly borne out in a straightforward way by the cases of *Red Dust* where the editing happened at the time of translating. As RC described in the interview, during the translating and editing of *Red Dust* whenever the editor thought there was a need for a few additions to explain and make explicit some culturally specific elements in the TT, the translator (FD) would act as an intermediary to negotiate with Ma Jian about the changes the editor thought necessary. In the case of *Good Women of China*, the editing had been done by several people who were involved before it went into editing by the editor, RC (more on this point in Chapter 3). Although in most cases of this study the editing process is separated by a fairly fine line from translating, yet the two processes often overlap and combine together in terms of their functions to the extent that, as Seguinot observes (1982: 153), they can both aim – in a conscious or spontaneous and unconscious way – to make the information in the translated text more accessible.

In terms of the changes made to the ST, Stetting sees the editing activity as mainly about 'insert[ing] additional information or explanations, delet[ing] passages that are less relevant or confusing to the new group of receivers' (1989: 378), which would put the editor in a position that requires editing skills well beyond the linguistic level. The editing process of

Shanghai Baby is a case in point, which explains the way the primary substance of the editing has been shaped by the role each participant played to enhance the overall effect of the product. The first translation draft of *Shanghai Baby* was done by the translator (BH) with very little contact with the editor and the literary agent, and thus received hardly any instructions from them except for the instruction to avoid adding or deleting content (BH's interview). 'Without changing the content' is a general and basic instruction which gives much room for the translator to even recreate the tone or spirit of the original in the TT as long as the story/content is still there. In fact, it puts the translator's English language skills under assessment, rather than assessing whether the translator faithfully transfers the spirit of original voice of the ST. BH conducted the translation of *Shanghai Baby* with the help of a Shanghai-raised Chinese interpreter and an American translator with a good command of Chinese; the aim was to help ensure accuracy and avoid 'stilted translationess' in BH's first draft (BH interview). BH described this cooperative activity as follows:

They worked together to catch my occasional mistranslation, but more importantly, his youth and relative distance from the Chinese (and sharper ear for English) meant that his polishing of my writing improved it immensely. It read more fluently, less like a translation, and he was particularly good at making the conversations sound more contemporary and natural. Her background as an interpreter, not a translator of the written word, also helped them to reduce my sometimes-scholarly tone and replace it with something more 'spoken.'

It is clear that BH paid great attention to accuracy and to minimizing the traces of translationese in his translation with a great deal of awareness about the 'spoken' register and contemporary and lighter language marking the style. However, BH's effort did not seem to be efficient enough to meet the editor's expectations about the fluent translation although his 'accuracy' translation was recognized by the editor (NR). These conscious and meticulous efforts only worked against what was seen as the fluent and smooth English that should have been achieved. In other words, the traces of translation and the scholarly tone of the language in BH's draft, in NR's view, made the translation lifeless and dull (NR interview). In this sense, BH's 'accurate' translation was treated merely as raw material, based on which a considerable amount of editing took place to reduce the visibility of translationese in BH's draft. NR thus worked on the draft in collaboration with a woman editor:

So I got a woman editor and we got the French translation of the book, so we had the English translation ... because my French is quite good ... We talked about how a young woman speaks and then we tried to get an accurate idea ... Then the woman editor did different attempts. Not wrote, just changing words, saying 'Do you think this word is better than that word?' Then I would do a bit of work and she would say 'I don't think a young girl would say that.' 'A girl doesn't say it like that, they say it like this'. Then I worked on the bits at the end of each chapter particularly those which were very complicated.

As is clear through the quote from this interview, the editor thinks another weakness in BH's translation draft is that the feminine voice and tone as well as the youth language have been lost in the translation. This raises some issues and pertinent questions around the relevance and significance of the translator's gender and age that may as well be considered among the criteria for the selection of translators in the future. On a conceptual and theoretical level, this raises the question of the extent to which the translator should share in common with the author of the original a certain degree of similarity in terms of their experiential or identitarian traits; and the extent to which the translator should share these traits with the main characters or the social groups portrayed in the novel (a certain gendered age-group going through some form of experience that the work in question tries to capture). However, what is interesting to note is the way the editor went about the task of editing in a rather unusual way, based on the comparison between the French version – which was deemed to be the better translation – and the English one. In the editing process comparison between the ST and TT in theory should be carried out for 'completeness and sense', avoiding the 'actual misunderstanding of the source language that distort[s] meaning' (Cunningham, 1971: 138). This, however, ideally requires that the roles of editor and translator are performed by the same person with bi-lingual and bi-cultural competence in order to ensure the accuracy of the 'faithful' translation. In this context this comparison is impossible given the editor's monolingual and mono-cultural skills; thus, it follows that conducting a thorough check on the translation's accuracy and 'faithfulness' is not among the tasks that can be carried out during the editing process. Here BH's accurate translation served as a basis for the reconstruction of the tone and rhetorical style that were said to have been lost in the translation; the translator under these circumstances functions as a mere informant. While the French version of translation was used with the assistance of the woman editor to capture and reconstruct the tone of femininity in the narrative of the translation, it shows that the gendered and youth language has been taken into account on the part of the editor. However, what is crucial, which was out of consideration, is that what an English girl would say would be different from what a Chinese girl would say, which suggests that the crucial aspect of

culture in the translation has been overlooked. This raises another important question: how much of the cultural references should be retained in the translation as far as the authorial intentionality is concerned; what aspects of the cultural differences in the ST matter with regard to the authorial intention? Xinran speaks of this relevant issue in relation to the editing process of *Sky Burial*:

The editor has taken off all of the Chinese knowledge in my second book, which was very painful for me. Because she [editor] said it didn't make sense so she just took them away. I said: 'Can we try to make sense of it? this is the value of the book' ... I said: 'Without that ... this story could have happened here in Britain, what's the point for me to write this book about Tibet?'

(Xinran's interview)

Xinran's remark clearly shows her authorial attention towards translation (discussed in Section 4.1), which indicates that ultimately keeping the dimension of culture alive in the translation with a certain trace of foreignness is vital in that it encapsulates the very uniqueness that characterises the narrative as Chinese. By preserving the uniqueness of the culturally specific facets of the narrative, the presence of the authorial voice, which is the central topic in relation to the translating process, can be made visible. Circumscribing cultural aspects and reducing them to an imperceptible minimum in the translation through the editing process would inevitably lose the voice of the protagonist and merge the Chinese voice into a presumably universalised voice which is in fact centred around the culturally specific experience and context of the target culture. It is clear that the editor's concern is not with capturing and retaining the authorial voice of the ST; the editor's concern is rather to remove what are seen as the cultural barriers to the reader's smooth reading and experiencing of the text since the editor, taking herself as the typical reader in the target English-speaking culture, found herself making an effort to understand the culturally specific items and knowledge in the translation. It also shows that the editing process is not merely a matter of linguistic adjustments with the aim of aiding the translator to 'perfect' the translation by 'editing for typographical style and stylistic consistency, final typing and proofreading' (Seguinot, 1982: 152); it is rather the final check of translator's domesticating approach to help the translator further efface the foreignness in the translation draft.

4.5.2 The Editorial Decision as Ultimate Power on the Translated Text

The editorial revision is also called 'cultural adaptation' within the receiver-oriented approach (Stetting, 1989: 378) in which the editor puts her/himself as a target reader, cutting and adding wherever he/her feels necessary based on their perceptions of the anticipated

readers' tastes and expectations. As NR explains in his interview, whenever he feels stuck somewhere in his reading of the translation draft with regard to a particular idea or expression or element of some kind, he is in a position to decide to keep it or cross it out after consulting with the literary agent. Although the editor does not take the decision single-handedly in the process (as he would discuss and negotiate with the authors and occasionally with translators),⁷ yet the final decision falls within the prerogative of the editor in the end of the day. I will describe and discuss cases where the editor's decisive power can further manifest itself in ways that show how decisive the impact of the editor's inputs can be on the final production.

First, the writing and translating process of *Sky Burial* was rather complicated, due to the circumstances within which the primary materials for the work had been collected and compiled. The interviews that had been conducted by the author Xinran were incomplete and fragmented, in addition to the complexities and sensitivities surrounding Tibetan culture and the fact that the 'fieldwork', as it were, was conducted by Xinran, a Chinese non-Tibetan woman. As Xinran was aware of the challenging complexity for the translator to capture the spirit of the original, she provided the translator with videotapes showing local Tibetan customs. When ET was half-way through with the translation, the literary agent(TE) evaluated the translation and came to the view that it was rather 'dry', which might have been caused, in TE's view, by the too many historical and cultural facts and details about Tibetan culture. TE therefore hired another translator, JL, whose biggest merit as TE stressed in the interview was her excellent English writing skills, which was expected to be complementary to ET's more accurate but 'dry' translation. TE described the result of this arrangement:

Part of one [translation] was good, part of the other one was good. We managed to put them together.

The two versions of the translation eventually arrived to the editor (RC) who merged the two translations together into one version based on what she saw as the strengths of each. RC explained how and why she reconstructed the narrative of *Sky Burial* to make it more readable within the target literary culture:

⁷ This happens mostly when the translator needs to play the role of the intermediary between the author and the editor, as is the case with *Red Dust*.

Because Xinran was trying to turn a real story into a novel, and the problem is that, when British people read the novel, they have a certain expectation of what it would be like. You read a novel in terms of development of a character, the sense of character and the sense of how the story is told, and developed, the sense of suspense. And the Chinese doesn't have that same kind of novelistic tradition. So Xinran didn't really have that ability to tell the story in that way. So when I read the translation I was very worried in case if it came across as a bit boring for the reader, just because of the different way of telling the story between Chinese and English, so we did a lot of work on that and I think in the end I managed to create something that is very readable.

(RC interview)

As indicated in RC's explanation, the influence exercised by the target culture is manifest through the role of the editor due to the (presumed) fact that the original text is inherently and by default completely out of kilter with the English narrative tradition, and thus reconstruction through the editing stage is seen as indispensable. This reinforces the status of the editing process as the most decisive assessment and adaptation of the translation in the light of the target readers' expectations.

Furthermore, it seems that the translation draft did not meet the editor's expectations in the first place, which was not due to inaccuracies and translation problems; but because, in RC's view, it could come across and read as somewhat boring. Xinran's expectations about the translation were centred around the accuracy criterion (i.e. accurate representation of facts), which is similar to what can be described as the criterion of documentary accuracy. That is to say, Xinran had hoped and expected the translation would focus on capturing and portraying Tibetan culture and customs rather than on elaborate, colourful and exciting stories, particularly the love story of the protagonist. The editor's view of the translation as dull is also the result of the accuracy of cultural details in the translation draft to which the translator ET had paid a great attention at the expense of other aspects, in response to Xinran's attention and demand for accuracy. The second translator JL worked in close collaboration with ET on *Sky Burial*; her translation approach may explain the outcome of her translation of *Sky Burial*:

I think it is important for a translator to feel some sense of freedom with respect to the original, where such a sense is helpful to achieving fluency and naturalness in the translation ... Although, of course, the translator must not invent new content.

(JL interview)

Her account in the interview quoted above does not necessarily assert that her translation is domestication; however, her very different translation from ET's as judged by TE suggests that her attention prioritises fluency and naturalness in translation with high quality in terms

of the craft of English writing. This was confirmed by Xinran who thought ET's translation was more accurate whereas JL's was very poetic. The fact that two versions of translation were eventually put together by the editor shows that the ultimate power to calibrate a certain balance between the accurate and poetic translations are in the hands of the editor. Whether poetic or accurate, the translation is in any case treated as the raw material for recreating the narrative by the editor who decides on the shape and content of the final product; and the translators in this process thus again act as linguistic and cultural informants. This clearly highlights the translator's secondary position and invisibility, which is reflected in the NR's approval of invisibility of translator (see Section 4.2.2.2) as well as in RC's remark:

we cannot change anything in their book without consulting the authors, but with translators we can change something in their translation, we have to ask them if they really disagree but if we think it's totally important to change this to publish the book then the translator has right to take their name off ...

(RC interview)

The authors are the persons to be consulted about the changes, who for the most part agreed with the editor as they were keen to see the book published. However, on some occasions, when the author would insist on her original design, the suggested changes would still be negotiable provided that the author's insistence would not be seen as departing too much from the potential readers' taste and expectations. Guo Xiaolu speaks of her negotiation with her editor RC with regard to *Village of Stone* when RC suggested that the city life aspect in the translation should be reduced in order to enhance the theme of her childhood life in the fishery town. Guo Xiaolu's reaction is as follows:

I want to write these contrasts between city and village, so I don't want you [the editor] to take out my city part, because my city part is very important about China, now you know how disturbing the city life is and the disturbance of the city energy is.

Guo Xiaolu's view is that the contrast between city life and village life is the primary theme of her semi-autobiography; that is to say, her adulthood of city life is not meant to simply fade in the background. RC was eventually convinced in this regard and agreed with the author who strongly insisted on her original authorial intention. Xinran and Guo Xiaolu are the authors who disputed the editor's suggestions about changing the ST only when they felt that the changes would steer their authorial intention to a different direction, otherwise most of time they agreed they should give the editor some freedom to do whatever they deemed good for the publications. Hong Ying also encountered a similar situation with respect to the

editorial suggestion about changing the translated title in the translator's draft: *Daughter of Hunger* into *Little Six* in the final English version based on the assumption that English readers would not like the original title. Hong Ying initially rejected this change but eventually put forward another title *Daughter of the River*, which was approved by the editor. However, the translator HG voiced an uncompromising objection to this change in title:

...the publisher changed the title from 'Hunger' to 'River,' despite my objections.

(HG interview)

Daughter of Hunger is obviously the most accurate translation compared to the original title 饥饿的女儿 in terms of both the meaning and the spirit of the story. Although *Daughter of the River* refers to the location of the protagonist – Little Six – and her family, which is also relevant, yet the intention of conveying the metaphorical significance of incorporeal hunger is lost in this geographical reference. This might be the reason for the translator's objection. Here, it is clear that the translator's view, whether well-justified or not, would not have had any effect on the final decision. Unlike the author, the translator has no room for the negotiation of their writing/translation since the ultimate possible outcome of their uncompromising disagreement with the editor would be their right to have their own name erased on the cover of the book, as RC puts it. In fact, in most cases in this study, the translators were rarely consulted about the changes the editors suggested, although RC stressed that she would collaborate with the translators to make the translation as good as it could be. BH made a very telling remark on the role of the translator, reflecting on the situation where he enquired about who the editor was, only for his enquiry to remain unanswered by the publisher on grounds of confidentiality. He further added:

But it says a lot about how publishers in the West perceive the books they buy as a commodity; to them, I was just a worker on the assembly line.

(BH interview)

This remark captures the translator's unequal position within the power balance. This suggests that decisions about the domestication or foreignisation of the translation do not simply depend on the translators' preferences, orientations or practical or normative considerations that bear on the translation process. As indicated by the example of HG's rejection of the change of the book title, what is clear is that the translator is not constantly and completely in favour of domestic translation in preference to another mode of translation, or vice versa. If we consider BH's translation as an example, we can then see that he

sometimes tries to keep the *pinyin* form while translating some idiomatic expressions that have specific and unique historical and cultural dimensions just to give the translation more of a ‘China’ feel, such as 十里洋场 which has been translated as *shili yangchang*, but followed with added explanation of ‘the foreign concessions’ (Wei, 2001: 1). The translator’s decision – whether to give a ‘China’ feel or change it completely into a simplified and localised English expression – depends on the editor’s final seal of approval, whose decision is in turn governed by what is regarded as the readers’ likely preference and disposition to accept and positively relate to the foreign feel. The editor’s ultimate power consequently has a great impact on the final product of the translation, with very significant implications for the notion and enactment of the authenticity of the authorial voice and the faithful representation of Chinese culture and historical events in the translated auto/biographical writings.

4.6 Discussion and Conclusion

The economic logic operating in the publishing field has to a great extent decided the nature and objective of writing: namely, aiming for translation and publication in the British book market for British audiences. As a result, the collaborative and interactive relationships of the author, translator, literary agent and publishers/editors have shaped the characteristics of the translating process in which the writing, translating and editing acts constantly interact and interface to yield the end product of the translation. During the translating process, the authors’ concerns regarding the translation of their literary works are evidently primarily about the faithful translation of their authorial voices, placing great emphasis on the aspects of the aesthetic values and capturing the experience of the inner self (Ma Jian, Hong Ying and Guo Xiaolu and Wei Hui) as well as the factual details in the journalistic mode of writing (Xinran). However, the authorial voice has inevitably been lent a very significant multi-voiced facet due to the constant multi-layered intervention and mediation that occur on the interface of the translating process where asymmetric power relations come into play to set the criteria for the selection of translators as well as the evaluation and editing of the translators’ drafts. Through the criteria and norms of the ‘right’ translator and the ‘good’ translation articulated by the literary agent and publishers/editors, shaped by the prevalent views in the target English-speaking culture, the translators’ capacity of keeping to a minimum the foreign traces of the translation, and therefore minimising as much as possible the visibility of the translators, has become a legitimate expectation and even a requirement.

As a consequence, these norms and criteria come to shape the types of competence, skills and expertise that the translator is expected to possess, accumulate and demonstrate; in other words, they come to constitute the translational capital that the translator aims to acquire. The translator's *habitus* thus is formed through the sense of readership and his/her mediating role between the two socio-cultural contexts and the various institutional contexts that correspond to them; this mediation is enacted both between the ST and TT and between author and editor. It is clearly the case that the translator brings to the mediating position his/her bi-cultural *habitus*, which has been formed through, and indeed has informed, the communication and negotiation between author and editor. The translations of Chinese auto/biographical writings have functioned for the inexperienced translators as a learning process through which they have learned about the preferred translation strategy aiming to produce the desired translation within the target English-speaking culture. The translation strategy is in effect controlled and supervised by the people who have acquired the knowledge and *habitus* with which to predict and anticipate the readers' taste and the market demands. These readership-oriented and market-oriented criteria and considerations are internalised into translators' translation strategies.

However, this is not to say that the translators are automatically in complete conformity with the target norms, and subordinate themselves unquestioningly to their power as expressed and mediated by the literary agent, the editor and the publisher. As this study shows, translators still have a certain sense of loyalty towards the authorial intention and the authorial moment of creativity. However the final product is controlled through the filter system of publishing culture in which their translation drafts are treated as the mere products of linguistic and cultural informants. It has been shown that the social and cultural trajectory constitutes the translators' *habitus* in the practice of translation, and contributes to the structure of the fields, which in turn generates certain modes of translation behaviour well-attuned to the requirements of the fields and the complex logics that govern them.

The editors' ultimate power is manifest in the mediating role the editor plays between the translation draft and the target cultural context as well as his/her decisive say on various decisions to ensure the readability of translations by virtue of creating more cohesive and 'logical' elements and sequences, avoiding potential ambiguities and making explicit and readily comprehensible all culturally specific references and information through deleting, adding, re-organising and even reconstructing the narratives in the translators' drafts. In so doing, the authors' literary voices are to some degree stripped off and suppressed with

considerable room left for the factual description of the outer world, and the translator's role is therefore treated as secondary in relation to the other players in the target context; arguably the translator can be reduced to the role of the manager of a transparent and mechanic translation activity.

Chapter 5 Analysis of press reviews of the Chinese auto/biographies

5.1 Introduction

In previous chapters the focus is placed on the selection of the Chinese source texts for the translation into the British literary scene as well as the cultural and social contexts within and across which the translations occurred. In this chapter I will primarily examine one dimension of the reception of these translated Chinese auto/biographical writings within the British cultural context: namely, newspaper reviews that appeared in the UK right after the books came out into the book market. As many critics have noted, the experience of reading translated Chinese auto/biographies is to a great extent underpinned by an expectation about and a search for an 'authentic' voice about the Chinese Communist society through the experiences of the protagonists narrated in the personal life-stories in the West (Grice, 2001; Zarrow, 1999). Expectations about historical facts to some degree also colour the reception of translated Chinese literary fiction in general. In the newspaper reviews the protagonists' stories in the fictions are often read as factual representations of Chinese history (Gentz, 2006).¹

Against that backdrop, I will conduct a textual analysis of the press reviews in the light of the defining features of the autobiographical genre mainly with regard to the conditions and limits of autobiographical truth, and the self and subjectivity in relation to the external world, with a view to mapping out the ways in which the writers and their books are represented. My aim here is a) to examine how this particular group of experts' interpretations and representations frame the Chinese auto/biographical writings and thus mediate the perception of the genre of Chinese auto/biography, and b) to draw out the implications of the documentary function attributed to these works for the genre of autobiography. I draw on, and aim to apply, Macherey's concept of a symptomatic reading through which to unpack and highlight both the emphases and the silences of the text, the presences and as well as

¹ Gentz draws attention to the genre differences between auto/biography and fiction when it comes to reading the novels *Sole Mountain* and *One Man's Bible* by Gao Xinjian, the first Chinese writer to receive the Noble Prize in literature in 2000. She points out that treating his novels as an authentic representation of the writer's experiences in China in the reviews has simplified the authorial voice and reduced it to the voice of the characters. The problematic aspect of this mode of reading is making the political and historical background more prominent, which overshadows the literary value that the writer intends to achieve (see Gentz 2006: 122).

absences, the spoken and the unspoken within the press reviews which will be analytically reviewed.

5.2 Analysis of the Newspaper Reviews

These translated Chinese auto/biographical writings have received a considerable amount of press reviewing, with the exception of *Village of Stone* which seemed to receive relatively less reviews. However, like the other five auto/biographical writings, aspects related to the writer's cultural and literary position, coupled with interviews with the writer, occupy most of the space in the newspaper reviews. It is the reviewer's tasks, as Brown notes (1994), to represent the authors' work and bring out their persona and relay their cultural 'standpoint' (referring to their past experiences and current positions, see chapter 2) to the target audience; these representations are delivered to the UK audiences usually in full-length reviews in the newspapers. The important point here relates to the question of where this typical focus leaves the aesthetic and genre features of self-writing; the extent to which the attention given to the authors' 'standpoints' conceals or leaves in the shadow the other sides of self-writing; and how the thematized sides are represented and framed for the anticipated reading public. In the following sections, a detailed analysis of the reviews of these Chinese auto/biographical writings in terms of spoken sides and unspoken side will be carried out.

5.3 The Spoken Side of Auto/biographies in the Reviews

5.3.1 The Representation of Auto/biographical Intentionality

With the six auto/biographical writings, most attention in the reviews seems to be given to the writers' past cultural and social experiences in China and their current positions as exiled or self-exiled writers living in the UK or the United States (e.g. Wei Hui). This is mostly coupled with quotes extracted from interviews with the writers conducted by the newspapers; these quotes relate for the most part to their personal experiences during the period of political turbulence and oppression in China. Now the question is what unique facets of the writers' persona are (re)presented in the reviews, and how they are represented to bring out the represented intentionality of writing their life stories.

5.3.1.1 *The Current Position of the (Self-)exiled Writer*

In the reviews the current situation of writers as (self-)exiled living in the UK has been discussed in comparison with the situation in which they were in China. The accentuation of the politically and culturally adverse circumstances in which they were living in China has

already elevated the British context to a desirable and attractive milieu which Chinese writers would eventually make home. Their desire to make of Britain home is motivated in the first place by the devaluing of their literary work and their cultural and social alienation in China. The reviews point out, with a great deal of approval, the writers' disillusionment with the Chinese context and their political alienation as well as defiance towards political authority, which stands in sharp contrast to the literary value of their self-exiled writings which can be realised and is recognised in the West. For example, Ma Jian's literary language – which found expression in his ironical narrative – is portrayed as a quality that can be appreciated only by the Western readers; this was construed as one of the main reasons for his inability to live in China and to survive culturally, as it were. Philip Marsden epitomizes this outlook when he writes in *The Observer*:

His scepticism and irony make his musings palatable to a Western ear. It is no surprise that he could no longer live in China. (June 10, 2001)

Hong Ying's literary position in China is described by Tim Luster in *The Evening Standard* (May 21, 1999) as the situation of a writer who has never got her books published since 'her work is considered too political and too erotic ...'. Similarly, what is emphasised about Ma Jian's work is the fact that it was banned in China (*The Daily Mail*, Sep 20, 2002); he is represented as being in a similar situation to Hong Ying as a marginalized underground poet/writer in China (*The Evening Standard*, 1999, May 21). The highlighted mistreatment and injustices suffered by the writers in China implicitly points to their desirable position as (self-)exiled writers currently in the UK. What is also implied is that the freedom of expression and the favourable environment for writing that characterise their current position are conducive to the truth-value and realistic and accurate narrating in their self-writings. Xinran's self-exiled position as a journalist is highlighted with particular focus on her disappointment about male-dominant Chinese society. This is portrayed as the primary reason for Xinran's 'leaving China for London in 1997, shaken by her encounters with deprivation and cruelty' as *The Sunday Times* puts it (August 18, 2002). *Good Women of China* at the time was on the way to getting published in China; this promoted *The Observer* (July 21, 2002) to make a sarcastic comment, predicting a negative reaction and reception due to its revelations about 'truthful' records of abuse of human rights in contemporary Chinese society.

Among the reviews of all the writers, the ban imposed on Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby* in particular has come under the spotlight, with some trenchant comments on the official condemnation of the book 'by China as decadent, debauched and a slave to Western culture' (*The Times*, 2001, August 4). Western culture, on the other hand, becomes a haven for the writer's deviation from the mainstream literary field as dictated by political forces in their native China. The contrast between the writers' past situation in China and their new desirable situation – literary achievement and fame in the UK – is emphasized in these reviews to represent two different images of ideological stereotypes of British literary culture on the one hand and Communist China on the other.

Zarrow attributes the writers' completely different fortune in the UK to 'the advantages of capitalism' (1999: 167). In addition to the idea that the UK has hosted and provided an auspicious and nurturing milieu for the Chinese writers in a society that values their work, in the reviews this comparison is made more explicit when it comes to the material comfort and cultural privilege countries such as the UK and the USA can offer to such writers. There is also in the reviews the suggestion that (self-)exiled writers in the West live in a higher social class, and thus this places them in a position from which to look back on their past experiences from the points of view of middle-class cultural workers, so to speak. This is exemplified in *The Times Literary Supplement* and *The Daily Telegraph*:

Chinese autobiographies of similar kind are written mostly by members of China's intellectual and political elite, often living in material comfort and social privilege in Europe and America.

(*The Times Literary Supplement*, Sept 10, 1999)

This is an unimaginably different world from the West in the affluent 1980s. In China there was still at best one phone per village ... Ma Jian eventually fled to the safety of Hong Kong, moving on to Europe in 1997.

(*The Daily Telegraph*, August 04, 2001)

Establishing the authentic insider voice as the representative of a collective voice speaking for the people who are not able to stand for themselves (the deprived class for instance) and bearing witness to their adverse experiences are presented as the primary motive for authors to write their auto/biographies.

5.3.1.2 *Past Experiences of Heroic Individuals*

In the reviews the focal point tends to be centred around the representation of the writers' individual features that seem to be at odds with Communist China and the majority of

people's mentality. This focalization homes in on the reasoning behind of the decision to leave China for the UK in pursuit of artistic fulfilment, as well as on the authorial intention underpinning their introspective writings. In the following sections I will highlight and discuss the individual facets of the writers' profiles as represented in the reviews for the reading public.

5.3.1.2.1 Defiant Intellectuals

In the reviews all the writers are represented as intellectuals with an independent and liberal spirit challenging and questioning the injustice and inhumanness of the conditions in which the society exists. Among the writers, Ma Jian and Xinran are represented in the reviews as two defiant warriors endowed with charismatic personalities who have openly confronted the dictatorship of the Communist party. This is particularly true of the representation of their intellectual and professional backgrounds which are highlighted to indicate their ability to produce of scathing critical commentaries on the Chinese context and speak for a specific group of people (speaking for Chinese women in Xinran's case for instance).

Ma Jian's versatile professional roles as writer, painter, photographer, poet and visual artist in China are highlighted in all the reviews, along with his liberal thinking. His multiple professions as presented in the reviews emphasize his unique position, both intellectual and ideological, in order to provide an explanation for Ma Jian's sceptical and satirical comments on the oppressive political atmosphere in the Chinese context. *The Observer's* review exemplifies the pattern of portraying Ma Jian as a rebellious character:

Ma Jian, a writer, painter, photographer and poet, is among a group of young intellectuals who grow their hair long, meet illicitly to drink and discuss ideas, write poetry, read European books and listen to Western music. (April 28, 2002)

Ma Jian's appearance and lifestyle are a noticeable leitmotif in the reviews: his dress style and his meeting with friends to drink and discuss ideas, write poetry, enjoy Western literature, all together paint Ma Jian as the type of bohemian artist more readily associated with either the Western artist or the westernised artist who is estranged from the Chinese social context. The association of Ma Jian's image with Western free liberal-minded thinking becomes more evident when the emphasis is placed on 'European books and Western music' as an essential component of his meetings with his artistic friends. The reviews emphasize that the (Western) art and literature valued by Ma Jian and his companions were denigrated as 'lax free-wheel life style' by the Chinese establishment which pigeonholed into the category of the 'Spiritual Pollution' that Chinese government launched a relentless campaign against.

It is also worth noting that it was emphatically highlighted that the most essential and indispensable things for Ma Jian which he carried with him on his three year trip were ‘a compass, a camera, a notebook, some rice coupons and Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*’ (*The Observer*, June 10, 2000; *The Daily Telegraph*, August 04, 2001); that was in a sense his survival kit. The significance of Whitman’s poetry is that it is a symbol of American liberal democracy (Kaplan, 1980) and thus Ma Jian’s political convictions are signalled by the presence of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* in his travel bag. The association between Ma Jian and Whitman is not limited to Ma Jian’s taste for Waltman’s poetry and Western literature in general; it also extends to Ma Jian’s resemblance with Whitman’s untamed image and free thinking which can be seen just as significant. By associating Ma Jian with Waltman – an American individualist poet – Ma Jian as a writer as well as his writing are intertextualised given the presumed influence from Whitman and Western culture in general; a certain cultural as well as literary intertextuality is thereby posited.

Ma Jian’s anti-social behaviour is most manifest in his confrontation with the anti-Western image of Director Zhang whom Ma Jian describes in *Red Dust* as a typical bureaucratic officer embodying the repressive Communist ideology. This conveys a picture of China that sharply contrasts with the West and Ma Jian’s circle of artists who are identified with Western ideas:

Director Zhang loses his temper, attacking the young painter’s ‘furtive’ Westernised friends, ‘like toads in their dark glasses’.

(*Daily Telegraph*, August 04, 2001)

The quoted expression from *Red Dust* conveys the aggressive attitude of the orthodox Communist party towards the West, including its art and literature. The stereotype of the Communist figure is further portrayed through the incident of the policemen who harassed Ma Jian due to ‘his long hair, loud music and denim jeans’.

(*Times Literary Supplement*, July 27, 2001)

The reviews clearly place a great deal of emphasis on Ma Jian’s dress code and its cultural significance. The dress code in the 1970s and early 80s in China was a salient signifier of specific cultural and social connotations. The Red Guard’s uniform (national-defence green army-style uniforms) functioned as a sign, and indeed an announcement, of one’s political and moral correctness, which have been forcefully captured in *Wild Swans* and similar auto/biographies, whereas casual clothes, jeans, denim clothing and Western-style coats,

especially when combined with unconventional hairstyles, were associated with the undesirable bourgeois lifestyle of the capitalist West (Law, 2003). By accentuating Ma Jian's daily dress code and Western lifestyle that caused him political problems, the reviews represent two contrasting groups: Ma Jian and his 'Westernised friends' who admire Western books and music versus the Communist official Director Zhang and the policemen. With the large proportion of attention given to Ma Jian's past troubled situation that came about 'merely because of his long hair, jeans and artistic friends ...' (*Sunday Telegraph* May 12, 2002) and 'only his dangerous habit of inviting poets to his apartment' (*Daily Mail*, September 20, 2002), the reviews convey the general stereotype of oppressed artists in Communist China where the value of art is generally restricted and in effect officially dismissed.

Red Dust is thus read as 'a dissident's tale' (*The Observer*, June 10, 2001), Ma Jian's odyssey (*The Times Literary Supplement*, July 27, 2001) and a 'fugitive' journey (*The Daily Telegraph*, June 01, 2002). The motives for his trip are presented as mainly political; it is his Western free-wheel lifestyle, his cynical view of the socio-political system, and his free and liberal thinking that put the 'flea-bitten painter-poet on the run from the Chinese authorities' (*The Daily Telegraph*, August 04, 2001).

The reviews portray Xinran along parallel though in some ways different lines. Xinran's confrontation of the social injustice is causally linked to her prestigious family background and her pioneering profession as the first woman broadcaster who challenged men's oppression and fought for women's right and to resist and change women's subordinate position in the Communist society. She is said to articulate a clearly disillusioned vision of the Communist society by overtly approaching sensitive social issues and transgressing social norms under the politically adverse circumstances which the majority of people are compelled to conform to.

First, almost all the reviews are centred around Xinran's profession as the host for the first radio talk show in China, *Words on the Night Breeze*. In these reviews, what is highlighted is Xinran's ideological and cultural position as 'China's first agony aunt', who openly encourages 'the country's downtrodden women to talk about their lives' (*Mail on Sunday*, July 18, 2004) through this newly opened media channel. The political climate in the 1980s is depicted as more relaxed compared to the previous period; however, the stress is placed mostly on the politically sensitive topics and issues that were still as largely no-go areas. This

is portrayed to have been clearly the case with the sensitive program run by Xinran who, *The Times* reports, was advised not to ‘overstep the bounds of Communist political correctness’ (June 26, 2002). These emphases in the reviews falls on positioning Xinran as a political and cultural challenger mediating between the state authority and its censorship machinery, on the one hand, and audiences who were ready and willing to pour out their poignant stories on the other. Her passionate and empathetic mediator role is represented through the citation of the interview with Xinran who is reported as saying:

I was trying to open a little window, a tiny hole, so that people could allow their spirits to cry out and breathe.
(*The Guardian*, July 13, 2002)

Xinran’s active agency is shown through her successful action vis-à-vis the authority (such as persuasive negotiations with the radio station) to ‘open a window’ for the voiceless ordinary women to release their pent-up emotions born out of oppression and injustice. Her active agency is also reflected in her daring action through her broadcasting by shaking off the self-censorship typical of Chinese journalists, ‘creating for the first time a true picture of the daily lives of Chinese women’ (*The Guardian*, 13 July 2002). Xinran’s mediating negotiations with the radio station was not portrayed as tactical and diplomatic; she rather ‘chafed against state authority and the insidious self-censorship it imposed,’ speaking thereby on behalf of and for the sake of ‘the tens of thousands listeners who wrote to her’ (*The Guardian*, 13 July 2002). Her direct confrontation with the authorities, in a defiant and compassionate manner, echoed in the rescue operation in the narrative of *Good Women of China*, is a recurrent theme in the reviews. This is thought to be at the root of her authorial intention in writing this auto/biography which oriented towards addressing the question of ‘what a woman’s life was worth in China’ (*The Sunday Telegraph*, June 30, 2002). Her defiant manner and humane mentality, unlike Ma Jian who is said to pay the heavy price of his anti-conventional behaviour, did not lead her to personal disaster. In fact, her immense effort put into the programme that sought to evade the political restrictions (*Daily Mail*, July 26 2002) is seen as the decisive step that turned a pre-recorded censored ten-minute radio slot into a hotline discussion of issues relating to family, gender and sexuality. At this point, her personal charisma is highlighted and seen as closely linked to her work as a professional investigative journalist representing who was an empathetic, fair-minded and fearless fighter with a remarkable ability to understand the Chinese women’s plight caused by a combination of Chinese traditional mentality and the Communist regime that ‘still poison today’s China’ (*Daily Telegraph*, August, 03, 2002).

Xinran's intellectual awareness and free spirit are featured along with her upbringing and her prestigious family background with some British links as it was emphasized that her father's intellectual and professional background had a British connection which won him no praise by the Chinese establishment:

One of the top engineers in the country, [her father] spoke six languages and had worked for the British company GEC for 35 years, so he was labelled 'a British imperialist running-dog' and 'a representative of feudalism, capitalism and revisionism.

(*Sunday Telegraph*, June 30, 2002)

When Xinran describes her childhood of the good old days in the interview with *The Sunday Telegraph*, she says:

As a young girl I ate imported chocolate in my grandmother's house surrounded by flowers and birdsong in the courtyard, my hair beautifully plaited every morning by servants, while for most people a day's food ration was a few soy beans.

(June 30, 2002)

This rosy picture of her childhood immediately conveys Xinran's nostalgic attitude towards the type of life that was in the contrast with that of most of people whose daily 'food ration was a few soy beans'. The connotation attached to the 'running-dog' of British imperialism as well as her relatively well-off family situation is her growing up within 'educational, western, intellectual elite and culture' which also manifested itself through the family's possession of 'antiques and a library of precious books' that were destroyed and burned by the Red Guard who attacked her family's grandiose house. The picture thus narrated puts across a family image of not only material wealth but also cultural kudos. All these qualities stand in stark contrast to the Red Guard's destructive actions towards her father's books and her grandparents' precious furniture and her toys, in addition to undoing her 'imperialist hairstyle'.

Like Ma Jian, Xinran's final destination is also Britain, primarily in search of freedom; she left her family and beloved son in China but is still 'weighed down by the suffering in her own and her country's past' (*The Daily Telegraph*, August 03, 2002). The heavy and turbulent past carried over with her to Britain is claimed to be 'an extended work of journalism' rather than a memoir (*The Daily Telegraph*, August 03, 2002). At this point, the intentionality underpinning the writing of *Good Women of China* as well as *Sky Burial* is emphasized as she came to Britain to be able to write and tell the truth of 'what is a woman's

life worth in China' (*The Guardian*, 13 July 2002) within an environment where 'she felt free to share the tears of China's women and tell their stories which, for too long, have gone unheard' (*The Herald*, July 2, 2003).

5.3.1.2.2 Representatives of Insider Witness Voices

A prominent focus that runs all through the reviews is the writers' role of relaying insider witness voices that have been victimized and silenced under the Communist regime of the past. *The Daily Telegraph* sums up the thematic topics of Chinese auto/biographical writings after publication of *Wild Swans* as follows:

There have been memoirs by rich Shanghai women during the Cultural Revolution, poor women growing up in squalor on the banks of the Yangtze, books by orphans and books by girls whose family wished they were dead.

(August 03, 2002)

The voices from various social and cultural backgrounds included in this summary denote the broad representations of China from insider accounts through this new emerging genre. These writers' own experiences and suffering through the political turbulence are, therefore, publicized and represented as first-hand accounts by eye witnesses of common experiences in a particular period of contemporary Chinese history. This dimension of writers' insider position is markedly highlighted as guarantees of the truthful and faithful representation of the historical events contained in their writings which are framed and presented to the reading public of the Western world as representative samples of bearing witness to 'what *really* happened in China'.

a) Underclass Insider Voices: Hong Ying

By emphasizing the underclass both as the theme of *Daughter of the River* and as Hong Ying's social background, the reviews try to identify the author's voice as an authentic 'account of Mao's China seen through the eyes of a teenager' (*The Times*, May 15, 1999). The personal traumatic experience rendered through Hong Ying's voice is thus presented as an exemplar of the collective misery and trauma during the political upheavals at the time. The factual basis of her writing is not simply seeing or observing, and then recording her observations in writing. What she saw was intimately bound up with what she went through. So in that sense, in Hong Ying's case, seeing and experiencing coincide in a complex instance of bearing witness to what the writer saw happening, and what happened to the writer.

As spokesperson for the experiences of the Chinese underclass during the Cultural Revolution, Hong Ying's double insider position – an insider witness with first-hand experience – is highlighted to make a case for the historical 'truth' and 'faithful' rendering of incidents that lend the characteristic of 'authenticity' to her autobiography. Her authentic voice is verified through the political events that Hong Ying personally experienced. Most important among these events is the 1989 Tianamen demonstrations which is narrated in her first published novel *Summer of Betrayal* published in the UK in 1997, frequently mentioned in the reviews of *Daughter of River*. *The Independent*, for instance, writes a lengthy commentary on a sequence of political events in China that appear in the narrative of *Daughter of the River*. This commentary uses the Tiananmen demonstrations to frame and set the tone for the review of *Daughter of the River* which is about a period several decades before Tiananmen the commentary reads:

'We shall lie no more,' proclaimed a banner in Tiananmen Square during the demonstrations of 1989. On the last page of her autobiography, Hong Ying writes that to her this was 'the most meaningful slogan in the entire demonstration'; *Daughter of the River* attempts to put that slogan into practice. This book, however, is not about the Tiananmen massacre; it is the autobiography, albeit written in a narrative vein, of the daughter of a Yangtze River boatman and a factory worker. (*The Independent*, Oct. 18, 1998)

What is worth noting is that in this review the Tianamen demonstrations in 1989 in China have been inserted to validate the writer's truthful intention and to verify the historical facts in *Daughter of the River*. The wide coverage of the Tiananmen demonstrations in the West portrays it as a strong icon for the fight for democracy and freedom against the oppression of the Chinese regime. By starting with the Tiananmen demonstrations in the opening sentence, the review anticipates to communicate with a Western audience via a background intertextual signifier. As Fairclough notes, the word or phrase used at the start of the sentence constitutes the theme of the statement, i.e. what the statement is all about in the first place (1992: 183-84). Accordingly, the banner statement is used as the theme for the sentence, and to a certain extent, for the whole text. Here what is foregrounded is an implicit reference to the truth/fact (as opposed to the 'lie') that is revealed and captured by an insider who is a witness to these historical incidents. The central thematic relevance of the slogan is explicitly indicated through the statement '*Daughter of the River* attempts to put that slogan into practice'. The insider witness perspective involved in self-writing to a large extent constitutes the representativeness discourse where the "I" is used to enact the slogan of 'we shall lie no more'. 'My' experience thus is merged into 'our' experience in the voice of an 'I' that

conveys a true picture of the Tiananmen demonstrations and, what is more, is to guarantee more truth-value of historical facts to be reported through this newly released autobiography.

It is only in the second paragraph that the review shifts the theme by noting that this book is not about the Tiananmen massacre. However, in thematizing the topic by putting it as the opening statement, the review has already categorised the *Daughter of the River* as being in line with the genre of documentary writing about Communist China. Changing the name from Tiananmen demonstrations to ‘the Tiananmen massacre’ in the second paragraph is also noticeable. The connection between the demonstrations and the massacre, and skating round the difference between them, builds upon what Fairclough calls an intertextual presupposition based on the common view about Tiananmen that circulates in ‘a ready-made form’ (1992: 121). The fixed name is evocative of the bloodshed event in Chinese contemporary history and at the same time indicates that a similar disturbing truth would unfold in the autobiography. There is a sense in which intertextuality here can be seen as a discursive strategy aimed at sensationalizing the anticipated content of the new publication.

b) Ma Jian: Intellectual’s Insider Voice

Compared to Hong Ying’s insider voice, Ma Jian’s voice is presented as overtly political. This is framed through his ideological commitment to liberal democracy which is represented as being totally at odd with the dictatorial regime under Deng Xiaoping (more on this point in Section 5.1.1.2.1). Ma Jian’s insider voice is presented through his encounters with the people during his trip that is defined as a search for ‘real China’, truthfully reporting on ‘China from the inside’ and from his intellectually reflective perspective (*Daily Mail*, September 20). His position as a journalist during his trip clearly puts him as an outsider vis-à-vis the ‘narrated’ local people that he encountered; this can be seen to be particularly manifest through the reported aims of his trip which are described primarily as to ‘discover the realities of a true On The Road trip’ (*The Scotsman* May 4, 2002) and getting ‘a portrait of a nation’ (*The Observer*, June 10, 2001). His doubled-position of an outsider and insider (within Chinese culture) are emerged as an insider voice in the reviews although his journalistic stance and intellectual perspicacity are emphasized to lend a certain degree of objectivity to his narrative.

Here it is interesting to see how his reflective and critical eye is compared, in the reviews, with American writer Peter Hessler’s eye witness experience of an outsider who wrote *River*

Town: two years on the Yangtze. The comparison is carried out in Justin Wintle's review in *The Independent* (May 19, 2001) and in Frank Dikotter's review in *The Times Literary Supplement* (July, 27 2001). The justification for the comparison is presented as the existence of similarities identified between the two writers and their works; that is, as *The Independent* put it, 'both are autobiographical, both about the Chinese experiences of men in their late twenties and early thirties' (*The Independent*, May 19, 2001). The significance underlying the similarities, thus, is said to lie in Hessler's point of view on China, which 'slot(s) in snapshots of at least the more recent events' (from 1996 to 1998) while Ma Jian's stories are based on an insider experience in the 1980s. Peter Hessler was sent to China as a US Peace worker teaching English language and literature at a teacher training college in Fuling on the Yangzi River in 1996. Although he was in China for two years, his outsider voice is aligned with Ma Jian's insider voice, particularly with regard to the focus on China's 'alien culture, and alien ideology', 'provincial' city life, politically restricted college environment and the 'notorious one-child policy' (*The Times Literary Supplement*, July 27, 2001). His observations as an outsider on China's disorderly and insanitary living surroundings and the implications of his descriptions of the natural environment ('noise and pollution') have been confirmed by Ma Jian's insider voice. In Frank Dikotter's review, a great deal of space has been given to introducing how Hessler has come to adapt himself to 'an alien culture' (*The Times Literary Supplement*, July, 27 2001) where the 'noise, pollution and staring crowds' seem to be one of his primary findings that are narrated in his book. The city on the Yangzi River – Fuling where Hessler stayed – is represented as follows (*The Times Literary Supplement*, July, 27 2001):

Fuling, like most cities in China, teems with noise from roaring televisions, honking cars, screaming loudspeakers and salespeople shouting to blaring music from street stands ... Dotted with coal-stained shrubs and dust-covered trees, with grey patches of grass boxed in by drab concrete buildings, the city is also covered with coal dust.

The noise and pollution are stereotypical about China as a country where concern about the human and natural environment has been totally disregarded. Hessler's outsider voice is merged into Ma Jian's 'insider' voice in this regard:

In *Red Dust*, his enthralling account of three years spent on the road, bad odours, of coal smoke, dirty teeth, used socks, putrescent dung and stale urine, assault the reader on almost every page.

(*The Times Literary Supplement*, July 27, 2001)

Through these parallels, the outsider and insider voices have come to be in one homogenous and complementary tune, which serves to establish the factual value of this way of constructing China, and thus the truth-value of the autobiography and its factual documentary content. In a sense, comparison here functions as a way of establishing multiple corroborations through a kind of validity check.

These two voices are coupled together in the review, especially when the warranty is given about the two authors' sincerity and political and moral commitments, which makes for what Pascal calls 'a condition of an autobiography' based on the promise about the seriousness and truthfulness of the autobiography (1960: 25). Thus, Wintle writes in *The Independent*:

Inevitably, a Peace Corps worker has his own agenda to push, though in the main Hessler is if anything too tactful, too diplomatic ... Like many missionaries, Hessler writes well, if at times a touch too conscientiously. A capable fellow, he is perhaps too sane to be consistently engaging. Given that Western and official Chinese definitions of sanity are at some variance, I hesitated to say that the same cannot be said about Ma Jian. Or it might be Ma has attained a level of sanity denied the majority of mankind.

(The Independent, May 19, 2001)

Hessler's missionary role and motivation have been recognized but not questioned² as a possible source of bias when it comes to the validated truth contained in his work, although observations and comments are thought to be 'too *tactful*, too *diplomatic*.' Pointing to the tactful and diplomatic manners in his writing suggests that the truth in his autobiography could have been more appalling if Hessler had not been less tactful, i.e. less cautious than he should have been in depicting the shocking truth as it really was. There is also the suggestion that Hessler was too *sane* to be either able or willing to face head-on the insanity that permeated the host culture.

'Sanity' operates as a key word in this context. It is a valued quality attributed to Hessler. Although there is some difference in their respective types of sanity, sanity as a quality is what unites Hessler and Ma Jian and simultaneously creates binary associations in relation to that which they have set out to capture and represent through their writings: sane explorers who have a moral obligation to uncover the insanity of the explored. It implies that although

²Anthropological lenses refer to the representations in recent anthropology that have been challenged or questioned due to their problematic portrayal of the other based on the ethnographers' points of view which is entangled in Eurocentric discourses; that is, these representations of the other are coloured ideologically by certain forms of social and cultural discourses, as well as asymmetrical relations of power between the representer and the represented, especially in the context of observing and understanding third world cultures (Tyler, 1986; Wolf, 1997).

Hessler's missionary intention of writing about China is different from Ma Jian's, yet the sanity and honesty of both of them in writing their autobiographies will guarantee the verisimilitude of the writing in relation to the factual data. The grouping together of the two voices in the reviews has immediately put Ma Jian in an observing position from which he is portrayed as describing 'faithfully' what he has observed about his own culture which came across as 'alien' to him. Ma Jian's observations as an insider eye witness serve to validate and verify Hessler's Western anthropological lenses. These two voices have thus merged to buttress the claim about writing about China in accurate way, revealing and providing what Dikotter describes as 'an unforgettable sense of what it is like to live in China since the death of Mao' (*The Times Literary Supplement*, July 27, 2001).

c) Xinran: Spokeswoman for Chinese Women

Xinran's position as spokeswoman tends (as discussed in Section 5.1.1.2.1) to be portrayed as an outsider perspective due to her broadcaster position as well as her privileged background. Her journalistic voice – especially her own commenting voice on and immediate reaction to each story – is so prominent that the self of each Chinese women's voice is pushed to the background and thus minimised in the narrative of *Good Women of China* (Lai, 2007: 15). Her journalistic voice with the distinguished commentary voice speaking for the silenced is accentuated in the reviews which frame her voice as an observer of the consequences of the horrendous historical events on individual women's lives. Simultaneously, her position is also represented as partaking of the victimhood by belonging to the generation born in the 1950s and by being a Chinese woman in particular in this context.

In the reviews the value of *Good Women of China* is said to lie in the broad representation of Chinese society as well as the representation of women's suffering in contemporary China. This valued focus has been contrasted to *Wild Swans* whose account is narrated merely from the perspective of the lived experiences of the relatively privileged urban elite (*Daily Telegraph*, August 03, 2002). Women's position in Communist China and the question of sexuality are the main concern in *Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial*. This marks them out as different from the thematic topics 'that previous accounts of Mao's China have overlooked, or shied away from, [i.e.] the sexual aspects of the madness unleashed on an entire nation' (*The Daily Telegraph*, August 03, 2002). The dimension of sexual repression and ignorance deeply rooted in the Chinese traditional culture are particularly discussed in the reviews which then zoom out the focus to include the problem of a whole nation under the

Communist male-dominated society (*Sunday Times*, August 18, 2002). Xinran's own experience of sexual ignorance at the age of 22 is repeatedly mentioned in most of reviews:

At the age of 22, Xinran would not hold hands with a male teacher at a bonfire for fear of getting pregnant. (*Daily Telegraph*, August 03, 2002)

This example closely associates Xinran's experience with those of the women who in the narrative experience the consequences of severe political and social injustice. This of course goes to reinforce Xinran's insider voice and lend more immediacy and validity to it. Her own experience in fact verifies and increases the truth-value of *Good Women of China*; the leitmotif of sex repression is equally relevant to the other victimised women in the narrative of *Good Women of China*. At this point, her journalistic voice of the 'I' is represented to be ebbing away and then merged into voice of 'they', becoming thereby a collective voice of Chinese women from the same social, cultural and political environment where the repressive Communist ideology contributes to significant degree to their sexual ignorance. Both of her insider and outsider identities is seen as a unique position that buttresses the truth claims attendant on the biographical stories, 'giving her both moral authority (as someone who is in line with history and justice) and authenticity (as someone who actually experienced the trauma)' (Lai, 2007: 6).

Her double-voice position, as represented in the reviews, further – and most importantly – enables Xinran to have an access to a Western public forum as a commentator tackling topics well beyond the scope of her textual narratives of women within a certain timeline in China. She has been invited to voice her personal comments on the complexity of political, cultural and historical issues such as Mao Tse-tung's proclamation of women holding up half the sky (*The Herald*, July 2, 2003), Confucian views on women (*Sunday Telegraph*, July 21, 2002) and the social customs of showing one's affections in China (*The Observer*, July 21 2002).

Commenting on women's subordinated and oppressed position in patriarchal China, Xinran in an interview with *The Guardian* for instance (July 13, 2002) shares her reflections on equality, emotions and happiness in the context of China:

You have to understand that emotions and ideas such as happiness or equality are luxuries for the poor. First they want clean water and electricity; then washing machines and fridges; after that it's time for happiness.

The simplistic definition of happiness reminds us of Xinran's attitude towards democracy in the Chinese situation (Lee, W., 2005); in her view peasants and the underclass in China are

not educated enough to be able to understand the meanings and significance of democracy, and besides they have other existential priorities to worry about first. Thus in the same vein in the interview with *The Guardian* quoted above, she openly points out that the poor need to be fed first and then democracy and equality could be considered afterwards. In this sense, equality and democracy are seen as luxury accessories, and not as natural rights inherent to individuals; it is seen as something that can be granted by the state, just as they can be taken away by the state. As it happens, this was the very same discourse that was employed in twentieth-century by both the Guomindang regime as well as the Communist regime to perpetuate the arbitrary power concentrated in the state (Goldman, 1994: 8). As a freedom activist, Xinran's problematic statements made in a private voice are given a public dimension and seen as typical of the ethos of the public sphere in China where democracy is seen as secondary and inessential to social and political life. She is thus positioned by the media as an authority and a spokeswoman on things Chinese well beyond the remit of literary matters, including historical, social, political and cultural issues relevant to the Chinese context.

In parallel, her role as representative of Chinese women is what is most frequently highlighted in particular in most of the newspaper reviews where she is given a forum to voice her questioning of the traditional Chinese standards and expectations of what it means to be a good woman which are centred around being the characteristics of being demure and gentle, a good housewife and being capable of producing a son. This has thus made Xinran an acclaimed feminist. However, her critical statements about Chinese culture in connection with women often slide into essentialist assumptions of what it means to be a man and what it means to be woman that undermine her feminist intentions. In a sense her position does not seem to break radically enough with the patriarchal traditionalism and male-centred mentality that she is up against. In *The Guardian* interviews she states:

Man and woman have different feelings because in a natural way we are different. Crying is part of the energy of women, just as big muscles are a natural form of men's energy. There's a Chinese saying I like very much: woman's nature is like water; man's is like a mountain.

(*The Guardian*, July 13, 2002)

She clearly appeals to nature and a certain natural core that determines gender differences which in the West would normally be criticized as an essentialist outlook on gender differences rooted in patriarchal ideology as this vision essentially justifies gender divisions

and inequalities by naturalizing them. Her view is centred around a set of traditional binary oppositions: fragility vs. strength, softness vs. toughness, fluid vs. solid. She questions Chinese conventional codes attached to established forms of female attributes without rejection of naturalized biological differences underlying female and male gendered experiences (Croll, 2005: 129-30).

d) Wei Hui and Guo Xiaolu: Voices of New China

Guo Xiaolu and Wei Hui are presented as writing for and about modern Chinese urban life and a new generation in the transitional China of the 1990s. Guo Xiaolu's *Village of Stone* is bracketed with her award-winning documentary films, *Far and Near* (2003) and *The Concrete Revolution* (2004) where she contrasts between the modernity of 21st-century Beijing and the rural poverty of village life. This is seen as a defining recurrent leitmotif in all three works. Although the genre of novel is mentioned, yet, like Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*, the similarities drawn between her childhood and that of the protagonist indicate that *Village of Stone* contains strong autobiographical elements (*The Guardian*, May 13, 2004). In the reviews of Guo Xiaolu's *Village of Stone*, her representative voice is not portrayed in an emphatic way. However, what is emphasized is her witness view of the immense gap between rural poverty and modernized city life with a salient Western cultural influence (*Independent*, 18, June 2004). *The Guardian* flags up her self-exile position in the UK with a headline that reads *The Rise and Rise of Little Voice* (May 13, 2004), and then the article juxtaposes her literary alienation in China in contrast to her successful achievement in the UK. In parallel, her little voice is framed as speaking for the youth life in the 1990s of China against all odds within an environment that is unfavourable to such a representative voice. This is further complicated in *The Evening Standard* when Guo Xiaolu's work is placed side by side with Ma Jian's (May 5, 2005):

China's new urban youth and the life of a writer of political propaganda are the subjects of two new Chinese novels, *Village Of Stone* by Guo Xiaolu, and *The Noodle Maker* by Ma Jian. Readings are in translation, followed by a talk between the two authors about contemporary China.

Alongside Ma Jian who is represented as opposed to the Communist propaganda of his generation, Guo Xiaolu would, on the other hand, have her work function as the mouthpiece of the new generation of China through the authorial commentary woven into her work. Both thus focus on the factual dimensions of contemporary China.

Compared to Guo Xiaolu's representative insider voice, Wei Hui's role of representing the rebelliousness of the younger generation of urban youth against Chinese customs and traditions is more conspicuous in the reviews. In stark contrast to the imagined and mundane China of 'bicycles, paddy fields, Tiananmen Square and a brutal dictatorship' (*Irish News*, Sep 08, 2001), Wei Hui, as the review points out in *The Sunday Herald*, sees it as her mission to change the old stereotype of China, and set out to ensure that *Shanghai Baby* would give a new picture of a new China to the Western world (*The Sunday Herald*, July 15, 2001). As the spokesperson of the new generation of the anti-conventional youth, her role is seen as one of challenging the traditional orthodox 'imagined community'³ (Anderson, B., 1991) of Communist China. This is evidently highlighted in the review of *The Times*:

This delicately sensual and knowing novel is the kind of portrait of China's younger generation that the conventional old men who run the country would prefer had never been written. (August 4, 2001)

It is clear that *Shanghai Baby* has received very favourable reviews by virtue of its explicitness of sexual matters and its bold exposure of controversial topics. What seems to have endeared this novel to the reviewers even more is the fact that it was written by a young woman at the heyday of heady youth. She is thus framed as the image of the new modern Chinese femininity coming into collision with the old prudish and masculinist guard of 'Red China' with its 'austere, old-style revolutionary' ethos (*Scotland on Sunday*, July 29, 2001), which is the image of China most recognizable in the West. *Shanghai Baby* is seen as epitomizing a much broader generational trend: 'the modern, westernised generation as a whole' coming up against 'the Communist faith' (*The Sunday Herald*, July 15, 2001). Wei Hui is therefore 'acting as an ambassador for a generation of Chinese who are more interested in snapping up pirated Oasis albums on the black market rather than reading *The Little Red Book*' (*The Sunday Herald*, July 15, 2001).

Framing Wei Hui's voice as heavily autobiographical and rooted in the lived experiences of a whole generation, rather than fictional (*Sunday times*, June 3, 2001; *Daily Telegraph*, June 16, 2001), inserts the discourse of authenticity and autobiographical truth into the presentation of

³ In his seminal book *Imagined Communities* Anderson shows how the idea of the nation – and nation building for that matter – has been the product of a combination of discourses that crisscrossed various fields of knowledge and art, including literature. He argues that various discourses coalesced to 'imagine' and construct a particular multiplicity of heterogeneous groups and populations into a distinctive national community which was presented and adopted as the primary basis for people's identity and self-consciousness. To that extent, the nation is a product of discursive and narrative articulations with real and durable effects on politics, the economy, society, culture and people's collective consciousness and self-concepts. Literary narratives are among the key players in the process of 'imagining' and building the nation which Anderson highlights.

Shanghai Baby. On the other hand, however, in trying to ground the truth-claims of *Shanghai Baby* in Wei Hui's youth experiences, what incidentally comes into view is the limited claim to representation and representativeness given that the autobiographical truth is said to emanate from Wei Hui's experience within her circle of friends who ' "take and push drugs" ' (*Sunday Times*, June 3, 2001) and who are consumed by nightlife revelry as they are portrayed in *Shanghai Baby*. It is evident that what Wei Hui intends to capture in *Shanghai Baby* is the unconventional life of her friends whose lifestyle, as she implies, stand at many removes from the ordinary college graduates in Shanghai. In other words, from the point of view of factual truth, what is represented is by all standards a set of minority experiences and views – those of a statistically tiny group of young people engaged in youth counter-culture, but by no means the experiences of a generation in the strict sense of the term.

Having been characterised in the reviews as an 'established Shanghai counterculture novelist' (*Scotland on Sunday*, July 29, 2001), Wei Hui is constantly compared in the reviews with controversial novelists in the West, and with Henry Miller and Jack Kerouac in particular, the major figures in the American Beat movement in 1950's. This is exemplified in the following review:

Wei Hui says it was Henry Miller's writing that changed her way of looking at her own work. She sees herself as a new voice creating a new definition of what it means to be a Chinese woman.

(*Irish News*, Sep 08, 2001)

The central themes of the Beat writings, especially with the works of Henry Miller and Jack Kerouac, revolve around experimentation with drugs and alternative forms of sexuality (Knight, 1996). These are said to be inspiration for Wei Hui's anti-conventional characters. However, there is a strong sense in which the comparison is in some ways tenuous, and arguably implausible. It is quite difficult to see parallels between the writing style in *Shanghai Baby* and Henry Miller's experimental writing style and its spontaneous creativity. The intertextuality chained between Wei Hui and anti-social Beat generation allows the image of Wei Hui to be transformed into a Kerouac-type of a youth culture hero, who breaks the image of immaculate collage educated woman to create a sensational and seductive 'public rose' to the reading public (Cheng, 2008). This can arguably be described as a form of domestication of the translated work. The domestication in this case is not linguistic in nature; in a sense it is extra-linguistic. It occurs at the level of framing and making sense of the

translated work whereby it is classified based on schemes of perception and appreciation, as Bourdieu would put it, that have originated and belong in the target culture.

In the interview with *The Daily Telegraph*, Wei Hui asserts the feminist orientation of *Shanghai Baby* in connection with the explicit treatment of the theme of sex:

Other female Chinese writers have discussed sex, but used a passive, suffering tone', says Wei Hui... 'In my book the protagonist takes control.

(June 16, 2001)

Her rebellion comes up against the old codes of traditional Chinese women who are associated with being passive as sexual objects. In the reviews she is thus seen as following a new code of behaviour and cultivating a new relation to sexuality, which is portrayed as signalling a new feminine identity with a feminist mark. Despite her portrayal as a feminist figure, the question raised here is to what extent the new codes of feminine behaviour presented in *Shanghai Baby* can contribute to new and valid understandings of gender and sexuality in the new post-socialist China (Ferry, 2003). This is particularly true when we consider the fact that sexuality is overemphasised in the re-constructed women identity, which plays on the stereotyped image of a femininity constituted and swayed by emotions. In *Shanghai Baby* the woman figure is marked by narcissism and feminine sensitivities portrayed as the natural traits of the construction of the feminine self. Lyne (2002) points out many situations where Coco celebrates her own Asian type of beauty in comparison with that of Western women with full awareness of her power and magnetism as she personifies the 'fetishes' of Asian women,⁴ which fit so well into Western men's (e.g. Mark's) exotic fantasy figure. She finds Wei Hui's feminist construction problematic as *Shanghai Baby*'s main character Coco willingly gives in to the desire of being sexually dominated by Western Mark, and lets herself be entirely immersed in Western consumerism, values and aesthetics which are not free of a masculinist ethos. This is an aspect that seems to be celebrated as emancipatory for the woman figure and for femininity.

Contrary to the way the press reviews have depicted *Shanghai Baby* and its writer, it should be noted, thus, that the mode of self-representation and of representing femininity should not be hastily understood as inspired by or embodying a feminist ethos that is patently at odds with the established patriarchal ideology in Chinese society. I would argue that despite its

⁴ Regarding the comparison overtly made by Wei Hui between Western women and Asian women in terms of beauty, it is articulated most explicitly on page 142 of *Shanghai Baby*.

anti-traditionalism, the image of womanhood that comes across through reviewed and publicized self-representation and, relatedly, from the writer's autobiographical (self-) representation in *Shanghai Baby*, at best stands in an ambivalent relation to the masculinist construction of femininity, and arguably echoes some aspects of masculinist ideology. The image of womanhood, thus constructed, does pose a threat to the traditional image of femininity (Kong, 2005: 110-11), centred as it is around female chastity, decorum and demureness. Nonetheless, it does simultaneously activate the equally masculinist notion of femininity centred around sexual appeal and passion.

5.3.2 Highlighted Themes of the Outside World

The dimensions of the outer world in these auto/biographical writings are strikingly noticeable in the reviews. By outer world I mean the descriptions of physical settings and historical and cultural circumstances where the protagonists live. Almost all the reviews highlight in a very elaborate way people's lives within the specific socio-political context under the Communist regime.

5.3.2.1 Political Restrictions on Literary Works

The sexual taboo in *Shanghai Baby* that provoked a governmental ban is represented in the reviews as an example of the systematic censorship on literature pursued by Communist China. This is generalised and seen as relevant and applicable to all the cases with these (self-) exiled writers. In the reviews the instances of governmental restriction on freedom of expression with regard to the literary field is portrayed as their shared experience.

Sky Burial is presented as a sequel to *Good Women of China*, another Chinese woman's suffering and loss during the Sino-Tibetan conflict in the 1950s. The little-known culture as well as the historical occupation of the Chinese army of Tibet for 54 years is said to have been 'brought vividly to life through the protagonist's journey to Tibet seeking for her beloved husband' (*Sunday Times*, July 4, 2004). The history of Dalai Lama fleeing into exile in 1959 is brought into light again to paint Tibet as the spiritual land of Buddhism which has been stripped of its cultural heritage since the invasion of the Chinese army (*Sunday Times*, July 4, 2004; *Times Literary Supplement*, December 3, 2004). *Sky Burial*, along with *Good Women of China*, are therefore depicted as authentic and factual accounts of the history that ordinary people tell; the encounters of the protagonist in Tibet have lent the writer a unique vantage point from which to see through and restore history to its shocking simplicity and authenticity (*Times Literary Supplement*, December 3, 2004).

Of reviews of *Village of Stone*, the two most comprehensive reviews at length (*The Independent*, June 18, 2004; *The Guardian*, May 13 2004) give a massive amount of space to the turbulence in contemporary China. *The Independent* runs the headline as: ‘Fragmented Life in Broken China’, with an implicit reference to the social and cultural problems in ‘Red’ China caused by the transitional modernisation. An interview with Guo Xiaolu occupies most of the review in *The Guardian* (May 13, 2004) in which Guo Xiaolu’s reminisces about her despondent childhood in the remote and deprived fishing town, emphasising in her account the poverty in both material and cultural resources. The fishing town is represented as a ‘conservative environment steeped in Chinese tradition’, with reference specifically to the child bride and Guo Xiaolu’s grandmother’s bound ‘tiny twisted feet’. The darkest side of Chinese tradition is illustrated along with Communist propaganda and the political circumstances where Mao’s little book was the only available reading in the village. As a writer, Guo Xiaolu’s marginal literary position in China is explained in terms of the nature of her work which is not in line with ‘the traditional Chinese literary canon’. Guo Xiaolu’s leaving for Britain is therefore narrated as inevitable for escaping the literarily and politically restrictive environment of China to find her audiences who are able to appreciate her artistic talent in a free country like Britain.

5.3.2.2 *The Poignant and Harrowing World of China*

Within the picture of the outside world in these auto/biographical writings, the poverty and misery in China and the writers’ firsthand accounts of the cultural and social events have been the most prominent thematic foci. This is especially the case with *Good Women of China*, *Daughter of the River* and *Red Dust*. The portrayals of the pathos and bleakness of the physical world in *Daughter of the River* and *Red Dust* are represented in the reviews as self-evident truth. Since *Daughter of the River* descriptively sketches a miniature of the tragic starvation and struggle for survival during the Great Famine of 1959-61, the voice of Hong Ying is considered to be an authentic testimony to the Cultural Revolution through her witness account. Likewise, the poverty and hardships in Ma Jian’s journey are the main focus that features in the reviews of *Red Dust*. Throughout Ma Jian’s journey, people’s lives in the specific political context of Deng Xiaoping’s epoch are emphatically highlighted in almost all the reviews, much like what appears in the reviews of *Daughter of the River*.

a) *Daughter of the River: The Yangzi River as a Metaphor for Poverty*

As its Chinese title suggests (literally ‘Daughter of Hunger’), the central narrative revolves around the theme of hunger. As King points out, the type of hunger that is depicted in Hong Ying’s autobiography has two themes threaded through the book: the dire hunger for food entangled with an emotional yearning and sexual awakening (Spring 2000). Both types of lack combine to heighten the effect of the tragic endings experienced by the protagonist through the years of famine and political turmoil. The physical hunger and the bodily craving for food have been well recaptured in the reviews, which is, along with the wretched poverty and political surroundings, framed as the ultimate theme whereas self-discovery through the search for the fulfilment of carnal desire is disregarded. A review in *The Times* frames the theme as primarily about capturing ‘an atmosphere of fearful secrecy and moral collapse’ in China (March 10, 1998). Another review in *The Times* again selected the national context for emphasis, describing the setting for the autobiography as ‘one of the world’s most troubled countries’ (May 15, 2007), whilst *The Evening Standard* describes the setting as ‘the slum of Chongqing’ and presents it as a theme running through the autobiography (May 21, 1999).

Most of the reviews see the historical and political nature of the autobiography as following from the realistic depiction of poverty and squalor. When *The Times* recommends new books coming out in the book market in 1999, *Daughter of the River* is presented as follows:

Hong Ying’s memoirs tell the story of the poor and downtrodden in China. More importantly, they tell of her inner turmoils. Less a political exposé than an account of Mao’s China seen through the eyes of a teenager, this [is a] cold yet intensely moving tale of a girl’s transition to womanhood in one of the world’s most troubled countries. (May 15, 1999)

In this short introduction, references to the ‘poor and downtrodden’, ‘account of Mao’s China’ and ‘one of the world’s most troubled countries’ frame the pre-dominant theme of the autobiography for potential readers. Although the reviewer states that it is ‘less a political exposé’, yet the language used to introduce the work and the overemphasis on the theme of representing some aspects of China’s history and society invite and anticipate a reading or a reception of the autobiography primarily through political and historical lenses.

A prominent aspect of the press reviews of *Daughter of the River* is the set of descriptions of the living conditions and especially the living conditions by the Yangzi River where Hong Ying grew up. Harriet Evans in *The Times* entitled her review ‘Worms and Maggots by the

Riverside' to emphasise the context which is defined through the dominant images of 'sweat and filth, stinking latrines, worms and maggots' (September 10, 1999). By placing 'Worms and maggots by the Riverside' as the title, the review appears to put in the foreground the grotesque surroundings by the Yangzi River as the primary thematic topic in the autobiography where no human and social life is mentioned. Moreover, the absence of people in this context could also imply that the object of the description – people living on the riverside – lives alongside worms and maggots with indignity, which in fact reduces people's lives by the riverside to sub-human standards.

In the same vein, Evans's emphasis on the 'bloated corpses in the flood waters ... and nauseating smells' of the Yangzi River is echoed in *The Independent's* review of Hong Ying's fourth novel *Peacock Cries* (November 25, 2005), citing *Daughter of the River* in the opening paragraph:

The Yangzte River was a malevolent presence in Hong Ying's autobiography *Daughter of the River*, a depository of bloated corpses and evil smells.

The absence of human and social life again appears in the description of the Yangzi River – as a 'depository of bloated corpses and evil smell' (*The Times*, Sept 9, 1999; *The Independent*, Nov 25, 2005) – achieves the same effect in terms of framing the thematic topic. Despite this emphasis on the disturbing riverscape, what is striking is the figurative and rhetorical language employed to portray the Yangzi River. The attribute attached to the river – 'malevolent depository' – dramatises an appalling picture of the living surroundings where there is not even a single soul alive. By placing a dramatised representation of the riverscape at the opening phrase of introducing Hong Ying's fourth novel *Peacock Cries*, the review tries to evoke the pre-existing text and identify it with the next published work by Hong Ying around the disturbing story of the Yangzi River. The intertextual signifier of the Yangzi River thus serves to shed light on the depressing side of the River presented as the central story of the narrative, which to a certain extent identifies the overall theme of Hong Ying's works with the disclosure of the hidden side of China.

As some of the critics have noted, *Daughter of the River* is more focused on family stories rather than on China's contemporary history (Grice, 2002; King, Spring 2000). In connection with this point, I would argue that *Daughter of the River* goes even further than that and focuses primarily on the theme of the self and the way the self fares under the Cultural Revolution and the struggle for transcending the fatal destiny of women in her community.

However, in the press reviews of *Daughter of the River*, a disproportionate amount of attention is accorded to the leitmotifs of the outer world which, I would argue, does not reflect the thematic emphases of this autobiography, and indeed overlooks and sidesteps its pivotal narrative of the self. It is important to note that the squalid settings in the narrative of *Daughter of the River* have been focalised and transformed into the a broader contextual explanation in the reviews which extend and generalise an image specific to a particular and limited context – i.e. public toilets – to describe the broader setting of the autobiography.

In the narrative, Hong Ying, indeed, describes the slum where she grew up as squalid and gloomy. The outside world is portrayed in such a way that human life seems almost to be impossible; however, the inner self psychologically and physically undergoes, reacts and eventually manages to transcend these inconceivable circumstances. The toilet seems to be the leitmotif within and outside of the text used by Hong Ying to signify extreme poverty and squalor. The unhygienic conditions of the public toilet on the South Bank is described in several places in the book to denote the desperately dehumanising picture of people's daily lives. The image of the worms and maggots are said to be women's discharged parasites in the unsanitary public toilet (Hong, 1998: 121), exhibiting metaphorically the inconceivable life that the protagonist has experienced. In the newspaper interview in *The Evening Standard*, Hong Ying speaks of toilets again when she talks about universal poverty:

I think poverty works the same all over the world, the space may be larger, the toilet may be in a little better condition.

(May 21, 1999)

It is clear that the leitmotif of the toilet scene – filthy, packed, therefore, insecure and humiliating (the women's private part is shown in public) – is consistently employed to capture in a shockingly engaging way the theme of privation, struggle for survival and the life of indignity women's lives on the South Bank. This narrative device makes stages a constant collision between the outside world and significant self in which the writer, as Kristeva notes, 'experiences depression in its most acute and dramatic form, but ... also has the possibility of lifting her/himself out of it' (1989: 133). But given its genre identity, as it were, the primary intention, as Pascal points out, is to foreground the self and place it at the centre of the narrative (Pascal, 1960: 9), which can be seen as the ultimate objective of all autobiographies (Gusdorf, 1980).

b) Ma Jian's Journey: the Path of Barbarism

Ma Jian's journey into the hinterland is interpreted and summarized as an epic trek through China from empty desert to primeval jungle; an inside tour from overpopulated cities to metropolitan cities like Shengzheng, and finally arriving in Tibet. The violence, turmoil and 'cruelty and squalor of the soundings' narrated in the trip (*The Observer*, April 28, 2002) are represented in the reviews as 'witnessing scenes of barbarity' (*The Sunday Telegraph*, May 12, 2002). Apart from that, the main aim of Ma Jian's travels is construed as the witnessing of savagery and barbarity:

People are helpful and are always ready to share, which actually saved Ma Jian ... But with desperate hunger, savagery is not far away – politics have made things worse. In the Cultural Revolution, the Zhuang people developed a taste for human offal. They butchered 'class enemies' such as teachers, so that the 'live liver flopped into their hands.'

(*The Daily Telegraph*, August 04, 2001)

In this review, the savagery and cruelty are represented as activities that are specifically political in nature, which closely ties in with the political and historical environment (i.e. the Cultural Revolution). By presenting teachers as one of the examples of the category of 'class enemies', the review in fact differentiates the intellectual teacher from the Zhuang people who are seen as active agents acting out the action of savagery. In this case the Zhuang people are generalised as agents of a collective activity. The action words *developed*, *butchered* and *flopped* enacted by the Zhuang people suggest eagerness and zest, and *a taste* signifies a habit, a preference and something they take pleasure in, which is different from the image of eating human flesh due to 'desperate hunger'. It is also worth noting that the historical contexts in the two cases are blurred, with no specific indication of the period. The helpful and nice people Ma Jian meets on the journey are clearly different from the Zhuang people during the Cultural Revolution. The two types of people in the narrative are clearly marked as different in the autobiography, whereas in the review they seem to be interchangeable and easily transformable from 'people' to 'Zhuang people' through the marked conjunction word *but*. The contrastive relations between the first sentence (people are helpful) and the second (starting with 'But' in the quote above) is, according to Fairclough (2003: 88), constructed to frame distinctive classifications (of people and the Zhuang people, in this case). Classifying people and Zhuang people in one group obscures the agent who performs the action of eating human flesh, and induces the misconception that the same

people perform the same action in different historical periods. It also associates cannibalism, monsters and savagery with a certain group of people (excluding the ‘bad elements’ like teachers). Moreover, the rumours about Zhang people, mixed with the kindness of the people encountered by Ma Jian, blur the voice of fiction and Ma Jian’s witness voice. The mingled voices are thus represented from Ma Jian’s perspective to constitute a testimony-type representation of savagery and cruelty.

5.4 Unspoken and Minimised Sides of Auto/biographies in the Reviews

Having over-represented dimensions of the writers’ political and ideological positions and historical incidents of the auto/biographical writings, the reviews have to a large extent overshadowed other features intrinsic to the dimensions of the inner self and aesthetic properties. This foregrounding of the political context leaves in the background, and indeed gives little attention to, the nuances of subjectivity and the factors that go into the construction of the autobiographical truth. In the following sections, I will look into the dimensions that have been overlooked and minimised in the press reviews; I will also discuss the implications of the overshadowed elements for the conceptual aspects of factual accuracy, creativity and the truthful representation of the reality.

5.4.1 The Overshadowed Auto/biographical Essence of the Inner Self

A disproportionate amount of attention has been given to the leitmotifs of the outer world in the reviews: the predominant topics of political persecution, human rights abuse and extreme poverty over different historical periods thus frame the substance of the Chinese auto/biographical writings, and thereby leave little room for discussion of the inner self of the protagonists and the problematized subjectivity in these auto/biographical writings.

The quest for the self is a theme that is inherent to the autobiographical genre, as Pascal points out (1960), and this feature is by no means confined or unique to merely Western culture. Within the Chinese literary context the ideologies of traditional Chinese culture and Communist collectivist culture leave no room for asserting and performing one’s individuality through writing; yet, as Chen notes, ‘self-conceit, self-pity, self-love and self-affection’ and even ‘self-aggrandizement’ typically permeate modern Chinese writing (Chen, 1996: 44). These individualistic features constitute the uniqueness and characterisation of the

self in these auto/biographical writings. It is true that the squalid and gloomy environment where the protagonists experience extreme poverty is described as a recurrent graphic feature in most of the auto/biographical writings in this study (with *Shanghai Baby* being the only exception). However, what happens inside within the space of subjectivity is the taking shape of 'who I am', which can be realised only in the presence of the external world of darkness and harshness where, as Pascal points out, the peculiar shape of the self comes into being in order to arrive at the sense of selfhood (more on this point in Chapter 2). Likewise, the search for the inner self in relation to the question of 'who I am' is a pivotal issue all the writers try to approach in various ways, contrary to the claims made about these auto/biographical writings as representing certain types of social group/class.

As Zarrow (1999: 168) notes, whilst (self-)exile writings treat similar themes, only Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* makes a serious attempt to include historical background details to a very significant degree. Guo Xiaolu, for instance, keeps putting the accent, in the interview with *The Guardian*, on the inner side narrative of the self in *Village of Stone* cast within a narrative of reminiscence that, in her view, is associated with valuable literary and aesthetic traits; and she thus explicitly marks some distance and distinction from the *Wild Swans* type of writing (May 13, 2004). In a similar vein, Wei Hui, who claims to be the undisputed representative of Chinese youth culture in the 1990s, emphasises the essence of her novel as revolving around the inner struggle of the female psyche which goes against the background of the modernisation of Shanghai in the 1980s (Cheng, 2008). Although it is argued that 'her authentic female voice which diverges from the exotic stereotype to cater to Western and Westernised markets' (Lai, 2007: 12) remains 'problematic, dispersed and disturbing' (Lu, 1993: 11), yet the search for individual self and female subjecthood is the primary theme underlying her self-declared feminism (Lu, 1993: 11).

The intellectually independent and charismatic self in Ma Jian's *Red Dust* and Xinran's two biographical writings (*Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial*) is construed to accentuate the uniqueness of individuals. The constructed self, enmeshed with the lives of others, plays a heroic role in other people's lives only to make the life of the self centralised and all the more significant (Lai, 2007: 15). Lai points out the eminent self constructed in Xinran's two biographies through the writer's weaving her own life into other people's stories with which she was passionately involved (Lai, 2007: 15-18). The 'I' of the self is significantly visible throughout the narratives of the other stories and her own autobiography about her childhood (which was prompted by one of her interviewees' story), where the narrator's consciousness

almost seems to coincide with the character's, making it impossible for the reader to clearly distinguish between the two. Her passionate involvement in the rescue activities of the wretched victims demonstrates a great degree of sympathy, understanding and compassion, which again inevitably makes the significant autobiographical self strikingly visible in the narrative. The narrator is thus not only present as a witness, but also she becomes visible as the agent in charge of narration; she takes part in the scenes she describes, making evaluative judgements that are clearly formed from the writer's current point of view of the present (i.e. the present of the act of writing). This representational discourse leaves little room for the objective reporting in that the author plays the role of an active agent who brings out the self-portrait to the centre of the narrative through the biography of others.

As an overt and dogged challenger to the totalitarian world, Ma Jian clearly identifies the theme of *Red Dust* as the alienation of the self as a result of defying the mighty society when he describes the location of his dormitory as:

a hundred metres from the former residence of Liang Qichao, a member of the 1898 Reform Movement, whose calls for modernisation so enraged Empress Cixi that he left the country and spent fourteen years in exile.

(Ma, 2002: 3)

The narrative thus unfolds by association: from describing Liang Qichao's house (the physical space) to political history by providing information about the reformer's destiny – ending up in exile. It is clear that Ma Jian positions himself in line with the most prominent intellectual leader and greatest writer of China in the early 20th century, indicating the charismatic individual's fatal destination and their inevitable exile journey, the journey as what Lee describes as 'the solitary traveller on sentimental journey' (1985: 44).

Of these writings under consideration in this study, Hong Ying's *Daughter of the River* is the one most associated with *Wild Swans* when it comes to the representation of contemporary China. Contrary to what some critics have argued, *Daughter of the River* is more focused on family stories than on China's contemporary history (Grice, 2002; King, Spring 2000). Yet, the dimension of factual representation in *Daughter of the River* is often represented as primarily a product of the writer's autobiographical intention.

Having grown up in the impoverished slum of the South Bank, Hong Ying deals with the historical 'facts' in the form of the stories and anecdotes from rumours and hearsay in her own community, which leads Grice to come to the conclusion that this hearsay to a great

extent obscures the element of ‘truth’, and is therefore ‘unsubstantial’ (2002: 177). In *Daughter of the River* there are many places where ‘fact’ is portrayed through what people said (p. 63, p. 4), or ‘the village’ said (p. 155), without specific authorial comments. Most often Hong Ying gives details about characters’ and people’s daily lives or episodes from other people’s whispers such as the rumours about a popular bun shop – called Waterhouse – where human flesh was supposedly made into dumplings and buns during the Great Famine (p. 68). These eerie stories about ordinary people’s lives narrated through people’s rumours and perceptions, including Hong Ying’s own perceptions, construct the politically oppressive, materially impoverished outer world in relation to the self and her unified inner world. In retrospect, Hong Ying recalls the growth of herself (Little Six) and her fragmented, distorted and repressed psychic realm where the self often finds itself out of sync with the outside world. Her inner turmoil is the direct result of encountering and coming into conflict with the outside world – vicious, severe and inhuman – which is in complete contrast with her sensitive and passionate inner world. At this point, I would argue that *Daughter of the River* is not meant primarily to convey historical facts; but rather to be centred on the theme of the self and selfhood and the process of transcending the individual’s fatal destiny.

Hong Ying’s story telling exhibits her past self, the subject – Little Six’s inner experience during specific political and historical incidents – and her disillusionment with her cultural community (the South Bank and even her family) and eventually the Chinese context, all of which have been interwoven with her inner growth. The self-exiled writer explains her disenchantment with not only the political and cultural atmosphere but also, even more acutely, with her private life and with her family and her neighbours’ reaction to her illegitimate birth in particular.

By placing emphasis on the inner self, the narrative brings out the dialectic relationship of the human outer world which acts on the self and on which the self in turn reacts. This dialectic has been interlaced into the narratives of these authors’ writings. This clearly ties in with Rooke’s remark about autobiography from another context but with some parallels to the works included in this study: he notes that the Palestinian autobiographies published in the West deserve more attention to what happens inside the self rather than to the self (1996: 231).

5.4.2 Minimised Aesthetic Nature and Hidden Fictional Creation

In the reviews of these auto/biographies, the characteristics of Chinese auto/biography and its role in the Chinese literary history remain by and large unaccounted for. Related to that, the stylistic and aesthetic features of the writing are hardly mentioned. There are a few passing laudatory remarks about the writings such as ‘extraordinary physical beauty and interest’, ‘starkly written and endlessly fascinating’, ‘beautifully written’ and ‘intensely, poetic and captivating’ etc. However, these remarks seem to be made in passing and remain at a general level; they tend to feature as a aside gesture, without any sustained engagement with the stylistic features that mark the auto/biographical writings. Although Guo Xiaolu’s *Village of Stone* seem to have received relatively a great deal of acclaim for its ‘simple, touching and poetic writing style’ (*Times Literary Supplement*, April 23, 2004), yet like other auto/biographical writings, the laudatory expressions would not touch upon the thematic essence of the self with some further discussion of the literary creation of the narratives and its relation to the autobiographical truth. Evaluating the style of the Chinese auto/biographies in a ‘limited vocabulary’ (1990: 18), to use Maier’s words, confirms the existence of a similar problem of amateurishness in the press reviews of the translated works in the UK.

This has led Maier to call for ‘a qualifying and adequate adjective or adverb’ in the reviews to reflect the characteristics of individual works, which would improve the status quo of “‘amateurish’” reviewing’ (1990: 18). Treating auto/biographical writing as a piece of art in its own right, Virginia Woolf (1981) demonstrates the intrinsic aesthetic nature attached to this facts-orientated genre through her own biographical writing, *Orlando* (1933), based in part on the life of her friend Vita Sackville-West (more on this point in Chapter 2). Within the narrative of factual life, fictional traits are inevitably involved in the construction of the truth-value of auto/biography through the process of artistic creativity. The Chinese auto/biographical writings in this study are arguably no exception. Furthermore, I would argue that overlooking the artifice of literature employed in the auto/biographical narratives brings into light the fact that the veil of what is perceived as ‘authentic’ and ‘factual truth’ is stripped away in the process of literary creativity.

The validity of treating what is called *fact* as an instance of literary creativity is demonstrated, for instance, in *Village of Stone* where the ‘factual’ story is treated as background materials that are transformed and woven into the story created through the literary devices: mainly the device of flashbacks that are interspersed with an adult present-time of city life and the

writer's wretched childhood in the fishing town. The narrative stages interplays and moves between childhood narration and the voice of adolescence; and in parallel moving back and forth creates a disjuncture between city life and life in the remote fishing town, and thus a certain mode of relating the past to present past. In parallel, this literary narration of stories about the past and present is also used in the overtly proclaimed autobiography by Hong Ying *Daughter of the River* – which is classified in the same line with *Wild Swans*. Unlike *Wild Swans* where the events follow a chronological order, *Daughter of the River* unfolds in an unconventional way of narrating along two temporal threads: her mother's story in the past uncovered through accounts by her eldest sister, and her own stories starting with her own childhood and tracing her growth up to her eighteenth birthday (her mysterious birth and alienated position in her family). The narrator's voice is taken up alternately by Little Six and her Big sister but is dominated by Little Six's bitter but distant narration. However, the detached tone becomes theatrically descriptive when it comes to her mother's serial marriages and relationships. It is also worth noting that the focalization is often on the dramatic descriptions of characters' appearances, especially on the stark contrast between the past (in her early twenties) and the present (in her forties) as manifest in her mother's figure, look and demeanour; this description epitomises the course of women's struggle in an epic survival. The literary descriptions of these dramatic changes and physical transformations in her mother illustrate an aesthetically idiosyncratic dimension. By telling stories of her mother's adversities in parallel with the writer's own, what is implied is that her own destiny was very likely to resemble her mother's, becoming thereby one of the South Bank women. This opens up some space for the self to struggle and survive, and eventually arrive at the climax of transcendence (i.e. transcendence of the adversities of everyday life and the determinations of the outer world).

In relation to another literary aspect of creativity found in auto/biographical writings, Olney speaks of the trajectory of the self's consciousness that can be traced in the narrative discourse of 'the summary moment of composition' (1972: 35). In these Chinese auto/biographical writings, for instance, many conversations and dialogues are constitutive of the story telling with less self-narrations. Although what other people say in the conversations offer the external third-person narrative voice, albeit controlled by the protagonist's witness eye, yet the theatrical effect of the dialogues inescapably comes through. This staging of the theatrical dimension clearly brings into light the creative and aesthetic dimension. Lai talks about detailed conversations and incidents in Xinran's *Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial*

in which her writing, which overlaps between truth and fiction, is shown to be manifestations of the authorial creative strength. This a very significant dimension that Lai calls for more attention for (Lai, 2007). This is clearly exemplified in the first story of *Good Women of China* when Xinran asks the police officer to help the kidnapped girl, who is forced into marriage to a disabled man who is sixty years of age, to escape from the remote village. Then she reacts strongly to the indifference of the police officer:

The police officer on the other end of the line told me to calm down. ‘This sort of thing happens a lot. If everyone reacted like you, we’d be worked to death ...’

‘So’ I said, ‘Are you telling me you are not going to take responsibility for this girl?’

‘I didn’t say I wouldn’t, but ...’

‘But what?’

‘But there’s no need to hurry, we can take it step by step.’

‘You can’t leave someone to die step by step!’

The policeman chuckled. ‘No wonder they say that policemen fight fire and journalists start fire. What was your name again?’

‘Xin...ran,’ I said through gritted teeth.

(2003: 4)

This seemingly authentic representation generates the interval between the moment of the performance and the time of reading the text, which reveals the past self – Xinran who is performing in the narrated events and the present narrating and writing self of Xinran the writer. The mimetic dialogue is meant to evoke trustworthiness; however, the dramatic scene clearly produces a stage effect, or a staging of the reality as Herman and Veraeck would put it (2001: 14-15).

The creation of conversations and incidents also raise the issue of what John Freccero calls the phenomenon of the conversion of ‘a moment of self-consciousness into a temporal sequence’ (1986: 20). The conversion, in Freccero’s sense, highlights the boundaries between narrator, character and author, the separation of which betrays the fact that, as Eakin puts it, the ‘autobiographer’s access to the past is necessarily a function of his present consciousness of it’ (Eakin, 1985). The writer’s mediating effects of temporality and space are better illustrated in the observable reality and the writer’s vision as articulated in the literary form of these auto/biographical writings, which are to a great extent diverse and by no means identical to each other. The blurring of the boundaries, however, as Egan points out, has

ideological consequences as that disguises the process of ‘physical, cultural and linguistic translations’ of autobiographers (1999: 123). In this respect, of these auto/biographical writings, the subjectivity of Ma Jian’s *Red Dust* is the most problematic given that Ma Jian’s fleeing from mainland China to Hong Kong in 1986 due to the politically oppressive climate in the 1980s (see section 2.4.1) has positioned him as a politically exiled writer, unlike other writers in this study. Ma Jian’s point of view towards China and the West in general permeates the narrative through the subject’s and narrator’s voice (both merged in one voice) with overly political and ideological comments. The ‘I’ voice consists of the voices of narrator, the character and the author mingled together in the narrative which allows Ma Jian to switch back and forth freely between the relatively impersonal voice (narrator’s) interpreting and commenting on the outer world of historical events, and the personal voice of ‘I’ focusing on his personal inner life. These multiple voices merge as Ma Jian’s voice replaces the omniscient narrator, chronicling the historical events along with his testimony. Therefore, the claimed authenticity of the comments and interpretations in fact conceals his radical views that are coloured by his political and ideological position. His position can only be uncovered through the discussions in relation to space and temporality in a diasporic context. The mediating elements of space and temporality are in fact seen as unproblematic in the reviews given their consistent neglect of the literary creativity that goes into the selection and literary processing of memory and the interpretations of the past. Moreover, the blurred roles of narrator and protagonist and their merging into one unity conceal the process of consciously selecting, (re)constructing and transforming the fragments of the past into narrative representation. It is the very process that occurs through literary distortion and linguistic rhetoric which, as Woolf reminds us (1966-67), inevitably makes a significant input into the configuration of biographical art.

5.4.3 Unsaid translation status of auto/biographies

Like the aesthetic dimension in the reviews, the translation (process) of the auto/biographies is another aspect that is almost completely absent in the reviews, and that ought to have received much more attention. There are, however, very few exceptions made in passing when accolade given to the translator and translation of these auto/biographical writings, such as: ‘... Ma Jian’s prose in Flora Drew’s excellent translation is always elegant’ (*Daily Telegraph*, August 04 2001), and the translator of *Village of Stone* who ‘brings the salt air of the South China Sea into a teeming twenty-first –century metropolis’ (*Times Literary Supplement*, April, 23, 2004). The brief favourable descriptions attributed to the style of the

auto/biographies also bears out what Munday observes about the conflation of the writer's and translator's styles; Munday notes that 'for the reviewer, the style of the translation is the style of the writer' (1998: 140). The writer's styles in Chinese therefore, it can be argued, becomes the 'unsaid side' (Macherey, 2006) that is elided by neglecting its status as an important aspect of the translation. Raising the issue of translation and looking into the writer's Chinese original writing style in comparison to the English translation would have brought important points that are quite pertinent to the characteristics of the Chinese auto/biographies in both their original and translated versions. As a result of not touching upon these issues, the writer's stylistic features will not be fully recognised and properly appreciated in the West, and will live in the shadow of the English translation that often comes across as the 'original' language of the Chinese auto/biographies. Besides, without discussing the aesthetic dimension of the Chinese text, the status of Chinese auto/biography remains to be viewed merely as a vehicle of writing Chinese Communist experience, rather than recognised as instances of Chinese literary creativity.

For these reasons, the reviews of the translated books have been criticized for their lack of reflection and for their non-professionalism, the effect of which is only to underline the invisible and subversive position of the translators (Venuti, 1995) who build up 'the beauty of the bridges' between cultures (Christ, 1982: 21). In an attempt to improve the situation, Ronald Christ appealed to the translators to demand recognition from editors (1982). This recognition, for Christ, should consist of identification (making the translators' names visible in the reviews and any publicity activities), acknowledgement (making the translators' names visible in the body of the review where the evaluation of translations occurs), and appreciation (the substantial assessment of the translation on its own terms) (1982: 22). In relation to the three elements of recognition in the press reviews that I have examined, the translators' names have been identified in most of the reviews in this study, which confirms the claim that the element of identification has improved considerably in recently years (Johnson, 2006: 130). However, I would argue that identifying the status of the translated books and the translators is not sufficient enough to illuminate the role of the translation and the translators unless the intention of improving the remaining two elements has been made evident. The little improvement in substantial comments on the translation observed by Maier (1990) and Munday (1998) is confirmed in this study where the press reviews have not changed considerably with regard to discussing issues relevant to the translation itself, as far as reviewing Chinese auto/biographies is concerned. In contrast, Johnson argues that the

quality of reviewing, based on her case study of reviewing the translation of Pablo Neruda's *Canto General* in the US and the UK contexts, is appropriate and even commendable, considering 'the role of reviewers in cross-cultural transmission' and the activity of publicity (Johnson, 2006: 140). However, it should be noted that the role of the press reviews also influences the reader's perceptions of the text and the way the literary work is read, as she herself recognises (Johnson, 2006: 138-39). Without bringing this issue into consideration, it would be hard to make a convincing case that the 'appropriate' quality of the reviews is justified only by looking at the restricted task of the reviewers. Looking into the immediate and most readily noticeable function of the reviews will miss out the very influential role the reviews play in relation to the reading public. As Maier points out, this narrow approach to literary texts common in press reviews 'diminish[es] the "identity" of individual works or writers' (Maier, 1990: 19) and conceals the fact that the original text has to pass through the filter of the Anglo-American culture in the process of the translation (Munday, 1998: 142).

More importantly in the case of this study, these elisions with regard to the discussion of translational issues leave out the complicated translation process that might compromise the 'truth' value of the self and the 'authentic' voice of representing Communist China. Having gone through the target cultural selecting, editing and translating system, the reviews stage another filtering step through which the 'factuality' of the events narrated is represented as accurate and unquestionable. The absolute 'truth' in the representation of the Chinese contemporary culture and society through auto/biographies can be put into question only if the translation aspects in the reviews, as Maier suggests, are brought into discussion by incorporating translation theories into the reviewing practice to evaluate the English texts in parallel with the Chinese texts in terms of cultural issues that go beyond the comparison of linguistic equivalence (1990: 21). This way of reviewing would change the whole situation of the reviewing in which a bilingual critic is required to routinely do some research on 'the relationship between author and translator that has resulted in the book that the reader is reading' (Munday, 1998: 21). Under this serious securitization, translation will thus be stripped of its perceived transparent appearance to highlight its complexity, which, in turn, will shed light on the cultural and linguistic transformations that the Chinese original texts have to go through. This transformation will also show that the purported 'fact' and authenticity need to be re-defined from the perspective of the translation process.

Finally, this study brings into light another feature of the press reviews that clearly echoes Christ's point (1982) that the original texts and their writers are often compared with known writers in the target culture. The auto/biographies of Ma Jian, Hong Ying and Xinran are compared with *Wild Swans*. The way the comparison is made tends to frame *Wild Swans* as the standard way of writing and reading Chinese autobiography, which takes away the idiosyncratic character of individual writers and the literary value of their writings, gives little attention to the aesthetic aspects of their work, and forces their writing into the mould of writing the experience of Red China.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on my analysis of the reviews in terms of what is spoken and highlighted as well as unspoken and minimised, I would argue that the reviews manifest the predominant ideology and values that are prevalent in the British literary and cultural system with regard to Chinese culture and society. This is most manifest through the mode of representing and framing these Chinese auto/biographical writings as well as the historical and cultural circumstances against which the self-writings have taken place.

The discourse of writer's intentionality in producing their self-writings is constituted through the spoken sides, including the standpoints of (self-) writers and their inside and witness voices about historical incidents. The mode of representing the writers' intentionality in the press reviews also suggests a certain Eurocentric outlook underlying the constant contrasts made between the UK-based host position for the writers versus their past experience as culturally alienated (Hong Yong, Guo Xiaolu and Xinran, Wei Hui) and politically prosecuted (Ma Jian) in China. Their past personal experiences embedded in the historical incidents highlighted in the reviews also suggest that the disclosure of these documentary or documentary-like narratives about Communist China can take place only in a democratic environment such as the UK. Based on the premise of the westernized mind-set cultivated from their Western-influenced intellectual background (especially in the cases of Ma Jian, Xinran and Wei Hui), one the main aspects of the writers' autobiographical intention is said to consist of a great deal of scepticism towards and rebellion against the autocratic dictatorship of the Chinese Communist regime. The powerful and passionate insider witness voices of the writers through their personal journeys, involving struggle, defiance and rebellion, are seen as representative voices for various groups of deprived class (Hong Ying),

intellectuals (Ma Jian), oppressed Chinese women (Xinran) as well as the young generation in China (Wei Hui and Guo Xiaolu). These insider witness voices as well as the contents of what they say are seen as key factors that validate and guarantee the truth and authenticity of the representations of the historical incidents that the writers have selected to focus on.

Over-emphasis on the writers' current (self-)exile position and their past oppressions in China and the historical and political dimensions of the auto/biographies in the reviews disclose the unspoken, minimised and concealed sides of the auto/biographies that bring some ideological implications into the light. Stressing the spoken sides, firstly, overshadows the complex narration, construction and development of the autobiographical self. The documentary feature is presented as its defining feature, at the expense of the theme of the selfhood; secondly, it inevitably overshadows the aesthetic nature and creative process involved in these auto/biographical writings. This way of reading Chinese auto/biographies has completely reversed the central position of the self and the secondary position of the outer world. In the way the press reviews receive and frame the Chinese auto/biographies, there is a sense in which the Chinese auto/biography has lost its aesthetic and selfness value in the process, which has been displaced by the documentary property attached to it.

Autobiographical truth is thus evaluated from the perspective of providing historical 'veracity' which is taken as the criterion for assessing the Chinese auto/biography. By presenting the essence of auto/biography as documentary and historical without paying any attention to its aesthetic element and the status of translated works, these reviews also overlook the negotiation process where the truth and self are composed and filtered as what is represented as the 'truth' of Chinese auto/biography. This way of reviewing also frames Chinese auto/biography as a mere experience of writing Communist China. The author's intentionality is presented as mainly about providing accurate 'true facts' from the vantage point of the insider witness with an authentic voice that ascertains and corroborates historical facts. In this way, the writer's position is reduced to a function of cultural informant rather than a literary creator.

Chapter 6 Conclusion and Implications

6.1 Conclusion and Implications

I have examined the translations of six Chinese auto/biographical writings through several mediating spaces and social networks within the publishing and literary fields. This examination has shown that the literary agent and publishers exercise a great deal of influence on the selecting and translating of the genre of self-writing with the theme of writing 'Red China' into the UK literary field. The translation process involves the activation of multiple and overlapping *habitus* (in plural), all oriented towards the common objective of turning the translation process of the witness voices about Communist China into a very 'readable' and marketable product in the target book market. In the translation process, the literary agent exercises power in the practice of selecting STs for translation, and plays an influential role in the mediation of textual translation. The literary agent's *habitus* is constituted and informed by his professional knowledge and professional *habitus* that have formed as a result of his immersion in, and exposure to, the publishing and literary fields, their governing logics, their stakes and their struggles, all of which are conditioned by the demands of the British book market and the readership. The products of Chinese auto/biographical writings by the (self-)exile writers are accommodated and perceived as factual documentary-type outputs. The selection criteria, thus, have been shown to be less relevant to the literary and aesthetic dimensions that showcase the Chinese literary culture in general and the author's literary artistry in particular. It is rather determined by the economic and marketing factors underlying the dominant cultural and ideological attitudes in the target British culture towards Chinese self-writings which tend to be seen as factual eye-witness accounts contesting the Chinese official narrative of recent historical facts.

Besides, the selection process, with the power relations characteristic of the competitive and collaborative interactions and negotiations, is shown to be decisive in determining the way the ST is translated. These interactions and negotiations consequently shape and (re)construct the end product whose documentary properties overshadow its literary and aesthetic dimensions. The decisive power that the literary agent and publishers/editors exert is further displayed in the textual translation – i.e. the translating process – where they control the form and content of the end product by setting the criteria for the recruitment of translators and the monitoring of the translations; their editorial mediation acts to actualise the cultural and

normative factors that place constraints on the writing and translating activities. During the textual translation process, the authorial intentionality of the inward-looking writing of the self as well as the aesthetic and literary creativity are overlooked and compromised as a result of the multi-layered mediations informed by the overlapping *habitus* of the translators, the literary agent and the editors who act as mediators between the two languages and cultures. That is to say, the interactive and collaborative nature of the translating process inevitably lends a multi-voiced character to the generically problematic autobiographical truth which these translated Chinese self-writings lay a claim to. In the translating process, defining translation as re-writing is what underpins the literary agent's and the publishers' actions; translation as rewriting is legitimised as a common practice involving not only translators but also, most importantly, the literary agent and the editors through their acts of supervision and editing all through the translating process.

The translators' position and role in the translating process are shaped by the way they come to be commissioned to conduct the translations, as well as their mediating role primarily vis-à-vis the author and editors, and between the TS and TT texts. The translator's *habitus* is constituted through their experience of the power dynamics that impact on the translation in the real world of publishing. Through their embedded *habitus* they are able to know how to adjust and attune their actions, choices and strategies to the implicit and/or explicit norms bearing on the desired translation strategy (for instance to prioritise considerations about the target readers at the expense of the author's primary intentionality). The process of textual translation thus becomes an ongoing learning experience that reframes the formation of the translators' *habitus* through their immersion in 'the game' through which they get to know and acquire the operative rules and norms in the literary and publishing fields. They thus develop, for instance, their sensitivity to the British readership and a certain skill of re-writing in the light of the dynamic interaction and negotiation among the various agents involved within the field(s).

On another level, the editorial process epitomises the power exerted by the editors over the writers and translators. The editors' actions function as the final filter system whose impacts take the form of additions and omissions, re-organising and even re-writing (in co-operation with the authors) in the translated drafts. These actions and interventions into the translated text are justified as necessary and standard practice as long as they aim to enhance readability by the target readership. The editorial process serves not only as an evaluation of the translator's draft but also, most importantly from the point of the translator, as a mode of on-

the-job learning and a mode of professional development *in actu*, as it were, all of which combine to feed into the translator's intuitional translation *habitus*. At another level, these experiences feed into their translational capital – i.e. the competence and expertise, theoretical and practical, which enable them to be more successful and efficient translators. Having been assessed and evaluated by the commissioners who seek to represent the taste of a broad range of potential target audiences, the translators become aware of the power balance involved in the process of negotiations and constant editorial interventions, and in parallel they become cognizant of what is likely to be seen as acceptable and 'good' translation. As the translated work has to go through the literary agent's supervision and the filter system of the editing process to ensure the traces of foreignness are kept to a minimum in the translation, it follows that acculturation is generally the only translation strategy left available for translators.

In the translation process as well as the translating process, it is strikingly obvious that the translator's position is, as Venuti (1995) observes, all too often secondary and subordinate to the power – including ultimate decision-making power – held by the literary agent and publishers. However, in relation to the source texts and the (self-)exile writers, the translator is more likely to hold a considerable amount of power given the author's dependence on the translator as a cultural intermediary, and given the fact that the author is usually very keen to see their work published in the target context; these factors place the author in a relation of dependence towards the translator as the mediator vis-à-vis the target language and culture. The translators' role in this way acts as a safeguard in relation to Chinese authors and the Chinese STs to ensure that the Chinese STs are *faithfully* transferred into English target culture for English audiences with minimised Chinese-ness, as it were. This has significant implications for the (self-)exile authors' situation in the UK. Their feeling disorientated within the British publishing system and the way their work has been selected in the light of the demands of the readership make them aware that the literary conventions and values of the host country also act as restrictions, culturally if not politically as well, on what they should write and how they should write. Related to that, it should be noted that writing their auto/biographies in the UK for most of them (except for Xinran in this study) is not what they initially set out to do to demonstrate the aesthetic value of their writing and their artistic writing craftsmanship outside China. However, in an attempt to acquire recognition and various forms of capital to be obtained through the publication of their work in the UK, they are forced to adapt themselves to the various forms of publicity, promotional activities, and

media and newspaper viewing. This has made them gradually aware of the importance of what can be described as non-literary capital in the acquisition and accumulation of literary capital within the target literary field. Non-literary capital is used in this context mainly to refer to what Bourdieu would describe as social capital, the types of social, linguistic and interpersonal skills and assets that enable the authors to efficiently perform and manage the promotional activities. Social capital is proved to be vital to be possessed and integrated into the author's traits and assets in the British literary field. This has facilitated the very important role the Chinese authors are expected to play in the public eye, especially through publicity: the author is thus positioned as an eye-witness from China whose immediate presence helps strengthen the implicit claim to autobiographical truth, and lends to the notion of authorial intentionality a concrete recognisable 'feel' and 'face'.

It has been shown that all the social agents involved in the translation process are driven and motivated by their attempts to acquire and accumulate various forms of capital and the stakes within the publishing and literary fields. Aiming primarily at economic capital within the publishing field, the literary agent, for instance, has obtained multiple forms of capital – economic, social and symbolic – by virtue of his involvement in the translation processes of Chinese auto/biographical writings. The forms of capital acquired by the literary agent are to a great degree convertible into each other. Through their convertibility as well as their combinations, the literary agent's three types of capital social – economic, social and symbolic – constitute or a form of 'field-specific cultural capital', in Bourdieu's sense (1986), that the literary agent seeks to obtain as an essential trait and asset for cultivating, maintaining and enhancing the literary agent's credibility in handling and managing Chinese projects.

As for the translator's capital, it is acquired against the background of the invisibility of the translator's status and position in the translation process and across the fields where the translation process operates (i.e. the literary and publishing fields). The translation process as an ongoing learning process for the translators, furthermore, highlights the transformation of the translator's bilingual and bi-cultural knowledge into the translator's capital (or translational capital), which has been recognised and distributed according to the norms and criteria operating within networks of the translation process. In this way, writing in fluent English with no trace of translation is valued as an eminent feature of the translator's competence, a form of expertise capital that constitutes a key component of the translator's capital. That is to say, the invisibility of translation is taken as the natural consequence of

being a good translation; this norm seems to have become inculcated into the translator's internalised normative behaviour to the point where that is precisely what they can come to aim to achieve as the highest performance and as a manifestation of their valued translational capital. The authorised and legitimised invisibility of translation from outside of the translation field and the subordinate position of translators are, to a great extent, indicative of the power relations within which the translator is trained and positioned in such a way as to fit into the dominant literary conventions and normative expectations of the target culture. This has some significant implications for the translation of Chinese literature as a sub-field where a small number of powerless translators (from Chinese into English) operate in an unregulated environment that is not governed by some binding professional codes, as the translator of *Village of Stone* points out. The quote extracted from her interview clearly explains the translator's position in this sub-field and the current situation of the translation of Chinese literature:

This is a field that desperately needs more competition, but in a world where most translators (even the most competent literary translators) make between 20,000-40,000 USD a year, how can you expect to attract the talent you need? How can you find people who can write and are willing to spend 10, 15, 20 years of their lives perfecting their Chinese language skills to earn a salary less than a first year teacher in a British or American primary school? How can you find people willing to live and work and translate in China, when it is more lucrative and perhaps more professionally rewarding to teach Chinese literature at an overseas university?

The situation of the translation field has received some attention in translation studies (Wolf, 2006). Simeoni (1998) observes that translation has not yet been constituted as a translation field due to its exceedingly subservient and invisible position. It would be interesting to approach this issue by looking at the sub-field of the translation of Chinese literature and its logic and stakes operating within and between the field(s). This topic could constitute further research as a follow-up to the present research, exploring the way translators are trained in translating from Chinese into English, the role of translation organisations and institutions and their relevance to translational ethics. These issues could be discussed in relation to the Chinese literary works which have been and would be translated, and their impacts on the position of the translated literature at a global level.

Finally, the press reviewing of these auto/biographical writings has been examined and analysed to present the generic autobiographical issues of time and space in relation to the problematic autobiographical truth in these auto/biographical writings. It should be noted that

the press reviews do not question the truth-value of autobiographical accounts, and essentially frame these auto/biographies as first-hand eye-witness accounts of contemporary Chinese history contrasted to the official version of history. The reviews emphatically highlight the authors' past experience, embedded in some key historical and political incidents; the authors are represented as culturally alienated and politically persecuted within the Chinese context in the past; the reviews also emphasise their heroic and bold stand against the autocratic dictatorship of the Chinese Communist regime. In so doing, the reviews construct the writers' autobiographical intentionality through a discourse of authenticity and faithfulness attached to the narratives in these self-writings on Communist China. The authenticity is also represented in constructing the authors' voices as not only insider witness voices, but also as representative voices of various social and cultural groups that have suffered oppression under the Communist regime. By overemphasising the (self-)exile writers' cultural and ideological position and the oppression of the totalitarian regime, what is pushed to the background is the author's inner self that the authorial intention seeks to capture and render through the auto/biographical writing; it is evident that the complex process of the construction of autobiographical truth is thereby concealed; and the central theme of selfhood as well as the aesthetic nature and creative process involved in these auto/biographical writings are stripped away. Additionally, the minimised aspect of translation in the reviews also indicates that all the problematic issues that are interrelated with or in some way contributing to the construction of truth making are either overshadowed or minimised and missed. It can be concluded that reviewing Chinese auto/biographical writings in the UK by and large frames and foregrounds the documentary property as the dominant and defining feature of these auto/biographical writings. This suggests that the cultural representation of China, as a result of the translation process, is one where China features as another ideological pole standing in contrast to the UK which serves as a haven for the defence and protection of human rights, providing an international public space for writers to raise their authentic voices and speak for the oppressed in Communist China. In this way, translation can evidently function as an ideological tool, and can play a significant role in anticipating, (re)constructing and reshaping the (existing) representations of Contemporary Chinese culture and society.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

There are two limitations in this study need to be mentioned. First, as the investigation of the translation process is primarily focused on the contextual factors treated from a sociologically-orientated angle, and is based on the analysis of interview data, the limitation lies in the exclusion of textual analysis of ST and TT as complementary to the analysis of interview data. However, considering the circumstances within which the translation activity took place in connection with most of the cases in this study where translators used the authors' (unpublished) manuscripts as STs to translate (except for *Shanghai Baby*), the largely simultaneous ST and TT do not relate to each other in a conventional way. The translation interacted with the writing of the original, and in some ways influenced it. Thus, it is not plausible to compare ST and TT; and it is not possible to conduct a comparison between ST and TT based on published editions. The findings would become more significant if the translators' drafts had been obtained for the textual analysis to strength the interview analysis. However, unfortunately I was not able to obtain the translators' drafts; in response to my requests, all the translators indicated that the drafts had been lost.

Another fact that has set some limits on this case study is that the interviews were carried out in 2005 and 2006, that is to say, a few years after the textual translation had occurred. As a result some of the concrete details in the translation process were no longer fresh in my respondents' memories. Nonetheless, by and large my interviewees have given me very informative accounts about their experiences of the translation process of the six auto/biographical writings. In the analysis I found that the details that they found difficult to remember on occasions were not of substantial importance to what I was trying to find out about. In parallel, I have analysed the interview data comparatively by cross-examining the accounts of the interviewees who shared the same experience of working on the same work, and I was able to fill in the gaps through this comparison and cross-examination. So, combined and considered together, the interviews have yielded fairly detailed pictures of how the translation process unfolded in connection with each of the six Chinese auto/biographical writings.

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Appendix I: Interview Schedules

Opening:

Thank you very much for accepting to be interviewed, and to contribute to my research. Before we get started I'd like to remind you of my research project and give you an overview of my research.

My research is focusing on the selecting and translating of Chinese autobiographical writings into British culture as well as reviewing these translated Chinese autobiographical writings that appeared in British newspapers. The purpose of this research is to find out about the various factors, such as the cultural, social and circumstances, which shape the translation process and the form and content of the translated works. My research involves interviewing the people who have participated in the selecting and translating process. Interviewing you is very important to my research as it will allow me to look at the translation from the point of view of people like you who were directly involved in the various stages of the selecting, writing and translation process.

Could I ask your permission for me to tape the interview, bearing in mind that the taped interview will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purpose of this research and no one else apart from myself can actually have access to the interview data. And you are of course entitled to review the transcript of the interview and the analysis if you wish. And you could ask me to turn off the tape at any point during the interview.

Have you got any questions before we get started?

The Interview Schedule for the Literary Agent

- 1) Toby, you have a broad experience as an agent, and you are a very successful literary agent in the UK, could you tell me a little bit about what the role of the literary agent involves in the context of the British book market?
- 2) You have introduced a number of Chinese novels and autobiographies into the UK which proved to be popular and successful with the British readership; some of them have become bestsellers. Could you tell me a little bit about how you came to select these books?
- 3) In your experience, what do you see as important criteria in selecting a Chinese book to be introduced and translated? (Prompt: could you give me examples with regard to the books in my study: *Daughter of the River*, *Good women of China*, *Sky Burial*, *Red Dust*, *Shanghai Baby* and *Village of Stone*).
- 4) How do you assess the chances of success for the books that you consider worth selecting?
- 5) What kind of themes in Chinese books are likely to be popular with the British readership?
- 6) How do you go about making a case for a Chinese book project to publishers?
- 7) How do you collaborate with the publishers in promoting a book before it comes to the market?
- 8) What characteristics do you think a good translator should have?
- 9) In your speech entitled 'Publishing between China and the West' in Beijing in May 2004, you mentioned *Shanghai Baby* was initially rejected by all the big London publishers. Could you tell me the reasons for the rejection of this book?
- 10) How did you assess the potential of *Shanghai Baby*? Did you expect it to be such a success in the UK book market?
- 11) Again in your Beijing speech, you seemed to be in favour of the translation of *Red Dust*, and you expressed an unfavourable view of the translation of *Daughter of the River*. In your opinion, what makes a translation a good one?
- 12) Do you usually read the translators' draft and give comments on it or suggest any changes to the translators or authors?
- 13) Do you usually discuss exciting or potential problems with the author and translator? What are usually the central issues discussed?
- 14) The translation of *Sky Burial* was a bit unusual as it was done by two translators. How did that happen?

- 15) Are you planning to introduce more Chinese books into the UK in the near future?
- 16) Do you have any further thoughts or things you would like to say that I haven't covered?

The Interview Schedule for Editors

- 1) XXX could I start by asking you a little bit about your professional background? How did you get into editing?
- 2) Actually I noticed people usually pay attention to the writer of the literary work, the editor's role somehow has received little attention, could you please tell me a little bit about what a literary editor normally does in relation to books to be published?
- 3) I'd like to know what is in your view the most important quality of an editor? (prompt: What does the job consist of?)
- 4) What kind of criteria do you take into account in seeing a particular book as worth taking on and translating, editing and publishing?
- 5) How does the translator come to be chosen?
- 6) What was your assessment of the translation of XXX?
- 7) Could you tell me how many Chinese books have you edited and what genre or genres were they?
- 8) When you go about editing Chinese autobiography what aspects of editing do you think you have to pay extra attention to? And what were the most difficult aspects of editing the book XXX for instance?
- 9) What major changes have you made to make the English version smoother and readable?
- 10) Are there any general rules or guidelines you have taken into account when making those changes regarding what should be left out and what should be edited in?
- 11) You have worked closely with the translator and authors. Can you tell me a little bit about how you collaborated with them during the translating and editing of the book XXX?
- 12) If some disagreement arises about one aspect or another, in what way did you go about negotiating these disagreements with the authors and translators?
- 13) In your experience, what kind of factors constrain or determine the editing process of Chinese autobiographies? (prompt: marketing, theme, nature of language, style, timing or something else?).

- 14) Among the four books you've edited, which one do you think you are happy with the most. (this question is designed for Rebecca Carter, the editor of four autobiographical writings in this study)?
- 15) Do you have any further thoughts or things you would like say that I haven't covered?

The Interview Schedule for Translators

- 1) The success of the book – *XXX* – certainly owes a great deal to your translation. Could you tell me a little bit about your background and how you took up this translation this novel in the first place?
- 2) Based on your experience, what does it take to produce a good translation and what does it take to be a good translator?
- 3) When you were translating *XXX*, what factors were you expected to take into account and adjust the translation to?
- 4) Had you had any experience of translating literary works (Chinese-English) before you translated *XXX*, and how do you think your previous experience of translation or your knowledge about China helped and informed your translation of this book?
- 5) As the translator of *XXX*, what did you think was more important for you: the potential readers or the source text? And why?
- 6) What aspects of the translation of *XXX* do you think are most difficult to deal with? Could you give me examples? How did you deal with these difficulties?
- 7) When I first read *Shanghai Baby/Village of Stone*, it read like an autobiography or semi-autobiography. What was your first impression when you first read it? (this question is designed for the translators of *Shanghai Baby* and *Village of Stone*)
- 8) When you translated it, did you translate it as a novel or did you somehow lean towards the genre of an autobiography? (Did this awareness influence the way you translated it?)
- 9) You would have worked closely with the author and the editor. Could you tell me a little bit about how you cooperated with them during the process of translating *Shanghai Baby/Village of Stone*?
- 10) Were there any aspects of your translation of *XXX* that now you are not quite happy and satisfied with, which you would want to do differently?
- 11) Do you have any further thoughts or things you would like say that I haven't covered?

The Interview Schedule for Authors

- 1) Your book XXX has attracted lot of attention from British readers and the literary press, could you tell me a little bit about what initially made you think of writing this book?
- 2) What kinds of audiences did you have in mind while writing your book?
- 3) What in your view is most difficult for a Western reader to understand about your book?
- 4) The English version of your book came out before the Chinese version, which seems quite unusual to me, how did that happen? (this question is designed for four authors, with Wei Hui as the exception)
- 5) At the time of writing, did you expect or know that your work would be translated into English? Did that affect you writing in any way?
- 6) What in your view is most difficult about translating your book into English?
- 7) What kinds of issues did you discuss with your translator, especially with regard to major changes, if there were any?
- 8) Have any changes been made by your editor? If this was the case, have you been consulted about these changes? And what were your views in that regard?
- 9) In what way did these changes affect the content of your book?
- 10) Did you expect that your book would receive so much popularity in the UK?
- 11) Do you have any further thoughts or things you would like to say that I haven't covered?

Appendix II: Interview Transcriptions

Email Interview with Bruce Humes

MENG Pei (M): The success of the poetical novel—*Shanghai Baby*—certainly owes a great deal to your translation. Could you tell me something about yourself and how you came to translate this novel in the first place?

Bruce Humes (B): my background, please see the interview cited below:

(http://web.mac.com/katchoolik/katchoolik/Interviews/Entries/2007/8/7_Interview_31%3ABruce_Humes.html)

I spent a good year-and-a-half winning the contract to translate *Shanghai Baby* into English. It all began during a brief stop-over in Shanghai during January 2000, at the beginning (or the tail-end?) of my “road show” when I lectured to hundreds of exporters in ten Chinese cities in just thirteen days on the topic of how importers in the West were beginning to use the Internet to locate Chinese exporters. I wandered into Jifeng Bookstore at the entrance to the Shaanxi Lu subway station, and picked up a novel featuring the face of Wei Hui, *Shanghai Baby*’s author. A few days later I had finished the novel and made a big decision—I would translate this book into English!

My motivations: First I had spent the 1980s and 1990s perfecting my Chinese, and using it to bring international management and purchasing know-how to a Chinese audience via highly targeted, B2B Chinese-language magazines. Now, I was very keen to use my knowledge of China and the language to help foreigners better understand what was *really* happening in China. Secondly I felt a natural affinity for the book which, after all, was written during and about the late 1990s in Shanghai, when I was living in the city and experienced first-hand the interaction between male ex-pats and young, eligible, well-educated and attractive Shanghainese women with a predilection for *Things Foreign*. Thirdly, as an undergraduate in anthropology, I had long hoped for a chance to play a role in cultural exchange, rather than profit-oriented business publishing per se. And finally unlike so much of Chinese fiction then, I found Wei Hui’s style delightfully uncluttered, and her story frankly sexual, even occasionally sensual, and “genuine” in its own way—something a Western reader would find a bit surprising, given the stilted stereotypes one is constantly fed via mainstream media in the West. Feeling inspired by the thought of playing such a role, I located Wei Hui’s e-mail address, and offered to translate the book. Her reply was curt: Thanks, but no need. Not too long thereafter, *Shanghai Baby* was banned in China, and a shameless Wei Hui soon got back to me. Would I still be interested? She offered no excuses for her earlier refusal. Over the next few months I did take on this project, helping her to choose an agent (Joanne Wang) and then providing Joanne with the nuts and bolts of a marketing package: A translated excerpt from the novel, an essay I wrote entitled “*The Shanghai Baby Phenomenon*,” a chapter-by-chapter synopsis of the book, and a translation of a book review recommended to me by Joanne which compared *Shanghai Baby* favorably to another Shanghai product, *Candy*, by Mian Mian. I assume my choice of the particular chapter I translated was important in itself. I selected a chapter I felt sure to titillate foreign publishers—the one in which Coco first passionately kisses a foreign woman, and then later in the evening goes off with her German sex-machine Mark for a round of more conventional, heterosexual sex. This, plus “*The Shanghai Baby Phenomenon*” which positioned the author as a rebel and her (banned) book

as indicative of a trend toward more open sexuality in the ostensibly “prudish” People’s Republic, all helped to sell this “semi-autobiographical” work and its author to publishers in the West.

M: Based on your experience, what does it take to produce a good translation and what does it take to be a good translator?

B: First of all, let’s get our terms straight here: A “good” translator of commercial or technical documents is not necessarily a good literary translator. Below, I restrict my comments to literary translators. First and foremost, a good literary translator is highly capable of “experiencing” the world created by the author. This implies that the translator is very fluent in the language of the original, and possesses a strong sense of imagination. After all, if the reader cannot transform the author’s words into palpable images and feelings, the reading will be a relatively sterile experience. It should be noted that many Chinese strongly question—even flatly deny—the ability of native English speakers to truly “comprehend” a Chinese original. I find this attitude a bit arrogant because it assumes that the Chinese language is so profound that it cannot be mastered by those of other races, but more importantly, this attitude *overemphasizes* passive literacy and *underemphasizes* the active role of the translator’s imagination. Secondly, a good literary translator needs to be an excellent writer in the target language. This is so crucial that I would say that it is virtually a requirement that the target language be the mother language of the translator. This is a key difference between commercial/technical translators and literary translators: Among the former, those translating into their second language can nonetheless be very good because such translations emphasize logical expression and accuracy. Literary translators writing in their second language, however, will inevitably fall short because acquired fluency simply is not enough; the reader of fiction wants a highly stimulating experience which requires a mastery of “fuzzy” factors such as style, rhythm and wit.

Thirdly, a good literary translator must have the ability to do more than translate words and ideas accurately. S/he must be able to write with enough power and imagination to create a new world which, while highly evocative of the original, makes up for what is lost in translation. Just how this is done is a very subtle thing, and probably sub-consciously! But the good translator’s new rendition will tend to somehow “add value”; perhaps through use of a catchy metaphor, alliteration or by consciously creating a stronger sense of rhythm in the translated copy than that of the original. What makes a literary translation “good”? This is a very relative thing and depends largely on the audience’s expectations, standards and reception of the work! But there are many things a literary translator can and should do to make a “good” translation: Research the period in question, interact with the author if alive, set the draft translation aside and polish at a later time when it will appear “fresh” again, etc. Based on my own experience, there is one thing I would say is absolutely essential to producing a good literary translation: Ensuring that it is a group effort, not a solo affair. Writers in general—and translators are writers—tend to be rather egotistical types who believe, deep down, that one’s own writing reads better than the edited version. Such an attitude leads to quite a bit of the rubbish on the market today, and is one of the reasons that many readers just don’t “like” translated works.

Ideally, a literary translation involves several people as follows:

- 1 translator: Produces draft translation, and proofs work done by the proofreader, copy polisher and original writer *before* the finished translation goes to the editor. The translator decides which changes are to be incorporated. This ensures that the final translation is largely free of both translation errors and stilted “translationese,” yet

retains a consistent writing style despite having been corrected/polished by 3-4 people.

- 1 proofreader: Bilingual, but mother language is that of the original. Checks for obvious misinterpretations of the original.
- 1 copy polisher: Bilingual, but mother language is that of the target language. Performs light edit on the translation to ensure “translationese” is deleted.
- 1 original writer (optional): If the author knows the target language well, input on the translated copy should be welcomed.
- 1 editor: Mother language must be the target language. Since translation errors have been largely eliminated, the editor can focus on making the copy highly readable to the target audience.

This involves 5 people and no doubt seems unduly complex and costly. However, “*Shanghai Baby*” was done pretty much according to this scenario, except that I didn’t show the copy to the authoress because (at that time) her English was simply not up to it. Not a few readers have noted that the English copy almost seems a “better read” than the original. This is not surprising, because the Chinese version was edited by just one person who was quoted in an interview to the effect that her main concern was getting the book’s racy content past the censors; she spent little time doing what is considered real “editing” in the West.

M: When you were translating *Shanghai Baby*, what factors were you expected to take into account and adjust the translation to?

B: My contract with the publisher stated something to the effect that I was to treat the published Chinese novel as the original. I was not given any other instructions in the contract except to avoid adding or deleting content. Small matters did crop up. For instance, a handful of sentences in the sex scenes were not totally understandable or a bit strange. When I asked Wei Hui what they meant, she explained that some contained words like “penis” or “prick,” that had been cut, and one or more sentences rewritten by the editor. In a few instances, she insisted that I translate her original copy instead of the published version; I refused. Instead, I added footnotes to the text, offering a further translation of the updated text sent to me by Wei Hui. In effect, this gave the final editor the option of using or rejecting the author’s original, unedited copy.

M: You have a great deal of experience in translation field (Chinese-English) before you translated *Shanghai Baby*, and I’d like to know how you think your previous experience of translation and your knowledge about China helped and informed your translation of this book?

B: I am not sure that either my time in China (over two decades) or my previous translation experience were actually all that helpful in translating “*Shanghai Baby*.” The novel is set in Shanghai in the late 1990s, and I had lived there precisely at that time. That was certainly a major plus. I had been to almost all the venues mentioned in the book, so I could easily imagine the ambience. But that aside, the book has precious little to do with “China” per se. I would assume that a similar love triangle—Western sex-machine + hot local female + her affectionate but impotent local lover—could just as well have been set in Hong Kong, Ho Chi

Minh City, Kuala Lumpur or another Asian metropolis with a colonial history. Translation-wise, my considerable experience had previously been in semi-technical, commercial and legal translation, though much of the finished product was intended for business magazine readers. This background gave me a very solid grounding in modern Chinese, but also made me prone to emphasize accuracy over readability and literary style.

M: As the translator of *Shanghai Baby*, what did you think was more important for you: the potential readers or the source text?

B: Remaining faithful to the text was my only consideration. It seemed to me then—and now—that it is not normally the translator’s place to consciously add, delete or “package” copy based on the needs or preferences of the target readership. In publishing, however, most editors/publishers do actively shape text to make it more marketable to the target reader. This is acceptable only if the author has legally relinquished those rights to the publisher.

M: What aspects of the translation of *Shanghai Baby* do you think is most difficult to deal with? Could you give me examples? How did you deal with these difficulties?

B: There were perhaps five key difficulties: An initial fear that I might mistranslate due to misinterpretation; avoiding “translationese;” recreating the dialogue; handling the occasional Chinese term that just didn’t have an English equivalent; and translating the famous quotes/lyrics that begin each chapter. At the outset I wanted to be absolutely sure that my translation was based on a full understanding of the text. To do so, I hired a Fujian-based translator via the web and sent him much of the initial copy. He was very thorough but found very few mistakes indicating that my reading of the text was flawed. It turned out that if there was a problem, it was that my English—choice of vocabulary, sentence structure—were heavily influenced by the Chinese original. To the point of reading like “Chinglish” at times! A related problem was my stilted translation of dialogue. To me, the novel’s dialogue seemed to be almost imitating Hollywood movie scripts and US TV shows, and thus both trendy and superficial. My problem: I haven’t owned a TV since my teens and hardly ever watch Hollywood movies from start to finish. Much of the conversation was bedroom banter, and my love life has taken place in Chinese since 1978, so I was poorly placed to “recreate” this sort of talk in English. In a word, I was unsure what a New York twenty-something would say as she achieved orgasm. Yet I needed to know what she would say in order to recreate the sort of atmosphere that Wei Hue achieved in some of her sex scenes in “Shanghai Baby.” The answer to both of these problems, i.e., the tendency for my writing to read like translated copy and for my translations of conversations to sound passé and flat, was found in a husband-and-wife duo I located via the Internet. She was Shanghai-raised Chinese doing an MA in interpretation, and he was an American with good Chinese who had lived a few years in China. All three of us were living in California at the time. They worked together to catch my occasional mistranslation, but more importantly, his youth and relative distance from the Chinese (and sharper ear for English) meant that his polishing of my writing improved it immensely. It read more fluently, less like a translation, and he was particularly good at making the conversations sound more contemporary and natural. Her background as an interpreter, not a translator of the written word, also helped them to reduce my sometimes-scholarly tone and replace it with something more “spoken.” Compared to many Chinese writers, Wei Hue writes in a style, which is very straightforward and modern. One finds relatively few classical idioms, which can be a nightmare to render in English. But there were terms, like *ling lei* and *shili yang hang*, which I was unsure how to translate. In the end, I purposely kept some of them in English because I gradually became aware that judicious

choices of a word or two here and there—left in pinyin—gave the book more of a “China” feel. All of the quotes and lyrics, which open the 32 chapters, were in Chinese, but they had been expressed originally in English by well-known personalities. It was difficult enough to find the original words on the Internet, but when I did I discovered that some time before Wei Hui had found and cited them, some of the quotes had been mistranslated or heavily edited. Thus the question: Should I translate them as they appeared in her book, or should I “correct” them and use the actual words/lyrics of Salvador Dali, etc.? I posed this question to the editor, and her question was unequivocal: Find the originals and use them. Easier said than done! Ironically, I was so good at doing this research—I believe I found almost all the 50+ original citations—that I was regarded as an “expert” in this by Wei Hui. She referred her Italian, Japanese and French translators to me for these original citations, and told them to put their questions about her text on me first; she would answer them only if I couldn’t! And ask me they did! I must have answered 30+ questions from the Japanese translator alone, many referring to Chinese words with their roots in English slang, etc. I understood them easily, but the European and Japanese didn’t and couldn’t find them in a dictionary.

M: When I first read *Shanghai Baby*, it reads like a (semi) autobiography. What was your first impression when you first read it?

B: I assumed that it was semi-autobiographical, but never asked the authoress if this was the case. It frankly doesn’t interest me one way or the other. However, over the years I’ve encountered many Chinese readers of the original novel and solicited their opinion before revealing my own role. Upon learning that I was the translator, many male Chinese readers eagerly ask me: “Is it true she had sex with foreigners?” This shows that many readers of the novel here in China are fascinated by the possibility that it is semi- or totally autobiographical, or simply can’t believe that it could be based on the writer’s imagination.

M: When you translated it, did you translate it as a novel or did you somehow lean towards the genre of an autobiography? (Did this awareness influence the way you translated it?)

B: It never occurred to me to treat it as an autobiography. I read it as a piece of fiction based loosely on a city I lived in during the late 1990s. Many popular night-spots appear with their real names, for instance, for instance. One reason I didn’t experience it as an autobiography is that several of the characters are superficial to the point of being cartoonish. The figure of Mark is a great example of using a popular stereotype—the virile German sex-machine—to poke fun at both arrogant, oversexed ex-pats and less virile Chinese men.

M: I suppose you would have worked closely with the author and the editor. Could you tell me a little bit about how you had cooperated with them during the process of translating *Shanghai Baby*?

B: As for the editor, I did a fair amount of research about some of the venues mentioned in the book, and enthusiastically wrote footnotes about them including URLs of pictures, etc., so she could see for herself. I explained the literal meanings of the names of the characters, and why I chose a particular translation. But in the end, I never heard once from the editor, and when I asked who did the edit, the publisher refused on the grounds of confidentiality. I was very disappointed by this lack of communication. But it says a lot about how publishers in the West perceive of the books they buy as a commodity; to them, I was just a worker on the assembly line. Working with Wei Hui was simple: I was in the US, she in Shanghai, and I sent some 70+ e-mails, all of which she answered. But she had her principles: She would clarify the meaning of any Chinese phrase I did not understand, but she refused to “interpret”

the original text for me. That is, she refused to say what she “meant” by X, Y or Z phrase. I remember one amusing episode when I asked her whether Nikki—while making love in a disco loo—had sat down on her German lover’s lap *facing* him, or with her back to him. It was important for me to “see” the scene in order to fully experience and then recreate it in English. Her answer barely concealed her disdain for my lack of imagination: “Facing him, silly!”, or something to that effect. She never asked to see my translation, perhaps because at that time her English was pretty basic. But I had the feeling that her attitude was something like this: She had “conceived” the baby (her work of art), and now it was up to someone else (me, and perhaps her readers) to “raise” it. I liked this attitude, as it gave me lots of space to do my job in a fairly creative way too.

M: Were there any aspects of your translation of *Shanghai Baby* that now you are not quite happy and satisfied with, which you would want to do differently?

B: To some extent, yes. I tried many approaches to the translation and opted for doing my research (dictionary checking, etc) *before* writing my draft translation. Today, I feel more confident that I can capture the gist of the original without looking up words in a Chinese-to-English dictionary first, and I would now favor going straight from my reading of the text to translating it. Of course, I would then later have used various tools—the internet, published dictionaries, etc.—to check for accuracy and synonyms. By using the dictionary extensively *at the outset*, when I actually sat down to write I was subtly influenced by what I then believed were “correct” language and definitions. Looking back on this practice now, I feel that way of doing things added to the likelihood of writing a more stilted English, because most such dictionaries are full of awkward phrasing or definitions that simply “don’t work” in the context of a given sentence. This is particularly true of many Chinese-to-English dictionaries published in China, where native English speakers seem to play a small role (if any!) in their compilation.

M: Do you have any further thoughts or things you would like say that I haven’t covered?

B: No!

Email Interview with Cindy Carter

MENG Pei (M): The success of the poetical novel – *Village of Stone* – certainly owes a great deal to your translation, could you tell me how you came to translate this novel in the first place?

Cindy Carter (C): I had already been working in translation for some time when I met Xiaolu through an editor friend. Most of my work before then had been in feature film, documentary and art criticism, although I had been translating Chinese fiction, poetry and lyrics for some time, just for fun. Xiaolu told me that she was going to England and wanted to shop around the novel, so I translated a few chapters of *Village of Stone* before she left Beijing. From what I understand, she sent two translated chapters and the full Chinese manuscript to the London-based literary agent Toby Eady, who would later become Xiaolu's agent, and he sold the novel to Random House and commissioned the translation on the basis of those. I think the first chapters we translated were done in summer of 2002. When the proper book translation started, I was able to go back and revise those early chapters. Although they were done somewhat hastily during that summer, I was surprised, in hindsight, to see how well they read...they really set the tone for the rest of the book.

M: Based on your experience, what does it take to produce a good translation? (timing, circumstances, cooperation)

C: I think quality translation is a function of time. The more time a translator spends with a text, the better the translation will be. It isn't necessarily how many hours a day one spends at the computer, thwacking away at the actual translation...it's the freedom to read and reread certain passages in the original Chinese and in English translation, to mull over one's translation choices, to question those choices and to keep searching for better options. I spent about 6 months working on the *Village of Stone* translation – about a month and a half in the fall of 2002 and then, after a major revision to the Chinese text, another four and a half months in winter and spring of 2003. During that time, I was constantly returning to passages I had translated, trying to rework them into something better, editing as I went along. The translation could probably have been completed in 4 months (I'm not very fast, as translators go, but this would have been a reasonable deadline), but I feel the additional time was essential to making it a more polished work. A productive artistic relationship with the author is also essential. Although I consider Xiaolu a good friend, I don't think translator and writer need necessarily be friends – sometimes a slightly adversarial relationship can be equally fruitful. The main thing is that the author be patient, involved and willing to answer questions about his or her intentions. I try not to bother authors, screenwriters and directors too much when I'm doing a translation – I know they're busy people, always working toward the next project, so I don't pester them with grammar or other minutiae. But there are certain points in the text that only the author can clarify, points that can be easily misinterpreted by even the most literate and perceptive Chinese reader. In these cases, I go directly to the author and consider his or her word to be my final authority. Agents, publishers and editors who understand the text and the author can also make the translator's job a great deal easier. I was very fortunate to work with the literary agent Toby Eady, who understands the value of

quality translation and was very patient about the whole process, and Rebecca Carter, our editor at Random House, who was supportive, inquisitive, tireless and – in the end, when we needed it most – decisive.

M: And what does it take to be a good translator? What attributes and characteristics a good translator should have?

C: Patience, because translation can be a long and gruelling process. Good research skills, because a literary translator is, almost by definition, a generalist who will at some point be called upon to translate very technical or abstruse material that requires research, confirmation and consultation with experts in various fields. A passion for the literature of the language you translate (in my case, Chinese), because it is impossible to translate an author unless you understand how that author compares with contemporaries in his or her field. A certain facility with the target language (in my case, English), and a broad knowledge of the literature, past and present, in that language. Modesty. The worst mistake a translator can make is to try to transform every author into some version of him or herself. Always, always you should be searching for that voice that makes your author unique – a voice that is different from other authors and different from yourself.

M: When you were translating *Village of Stone*, what factors were you expected to take into account and adjust the translation to?

C: I didn't really feel any pressure to adjust the translation in any way. In hindsight, if I were a more worldly and experienced translator, I might have felt a greater pressure. Fortunately, this was my first outing and I approached it in a very naïve manner. It is a manner I hope to maintain, or at least maintain some memory of, for the rest of my career.

M: When I first read *Village of Stone*, it reads like a (semi) autobiography. What was your first impression when you first read it?

C: Because the novel is written in the first person, it does have a strong autobiographical flavour. Having said that, many Chinese authors of Xiaolu's generation tend to write in the first person, so I always take this format with a grain of salt. As long as the writer is telling me a story I enjoy, in a style that is unique from other authors, I don't care whether he or she actually lived it.

M: When you translated it, did you translate it as a novel or did you somehow lean towards the genre of an autobiography? (Did this awareness influence the way you translated it?)

C: Not at all. Although many journalists and commentators have focused on this point, I never gave much thought as to whether the novel was autobiographical or not. I approached it simply as a novel. Whether the content was 100% autobiographical or 100% fabricated (and obviously the truth lies somewhere in between) I don't think it would have made much difference to my translation. Along the way, I did ask Xiaolu some questions (just to satisfy my personal curiosity), but interestingly enough, they had very little bearing on the actual work of translation.

M: As the translator of this novel, what did you think was more important for you: the potential readers or the source text?

C: Source text, absolutely. I didn't even begin to consider the readership until we began the editing process and our editor pointed out some passages that might be confusing for foreign readers unfamiliar with China. The most important thing for me, as a translator, was to communicate the story, the author's voice, the voices of the characters and the author's intentions as clearly, faithfully and elegantly as possible- though I did think a great deal about how to craft a translation that wouldn't read like a translation, a text that wouldn't sound too Chinglish or exoticized, but at the same time, wouldn't come off as too westernised. It was a balancing act, but one in which I wasn't thinking too much about the readers, per se. My main focus was to imagine how Guo Xiaolu, as a Chinese writer with her specific background, would read and sound if she were writing this book in English.

M: What kinds of audience did you have in mind when you were translating *Village of Stone*?

C: An audience like me, I suppose. People who like to read literature in translation but don't want the translation to be faithful to the point of clunkiness; people who want to understand the workings of the author's mind but don't really want to see the backstage manoeuvrings, the shadows moving behind the scrim. One point we were all in agreement on was that *Village of Stone* should read like a novel, not as an academic primer or as a lesson in how to translate Chinese into English. For this reason, there are no footnotes in the book, and any needed explication takes place within the text. Certainly, there are some Chinese works in translation that require footnotes and other extra-textual explanation, but this was not one of them.

M: I suppose you would have worked closely with the author and the editor. Could you tell me a little bit about how you had cooperated with them during the process of translating *Village of Stone*?

C: I think I've more or less answered this question in other sections, so don't want to repeat myself. Rebecca Carter made the larger editorial decisions about storyline and plot structure; I confined myself to line by line criticism; Xiaolu contributed a great deal by being willing to revisit her work and make changes where she felt they were needed. It was a very smooth collaboration.

M: What aspects of the translation of *Village of Stone* do you think is most difficult to deal with? Could you give me examples? How did you deal with these difficulties?

C: Generally speaking, *Village of Stone* was not a difficult translation. The passages set in Beijing are written in the standard Chinese vernacular; the portions set in the Village of Stone involve some dialect, but not much. There are no quotes or literary references from other works, as far as I remember. *Village of Stone* is, more or less, a self-contained world; it stands on its own. Probably the greatest difficulty we encountered was that this was my first literary translation, and Xiaolu's first translation collaboration. It was a learning experience for both of us. There were a few sticky points. The first was how to deal with names. We didn't want

too much romanization, because the romanized versions of Chinese personal or place names communicate nothing to the western reader. For that reason, Xiaolu and I agreed that “Shanhong”, the protagonist, would be Coral, her boyfriend “Zhuzi” would be “Red”, her hometown “Shitouzhen” would be “Village of Stone”, etc. Many of the character and place names have been Anglicized for ease of reading, but the English translations are as close as possible to the Chinese meanings. In certain instances (and often, in disagreement with other translators) I have avoided what I consider an overly exotic translation of names and forms of address. For example, although in the Chinese text Coral’s teacher is addressed as “Teacher Mou”, this sounded artificial to me in the English translation. After we had established that “Mr. Mou” was Coral’s teacher, I simply called him “Mr. Mou”. We also had a few tiffs with other translators and readers about some of the translation choices. My favourite anecdote from the book is about the translation of the “sea pricks”. These are marine organisms that cling to reef rocks and apparently (although I have yet to see them in person) look a great deal like the head of a penis. They are roundish and, when squeezed, emit a yellowish fluid. The Chinese term is “hailuan” - sea ovum, sea ovary, sea egg, etc. I remember asking Xiaolu point-blank what they looked like, and she said “penis head” with absolutely no hesitation, but two other translators insisted that, based on the Chinese characters, “sea ball” would be the better translation. I went back to Xiaolu and she was certain that the translation should be as crude as possible, given the context. We played around with “sea cock”, “cockles” and some other translations I won’t mention, but in the end, “sea prick” seemed to be the most faithful – and fortunately, the most piquant – choice. About a month later, I chanced upon a passage from “Six Chapters of a Floating Life” (浮生六记) that lent some credibility to the decision:

“I was a naughty boy, and once my ball (for we call the genital organ a “ball” in Soochow) was bitten by an earthworm and became swollen...”

Although the translation was “ball”, it seems clear in context that the translation calls for something cruder and more direct. So “sea pricks” it was...!

M: Reading *Village of Stone*, I have noticed that a number of changes have been made to the English version. I’d like to ask you about the process whereby these changes were made? How were these changes negotiated between yourself, the author of the original and the editor?

C: The key here is that the Chinese version of the novel – the version published on the mainland – is VERY different from the Chinese manuscript on which I based the translation. The Chinese version, published after the English translation, was quite different from what we used. The Chinese version of the novel, if I understand correctly, is the manuscript that Xiaolu sent to several publishers before the English version came out. She didn’t have a great deal of luck with Chinese publishers at first because, although they agreed the novel was well-written, they were looking for something sexier, more urban, more contemporaneous and more marketable than a novel about life in a fishing village. The momentum from the overseas publication helped to get this novel published in China. But by that time, Xiaolu had had the opportunity to look over her original manuscript and make some changes that she had

wanted to make for some time. Those changes, the revisions in Dec 2002 and May 2003 and some editing decisions (deleting the story of two neighbours who were not essential to the main storyline) resulted in a very different English version. I would estimate that about 90% of the changes were initiated by Xiaolu herself, and the other 10% were based on the suggestions of our editor.

M: To what extent were you consulted on the major changes that the editor decided to make?

C: Rebecca has a great deal of experience in literature in translation, but because she does not read Chinese, she was very careful to consult with us about any changes she made. Her most important editorial change was the decision to delete a tertiary storyline about two neighbours. This strengthened the novel, and it was a decision I could never have made as a translator...my job is to communicate the original intent of the author, so major editorial decisions are, as they should be, out of my purview.

M: Were there any aspects of your translation of *Village of Stone* that now you are not quite happy and satisfied with, which you would want to do differently?

C: There aren't too many things I would change. Verb tense was an issue in some passages...looking back, I might change some of the subjunctives to something more visceral and immediate, but still, the subjunctive remains closer to the Chinese text.

M: Are you planning to translate more Chinese books in the near future?

C: I have worked with Wei Hui and Jiang Rong on early translations on their novels, and hope to do more literary translation in the future. Yan Lianke, Zhu Wen and Li Er are the three novelists I feel most passionately about these days. All are extraordinarily talented; none have been translated extensively enough, or competently enough. This is the sort of thing translators don't generally talk about...you keep your favourite authors a trade secret until the books get published, lest others find out and hone in on your author. But at this point, I think that's bullshit. The biggest worry for me, as a Chinese to English translator, is that there simply aren't enough talented people in the game. We have a few well-established C-E translators who are nearing the end of their most productive years (or are, at the very least, focusing on their long-running labours of love), and yet we have very few experienced translators ready to step in and continue in their tradition. This is a field that desperately needs more competition, but in a world where most translators (even the most competent literary translators) make between 20,000-40,000 USD a year, how can you expect to attract the talent you need? How can you find people who can write and are willing to spend 10, 15, 20 years of their life perfecting their Chinese language skills to earn a salary less than a first year teacher in a British or American primary school? How can you find people willing to live and work and translate in China, when it is more lucrative and perhaps more professionally rewarding to teach Chinese literature at an overseas university? And yet, C-E translation is more vital than ever. You can say things in Chinese fiction that you simply can't say in Chinese film, television or non-fiction, and overseas readers deserve to know this. Fiction is the one area in which a mainland Chinese writer can begin – at this particular point in history – to write something even approaching the truth.

M: Do you have any further thoughts or things you would like say that I haven't covered?

C: No, other than that people need to read more Wang Shuo, Mo Yan, Zhu Yan, Yan Lianke and Li Er in Chinese and in translation, where available. These are authors who deserve to be ranked among the best in international fiction, and yet have not been sufficiently recognized. I hope that ten years from now, each of these authors will still be writing, producing and saying what they have to say...because no one says it quite the same. They are the future history of Chinese literature, as it is being written now.

Interview with Esther Tyldesley

MENG Pei (M): The popularity of *The Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial* certainly owes a great deal to your translation, could you tell me how you got the task of translating these two books in the first place?

Esther Tyldesley (E): I was looking for the job, I've just returned from China. And translating fiction or literature of any kind was one of my long term and ambitious that you never seriously believe that you are going to fulfil. And I was actually looking for work of any kind but I was passed along chain of the people who might meet someone who work for them and ended up in Toby Eady's office. I don't think he was very impressed by my performance, but he needed someone for his book so he suggested that I at least had a chat with Xinran. He's seen my CV, you know I lived in China. And by that time ... I assumed that I hadn't really got a hope that I would actually get the book. So I was missing China very much. Here is someone who preferred to talk about it ... and the Wild Swans aspect of China. I had a lovely time, we just talked, talked and talked about four hours and then a few days later I got a phonecall saying 'would you like to do some sample chapters' and I thought 'yes, sure, that would be very interesting' and I worked very hard to get them together. There were actually the first chapter of Xinran's book and 'the scavenger lady'. And anyway they thought it was satisfactory and I got the job. So it wasn't a deliberate attempt on my part to become a translator as such; just opportunity was there.

M: Certainly it was your Chinese that got you the job.

E: Certainly. I am fairly convincing in Chinese, not like a native speaker, but a foreigner. So I had seen things that most students haven't, just because where I lived.

M: After the first book and the second book she would ask you to do *Sky Burial*.

E: Xinran was keen that I do that. Sometimes I suspect that Toby may have not had that idea, but he had asked Julia Lovelle about that.

M: I want to ask, Esther, based on your experience in your view, what does it take to produce a good translation?

E: A lot of time. In a way it's easy to list quite boring things: first, the motivation to just check the damn thing, and check it, check it and check it and keep going over things and keep playing about with the different sequences of words and the different words, and you know experimenting and that's very important and you also have to have a clear idea in your mind about what the source text is actually trying to say. If you don't have a clear picture of what the source text is saying, then you might produce a very good translated text but it sounds unlike it because your thoughts about it and your brain would be disjointed ...

M: Apart from that, how about co-operation with people who were involved in the translation process.

E: Well, I was very lucky to have a co-operation with Xinran. Because Xinran always made time for me, talked a long time, any question however stupid, even when I asked twice before, she answered again. She was one of these lovely people who say you know the more time the more work you both put in, the better it is going to be. There is never any suggestion that because I was asking these questions (...). So Xinran's help is very important to me and she also passed on some comments from Toby, which were also useful. I had some direct contact with Toby, this is Toby Eady for the record, Xinran's agent but not so very much. Also in the late stages of both books I was in touch with Rebbecca Carter, the editor, and was able to clarify one or two things in my text. So apart from Xinran, who I talked to quite often, I wasn't in regular or deep communication with others. But we did talk to each other and we certainly influenced each other.

M: How about some changes which the editor would suggest, would the editor contact you or consult with you about the changes?

E: I usually get four versions of the text, let's see can you spot the mistake, that is not a fantastically helpful approach because the novel is pretty big, and the first reaction is you feel your text's been pulled apart and slammed back together; you know you are reacting to things that aren't there at all, so it's actually quite hard to pick out the mistakes. I think the first time I did this I just corrected the mistakes and Pinying, one or two typographical errors and not much else. Well I mean chapter by chapter maybe but the whole book is quite a lot (...) especially as by the time it comes back to you, you've been away for a few months and you have moved on, you don't have practical line by line memory of the original source text any more, that's gone.

M: What does it take to be a good translator then, we are talking about translation now, especially translator, in your view what attributes and characteristics a good translator should have?

E: I have got no idea, if someone creates it for me I don't know. I hope they will pass it on to me. But I think you have to have a feel for both languages, one of the best pieces advice I've got in this field was from a teacher who said that if you want to be a good translator you've got to keep your mother tongue going, you've got to work with your mother tongue. This is something that for a student of the languages, it is actually quite hard for people to accept. I mean Chinese is so hard, you spend years and years of your life, getting up to almost a functional level, and on top of that and then someone turns around and says your English has gone funny, you know it's not easy. I am lucky in that I am one of the people who just has to read a lot of books. It is part of my advice in many ways, but it means I've always been exposed with my English even when I was very deeply involved in life in China and I think you have to be quite sensitive in your own language. I wouldn't say work to maintain it in the sense of doing exercises or anything but you've got to consistently read quite a lot of literary texts in your own language. You also need patience, because your good translation doesn't always come in the first draft, it doesn't always come in the fourth or fifth draft, you know you could get over something multiple times and you still can't find out the perfect phrase, you need to keep going back. And you also need to have a good eye for things like

redundancies. You need to be able to disconnect from Chinese at a certain point as well to just switch off your knowledge of the original text, just say OK how does this read if you're just looking at it in the English text. You also need a day job as a translator, a literary translator is impossible to make a living at my stage in the business world.

M: Could we now move on to focus on *The Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial*, when you were translating these two books, what factors were you expected to take into account and adjust the translation to?

E: I think it was made clear to me these were commercial texts, target audience were not Chinese Scholars but ordinary people and if they couldn't get it there wasn't any point. But I don't think there was anything like an agenda, if that's what you suggested. I was encouraged to get rid of things that seem to be repetitions or redundancies or things that just made the text overlong (...). I didn't do anything as much in that line as the original editor did, and I would probably now do that automatically. I think possibly that was part of my learning process I had to be told do what I will do now (...).

M: As the translator of these two books, what did you think was more important for you: the potential readers or the source text?

E: I didn't see a conflict actually, I mean you cannot have a translation without either. If I sent chapters of Chinese that were complete English, that were complete rubbish, I would not get money, that's not good but at the same time twisting a Chinese source text and betraying it wasn't the question either. Maybe I am not asking that much, am I? Just complete faithfulness to both but I think to talk in terms of one or the other is a mistake actually, you've got to try to get the balance between both ... You know sometimes it's trade-off, give a little one more side then the other side (...) or perhaps compensate in the other direction on some other point. I don't think the British reader is stupid, I need have a bit removed or I did sometimes I occasionally put extra sentences explaining something.

M: In terms of audience, what kinds of audience did you have in mind when you were translating these two books, if there was any?

E: Well the immediate audience is of course Mr Toby Eady and the editor and beyond that, as much as I have thought about it, people like me or you know. Maybe you've got to remember that I've come back from China recently and I was trying to explain my life to people who knew almost nothing about China and often don't care very much either. So that, I guess, was quite a useful experience because I suppose if I was looking for somebody who is reasonably but not highly intelligent and educated to an average level but, you know anybody that you could communicate with who will be capable of understanding me trying to explain where I lived in China, I suppose I am not making any sense at all. I didn't have one person in my head who said, you know students when I read translation essays that expected to specify the target audience, it can be a useful exercise but I was not thinking in that way at all. Well Toby Eady is my first reader if he doesn't like it, no money and of course that matters very much.

M: So he was your first reader, wasn't he.

E: Yes.

M: What aspects of the translation of *The Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial* do you think are the most difficult to deal with? Could you give me examples? *How did you deal with these difficulties?*

E: Are you talking about technically or personally?

M: Technically, or if there is anything personally.

E: Well personally it's easy because it is very shocking (...) in *Good Women of China* because of the method I was, not the method I was using, I think I don't use methods. I was spending a long time on these, there was really greasy stories in there, you know, the girl who behaves like (...) was that awful (...) about Shouting Hill. That was quite upsetting to spend all day with, but that's not really what you want to ask about. Things that I find difficult were first of all there's the question of idiom, because Xinran loves her idioms and puts them very smoothly into (...). And I quickly discovered that but although they are very nice we cannot get them all into English and if I try to do this I get back angry comments on the margin so again you have to compromise; see one idiom or three I think that's my rule of thumb, keep them to get the flavour. If something is particularly nice, I think about it but again remember that I am a Chinese speaker (...) is great to me they might just look quirky and irritating to the Western reader. I used angle brackets quite a lot in the first draft so that you know I had alternatives but some of which got left out but some of which didn't. Other things were difficult, romantic things. Xinran is a very romantic person (...), she has got the romantic treadmill and (...) that was occasionally quite challenging to translate things that you know just made me slightly irritated and especially in *Sky Burials* actually because she just recently got married and she's writing about a woman who's recently married after great love and mentioned many details about little kindness to each other. You somehow you get the feelings you accidentally find yourself going through somebody's underwear drawer, learning a bit more about the author than you want to know. But joking aside, it's hard to, it seems to be interestingly very sentimental speaking in Chinese literature in the way that just makes the Westerners slightly shifty and uncomfortable so I almost routinely tone that down and that's interesting to see in the final draft, usually the editor had to tone that down again, so obviously I didn't do that too much in that regard you could say I wasn't doing a lot. Other things I found difficult: I didn't have enormous cultural problems but with the first look I had more than the second because I had no great understanding of Tibetan life and culture. On the other hand Xinran had very few sources, I found internet sources a pain in the neck because they have always a ridiculous bias one way or the other. You just wander the (...) I want to have a fag, somebody gives fag or you get politics. I actually talked about the strength about the book was that she explains quite well how the young Chinese soldier went quickly to deal with that.

M: So the second book is with the cultural things and all that.

E: Yes, I mean the *Han* Chinese person tried to fit in this way of culture I found is very easy to understand, for personal reasons as well, I mean I had quite a bit of accommodating to do in South East China after all, but the society into which you were moving was, well, I wasn't familiar with, Xinran wasn't familiar with it either. So whereas with the first one if I had a question Xinran would give me background in all likelihood, and I would fit my translation in line with the background that I'd known. In the book it's often the case that having the (...) I know everything Xinran knew, so she's not (...) put help in that way.

M: you told me that when you did the first book *Good Women of China*, you went to Yangzhou, could you tell me you did it for what purpose?

E: That's by way of bonus due to the success of *Good Women of China*. I was funded by Toby Eady Associates to go back, so I visited most of the places Xinran has written about, not Shanxi. I was relieved, I mean the image I had in my mind wasn't the same but that wasn't different enough that someone could have called me out. I didn't think.

M: Reading *Good Women of China*, I have noticed that a number of significant changes have been made to the English version. I'd like to ask you about the process whereby these changes were made? How were these changes negotiated between yourself, the author of the original and the editor?

E: Could you give me a specific example.

M: For instance, When Xinran talks about the building, the broadcasting building, how secure this building is, she actually spends quite a long time talking about that. In the Chinese version it was in the very start while in the English version it was moved back to the middle of the story narrative, is it the different culture that made the way of telling stories differently?

E: There were multiple drafts discussed with Toby Eady, I am trying to remember when I actually translated them.

M: There are many things that were actually changed in the English version, because from the very start I thought maybe this paragraph was cut out while in the English version eventually I found this paragraph but in a different place.

E: That doesn't strike me as a kind of change I would have usually made, can you give me another example?

M: The description of the women's dress, the street, how people walk in the street day in day out. The first chapter when Xinran talks about how she has got into her job.

E: Oh yes, I know what you mean. I thought that was a very nice paragraph. That was an editorial change. I cannot now remember whether that's the editor or Xinran to reduce it or it was sent back to reduce paragraph because it sometimes happened as well, or especially she used to send edition after somebody has seen the first draft. But I was usually putting extra things and if there were cuts, I was usually consulted.

M: I've noticed a lot cuts, actually.

E: Yes, especially in *Sky Burial*.

M: In *Good women of China*, there are quite a lot.

E: Yes at the time I was told it was normal of course. Now I wonder.

M: Is it the kind of editor's job to do the cutting out or ...?

E: I must say I feel at the time I felt it was terrible you know I didn't really feel that I had the power to complain but I was very upset. Now when I read it I feel quite hard to remember where the cuts were, so I think the editor did a good job. That was like any form of applied criticism. I needed first to see it, I felt dreadful but you often come around to it after a while.

M: You were not consulted by the editor?

E: She rang me up to ask about a few specific points but I wasn't consulted in the editing process. Xinran tried to get me involved but I think I, I think it's awfully hard to bring that level of cutting to your own book.

M: I thought you were working together.

E: Not as closely as you are suggesting now. There was a little contact but not much and you often learn things about the process from another person after they have finished doing it.

M: *Sky Burial* was translated by two translators, what's your assessment of having two translators for one book? Can you recognize which part or chapters are your translation?

E: Yes, I must admit feeling bemused over this, I think Julia Lovell had produced a better translation than me and I would be not surprised Toby Eady would have removed me from the process all together. I don't think it is a professional way to go on to tell somebody that they can do this and take it away. So I also feel Julia Lovell ... if translation is co-operation, they should co-operate, not work in competition, I think that's a far more efficient way. I can only assume that there was some major confusion at Toby Eady's office that resulted and that ended up purely by accident being fairly successful.

M: So you could not recognise which part is yours?

E: Some of them I can recognise, I would say fifty and fifty, and bear in mind what the editor has seen after that, because sometimes because the editor made some substantial changes as well so in the end of it I would say probably forty per cent me, forty per cent Julia and twenty per cent Rebecca.

M: Were there any aspects of your translation of *Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial* that now you are not quite happy and satisfied with, which you would want to do differently?

E: No actually. I think considering the challenges to both books I did, as far as I could if you showed me the mistakes or text I could probably pick up a handful of places where the

translation was crude and bear in mind that I have spent several years now I've been correcting the translation of others and that gives you a sharp ability to spot the errors. I am sure I will be able to pick up on things that I don't feel 100% about, but there are no major errors that I feel actually embarrassed about or would not put my name to anything I am ashamed of.

M: Are you planning to translate more books in the same genre of Chinese autobiographies in the near future?

E: I have been approached by someone about it, we are still negotiating. Autobiographical fiction I would say. I mean how much is the fiction I still don't know, I read most of the source text and it's about Taiwanese woman rather than a mainland Chinese, which means I will be operating slightly out of my normal cultural atmosphere but close to talking about Tibet.

M: Do you have any further thoughts or things you would like to say which I've not covered?

E: I cannot think of any, just that it was actually, it was extremely pleasurable experience to translate *Good Women of China* and it was unbelievably hard work in the end. Some parts could be very frustrating because I just seemed to go through the same text over and over again and not getting very far but actually to be able to sit down and let the Chinese pull through the brain and English to come out. It's really very exciting. And lesser feeling but the same is true with *Sky Burial*, for example the part where the young soldiers are going up to the mountains and all the scenery and then they start to get ill ... and things can go terribly wrong, the bits like that I got something of the same feeling.

Interview with Flora Drew

MENG Pei (M): The popularity of *Red Dust* certainly owes a great deal to your translation, could you tell me how you got the task of translating this book in the first place?

Flora Drew (F): It was an unusual situation, Ma Jian spoke with the agent about this book and he wrote a proposal for it, so this is when I had just met Ma Jian. And I was there right from the beginning of the project when he was just first thinking about it so it was always going to be the case I was standing by to translate it, so it's just 're-knowing' Ma Jian and I being involved right from the beginning, so it's not like he came and looked for me. We knew each other, so it was always going to be how it would work out; he would write it and I would translate it simultaneously.

M: Could you tell me about how you learned your Chinese?

F: I first went to China when I was nineteen before I went to university and I was just spending time away from the university, travelling around a lot, and completely fascinated about the country and I just picked up a few words. And then later it was a very complicated route, but I ended up studying Chinese politics in Paris and then I just became more, that was in 1989, the time of the students demonstrations, and I became more and more interested in China. And then I just went back to China on my own and I started learning by myself in Beijing and then finally I joined the last year's university course since in SOAS and so ended up graduating in Chinese, but it's a rather strange route.

M: Based on your experience and in your view, what does it take to produce a good translation?

F: what makes a good translation, I think first of all you have to have a passion for the original work otherwise it won't come to life. I mean in particular, I mean I am in the unusual situation where I live with the writer so I have a constant access so I tend to be very very meticulous, so there is nothing that goes by that I am not sure about that I didn't ask him. So I am constantly asking ... and getting new answers. So you have to have passion and you have to be, what I found you have to be very meticulous even if you ask about the last detail so that you are sure and accurate and also you have to have faith in the spirit of the book. I think that's the most important thing that you feel, because there are something that cannot be translated and something that's going to be lost. But what's crucial is that you feel that when you are reading the book and someone reads the book in Chinese, he has to have the same, the reader has to have the same sense of the spirit of the writer that he would have in reading the Chinese of the original.

M: Well the next question is related to this question, actually the question that you have just answered; it is about what kind of translation do you think is good translation.

F: I think good translation is when you are not aware that it is a translation. Many problems I have found with many translations of Chinese are that you are, especially in contemporary works, that you are constantly aware that is a piece of translated work, I don't know the reason why but the best translation of, the great translations of Russian and French literature,

you are able to completely sink into the book and feel that you are reading it in its original. I hate being aware all the time, you know, that there is something in the translations: you feel that the syntax or something they use in an inappropriate jargon or some colloquial terms you just feel it does not fit in, that push you away from that work, I think you have to be as invisible as possible.

M: When you were translating *Red Dust* what factors or translational principles were you expected to take into account and adjust the translation to?

F: Expected by who?

M: Maybe by publisher or agent or readers.

F: I suppose the only issue that the publishers and I will be sometimes aware of is that how to make this book understandable to the Western readers without ... because Ma Jian wrote it, he is somebody who never writes for a particular reader, and he writes in very personal style: things he would be never writing a book with Western reader in mind. But as a translator ... as a publisher, they have to take these things into account. So there was a time when the book would allude to events in Chinese history or things to do with Chinese culture and the Chinese reader would know about it and Ma Jian would have to explain otherwise it wouldn't make sense to a Western reader. And most of the time I think it's best to either weave into the translation a couple more words or talk about it with Ma Jian and ask how can we find some way: like Lei-fen, say he talks about Lei-fen, in China he wouldn't have to explain Lei-fen, but to the Western reader, it wouldn't mean anything about Lei-fen, so you would have to, maybe add another sentence where the Western reader would..., explain who he is but without making it feel like it's becoming a history lesson, so weave it into the narrative so things like that would come up but sometimes you just leave how it is, since it is not reading a book like that it is not supposed to be a history lesson. The Western reader should not, you know, it's an alien culture, I don't think the Western reader should be spoon-fed all the time. So there is something that's still going to remain.

M: *Red Dust* is classified as travel writing, what do you think about this classification? When you translated it, did you translate it as travel writing or as an autobiography?

F: well I translated it as, I would [see it] as a piece of literary fiction. I remember that we talked about this to the publisher, this book with Ma Jian, they had to put it in the category of travel writing or autobiography or whatever, and Ma Jian didn't want it to be in the travel writing because it crosses over quite a few categories but in the end if it has to belong somewhere, I suppose, it should belong there but it's more than a piece of travel writing and it's the actual, the language used is very much ... I don't think he wrote for literary ... not for, not for an autobiographical reason even though it's true experiences. The style and the form that he wrote were based on his literary needs.

M: As the translator of *Red Dust*, what did you think was the most important while you were translating: the audience or the source text?

F: Definitely the source text and once you've got that, well, there are two stages: first of all you want to get something that's truthful and something that is accurate and faithful to the original, conveys the spirit and also has the same literary aspects to it, quality to it. So if you're happy with that you can read it, sort of you can read it from the Western angle ... but I think that is the second thing, you have to first of all create something that stands up on its own.

M: What kind of audience, if there is any audience in your mind, did you have in mind while you were translating *Red Dust*?

F: It's difficult because first of all you are aware of the kind of readers that Ma Jian would have had, that's difficult too, because he probably didn't have a reader in his mind, so I should have been imposing a reader on this, because you cannot think of the translation separate from the original, it's sort of part and it's sort of expansion of the original. But then I tend to read things out a lot so when I got to the later stages, I would read it out aloud just to hear how it sounds. It's just because I am the reader as well as the translator, because it's very personal things as well and it's very much about the sound it makes whether that has any resonance in me I wouldn't think a particular reader other than myself. I think it's quite a personal thing too.

M: What aspect of translation of *Red Dust* do you think is most difficult to deal with? And could you give me some examples as to how to deal with these difficulties?

F: There is something in Chinese that is untranslatable, some concepts, what amazes me is how much the languages are translatable. You know you can have two completely separate languages linked to different cultures but how most of ways and most of thoughts can be translated into another language. It's always surprising how people could have the same thoughts while living in different cultures. But there is some, just like the nature of the Chinese language and the roots, that is sort of, the influence of classical Chinese and philosophy and the way you can say many many things with just a few words. I think there were difficulties in Chinese language which can be very ambiguous, you can have many different levels whereas in English that is grammatically the way you don't have to fix it in time. So in *Red Dust*, Ma Jian's language is quite poetic and quite minimal, so you do find there are times when you say something and there is five or six different levels of meaning, but in English you are just forced to choose one. So that was the difficulty of retaining this ambiguity and poetic quality. So that's something I tried to a lot.

M: Reading *Red Dust*, I've noticed a number of significant changes have been made to the English version of *Red Dust*, if you could tell me a little bit about the process whereby these changes were made and how these changes were negotiated between yourself and the writer and the editor.

F: There would be two reasons for this: first of all, I translated this book as he worked on it simultaneously. Ma Jian during the process and after the process of translating created many different drafts, so he changed the book even after I translated it. If the book you have read was the mainland Chinese book, that's already been heavily censored by the authorities so

that wasn't even the original version, so you cannot compare but the Taiwanese is more faithful to the original work, so that's one aspect. Secondly, there is the aspect of the Western reader, so there were things that Ma Jian had to take out or add in order to make things more understandable to the Western readers but that was the secondary process, so he made different changes, he made changes after my translation, the second thing was Chinese censoring, the third thing was during the translation he made changes to make it understandable to the Western readers so all these different factors to make it like that.

M: So the editor was involved into that process?

F: The editor would make suggestions, she would say: 'can you add something here to make it clearer so he would go back to rethink some sentences or add, and then there was one part when he went back to visit his family in Qindao. And then the original was very short, the editor thought it was more emotional, she just thought she wanted more a bit, so he went back to write three more pages, so she did have an input in that as well, so the editor made a lot of suggestions as well.

M: During the process of writing and translation, who did you discuss with the most?

F: definitely Ma Jian, my agent didn't. In the beginning we did it with the editor. I sent the final translation to the editor, she would make some suggestions and send it back to us, we made changes and sent it back to her, but as far as the daily consultation, obviously with Ma Jian.

M: Is there any aspect of *Red Dust* which you are not quite happy with, which you want to do differently now?

F: When I read things I've already done, there are always things I want to change, I am never completely happy with it. When I translated it... As for *Red Dust*, I think I would make it a little lighter. I don't like prawn dumplings, because it was a sort of journal style I would write in that I don't like. I wanted it to be a sort of more mature so I kept these things, but now I would prefer to make it lighter, just abbreviate these things and make them more colloquial, they are just tiny things, you know.

M: Are you planning to translate more books in the same genre of Chinese autobiographies in the near future?

F: I have translated Ma Jina's books; I did *Red Dust*, I've done *Noodle Maker* and *Stick Out your Tongue* and now apparently working on another novel, so I am not ... the fact that I knew him and he was writing a book. As I never got to do any translations before, it's not like I've chosen this book.

M: If you had the choice, what would you like to translate?

F: Fictions, not exactly autobiography. If it didn't have literary quality to it, it doesn't interest me. The historical and autobiography, I wouldn't be so excited about that.

M; Any other Chinese writers' books you would want to introduce to the English readers?

F: More and more Chinese writers are getting translated. I have problems with a lot of Chinese writers from mainland China, because there is a lot self-censorship, they are holding back and a whole area of that would make me uncomfortable. Because if I translate a book, I need to be completely absorbed by it until being on the same sort of wavelength and I've not found that possible with writers in China so.

M: Do you have any further thoughts or things that you would like to say that I have not covered?

Email Interview with Howard Goldblatt

MENG Pei (M): The success of the poetical novel—*Shanghai Baby*—certainly owes a great deal to your translation. Could you tell me something about yourself and how you came to translate this novel in the first place?

Howard Goldblatt (H): I was asked to do it by the author, whom I met the next year at a conference I sponsored in Colorado on the writings of Chin Yung.

M: Based on your experience, what does it take to produce a good translation and what does it take to be a good translator?

H: The obvious: 1) know two languages, one (the source language) critically, the other (the target language) creatively. Ultimately, the latter is more important, since that is truly where a translator is alone (if there are problems with the former, there are plenty of resources); 2) have at least a sense of readership. While some poets/novelists may write only for themselves (Gao Xingjian, Umberto Eco, Proust, or so they say), no translator works without the assumption that the finished product will be published and hopes that many people will read it. 3) don't be intimidated by your text (respect, yes). Convey what the author intended, even if you have to move away from words to do so.

M: When you were translating *Daughter of the River*, what factors were you expected to take into account and adjust the translation to?

H: Unlike almost every novel (in this case, we are dealing with nonfiction, insofar as autobiography is “non-fictional,” and I urge you not to call it a novel), I took on the Hong Ying project (the publisher changed the title from “Hunger” to “River,” despite my objections) even before the Chinese book was published. I was sent the Chinese text by e-mail from the author's husband, Zhao Yiheng, with his own rough rendering, which included some changes from the original text. I trod a narrow path, wanting to respect both the author's mediated “crib” and what I understood the original to say. Then, of course, I had to make sure that my version was readable. The British publisher (Bloomsbury) did a very light edit on the manuscript.

M: How do you think your previous experience of translation or your knowledge about China helped and informed your translation of this book?

H: I can't think of any particular influence.

M: As the translator of *Daughter of the River*, what did you think was more important for you: the potential readers or the source text? And why?

H: I'm always respectful of the author/text, but absolutely reverential in respect to reader. It's asking a lot of an American/Briton to actually buy and read a novel or other work written by

a Chinese for a domestic reader and translated by an anonymous mediator. It's important for us translators to treat them gently, without doing injury to the original. If done properly, both author and reader are well served by a conscientious, sympathetic translation.

M: What aspects of the translation of *Daughter of the River* do you think are most difficult to deal with? Could you give me examples? How did you deal with these difficulties?

H: I can't recall.

M: When you translated it, did you translate it as a novel or did you somehow lean towards the genre of an autobiography? (Did this awareness influence the way you translated it?)

(There was no response to this question)

M: You would have worked closely with the author and the editor. Could you tell me a little bit about how you cooperated with them during the process of translating *Daughter of the River*?

H: See my response to my opening comments and my response to question 3.

Goldblatt's opening comments:

I'm going to try to answer your questions, or at least some of them. But first, a couple of comments and/or concerns. First, I'm always interested in knowing what I'm "contributing" to. Just what does a dissertation on translation accomplish? I certainly hope it's more than just comparing translations with the Chinese originals in search of changes or "mistakes." Apparently, you folks in the UK do a lot of this, since this will be the 5th "interview" I've done for UK Ph.D. candidates, including, as you know, Kenneth Liu, and most are from Taiwan. I have yet to see the end results of any of these interviews. Next, you must understand two things about this particular translation: first, I finished it a decade ago and I do not keep notes on my translations. What that means, of course, is that, since I have finished 20 complete translations in the interim, my memory of the work itself is hazy at best.

M: Were there any aspects of your translation of *Daughter of the River* that now you are not quite happy and satisfied with, which you would want to do differently?

H: I would probably do it in a vacuum, if I had the opportunity to do it over (which I neither have nor wish to have). But you'll never get me to slap my own face.

M: Do you have any further thoughts or things you would like say that I haven't covered?

H: I refer you again to my opening comments.

Email Interview with Juilia Lovell

MENG Pei (M): The success of the poetical novel – *Sky Burial* – certainly owes a great deal to your translation, could you tell me how you came to translate this novel in the first place?

Juilia Lovell (J): Xinran is the wife of my agent, Toby Eady, for whom I read and assess new writing from China. Toby asked if I would translate Xinran's book, which of course I was delighted to do. I have the highest respect for Xinran as a journalist and writer, and was confident that any story she decided to write about would surely be interesting and important. And when I read the book in Chinese, I immediately recognised that she was telling an astonishing story.

M: Based on your experience, what does it take to produce a good translation? (timing, circumstances, cooperation)

M: And what does it take to be a good translator? What attributes and characteristics a good translator should have?

J: (I'll answer above two questions together, as they overlap somewhat). Fluency in the original language, of course; and wide reading in literature of the target language, in order for the translator to familiarise him/herself with as wide a variety of styles and registers as possible. In-depth consideration of the tone and style of the original. But finally, I think it is important for a translator to feel some sense of freedom with respect to the original, where such a sense is helpful to achieving fluency and naturalness in the translation: a sense that sometimes recreating the tone or spirit of the original in the target language is more important – in the interests of recreating the original as a work of literature in another language – than an absolutely literal linguistic translation. (Although, of course, the translator must not invent new content.) Some turns of phrase, stylistic flourishes or types of punctuation that sound idiomatic in the original may sound clumsy and idiomatic if rendered directly into the target language, particularly in the case of 2 writing traditions as culturally remote from one another as Chinese and English, and the translator must feel free enough where necessary to substitute expressions that are equivalent in meaning and tone, rather than stick exclusively to literal renderings.

M: When you were translating this book, what factors were you expected to take into account and adjust the translation to?

J: Nothing other than to produce as fluent a translation as possible.

M: As the translator of this novel, what did you think was more important for you: the potential readers or the source text?

J: One had to have some consideration for an imagined Anglophone readership (ie thinking about supplying extra glosses or background for events and concepts that would be very familiar to a Chinese readership but very foreign to Westerners); but the source text, of course, always took precedence.

M: What kinds of audience did you have in mind when you were translating *Sky Burial*?

J: General readers interested in China and Tibet; perhaps people who wouldn't necessarily read a thick, academic history of either country, but who might be drawn in to reading about them by a gripping story such as the one that Xinran told.

M: I suppose you would have worked closely with the author and the editor. Could you tell me a little bit about how you had cooperated with them during the process of translating *Sky Burial*?

J: In truth, I had just given birth when the book was being edited, and was on maternity leave, so I had relatively little interaction with the book's excellent editor, Rebecca Carter.

M: What aspects of the translation of *Sky Burial* do you think is most difficult to deal with? Could you give me examples? How did you deal with these difficulties?

J: In fact, Xinran's prose was so clear that I don't remember it posing any great difficulties in translation.

M: *Sky Burial* was translated by two translators, what's your assessment of having two translators for one book? Can you recognize which part or chapters are your translation?

J: I can't actually remember which bits of the translation were mine, and which Esther's. Credit to Rebecca Carter's excellent, fluent editing! With respect to the question about having 2 translations, maybe it would be best to ask Rebecca, as she put them together.

M: Reading *Sky burial*, I have noticed that a number of changes have been made to the English version. I'd like to ask you about the process whereby these changes were made? How were these changes negotiated between yourself, the author of the original and the editor?

J: I was so lucky in having Rebecca to do the editing; I feel that she set straight many of the problems with my translation.

M: Are you planning to translate more Chinese books in the near future?

J: At the moment, I'm focussing more on fiction, but if an interesting biography or autobiography came along, I'd definitely be interested.

Interview with Guo Xiaolu

Guo Xiaolu (G): Just translation make a big difference like my French version of the book is seventy year old who translated 'Lao She' ages ago and he has never translated any young writers from China but I've never met him, he was chosen by my French publisher. So he finished translation in two months. This translation took two years. I had six or seven books published before in China only one being translated and that man translated it within two months someone who can read both in French and English told me the French version is so cold, so old and really old-fashioned and the English version is so lively and so colourful and sexy and poetic. The English version is by my friend, you know she is a poet from American from ALA. She is a very beautiful woman and thirty years old and very young and very energetic you know, she lives in Beijing, she is American but her boyfriend is like punk musician so her life is very lyric and very funky. When I came to London I brought all my Chinese books like six published books, so I send to my agent and said 'look, you find someone to translate all my books'. And my agent is very old he is Yung Chen's agent and my agent. Basically he doesn't read Chinese so he cannot judge so he said to me 'you have to give me something in English and I cannot read all this. I said 'ok ok' that's very surprise, you don't read Chinese you can be my agent. So I went to China again, I found this poet, this woman. I said 'oh, Cindy can you just translate some pages so she translated ten pages and it's well done, so beautiful and really really lyrical, so we got ten pages and we immediately send it to Random House. And Random House said 'it is really beautiful, can we have her as a translator?' so immediately we signed a contract. Normally the agent or publisher they decide to choose their own translator, like Xinran's case, it's Toby decided you know, and also the publisher decided. To me it failed, especially Xinran's second book *Sky Burial*. I don't think works, it's nightmare, the translation, and the way they worked together, and Xinran is like a big mother and two translators are very young and very timid English girls very academic. I think the academic, they don't live in China and they don't know Chinese really the world words so dead and it's from textbook. When you translate non-fiction work, the words so dead you know. Very dry and academic and make the whole book unreachable, unreadable, so that's the problems I think, and now I have two books coming out from Random House; one is my first novel which was written five years ago and whole book looks so naïve and stupid (...) this I cannot get somebody from university to translate, you know I am really worried it translated into very academic series way. That wouldn't work. So I just find any girl; native of English and spend more than several years in China, so I found that woman, somebody said in Random 'her is Rebecca she's stayed in HK for twelve years and she speaks wonderful mandarin but she' never never had any experience on translation. I said 'that's fine, I can let her grow up with some experience. But I didn't tell me agent and my publisher because I want to decide on my translator, I don't want them to decide and find a sixty old man translate my novel, it's not man or women thing that's just my novel is so feminine so inner nothing to the outside. Ma Jian, you know, his translator, his wife, and she is fantastic and she is very good on that book. I don't have that kind of relationship so I have to find somebody myself.

MENG Pei (M): I would like to you that your novel *Village of Stone* has received a great of deal form British readership and literary press, could you tell me about what initially made you think of writing this book?

G: The quick answer is of course my own experience, you know, in the way lots of female women, women artists, you got painter, you pain from heart, you got hurt from love so you write a love story, you know it's very direct and physical writing rather than a lot of criminal writing written by the male writers.(...) as young, you know your experience decide your story in the way but it's doesn't mean you are lacking imagination but just you so much based on story but again because I am a novelist so I am so proud to say it's autobiography which means undermining my imagination. Whenever the media or journalist ask me 'is that autobiography' and then you are thinking 'shit! you think I don't have imagination and I am not a story teller?' because the fiction ability to write a fiction is so big so deep and is imaginative landscape. When you write about your home town everybody knows that is your hometown like *Village of Stone* totally based on my fiction but is my hometown where I am from but it's just whole landscape it's so surreal. When you go there the place called 食堂 in 浙江, it's an island between 福建和浙江 it's actually very close to Taiwan, but the landscape I wrote in my novel just so, not look like my hometown any more somehow because I don't know it may have been rebuilt or may be when I was young I hated that place so when you were child you just looked at everything in surreal you know you don't see the reality you see the imagination you are made up. So now people like reviewers say '*Village of Stone* has very strong ability to represent the uniqueness landscape; so harsh so bleak so, you know kind, of no love, the whole village is hard rock, that's so impressive. But I think that's very subjective very subjective. That's the quality of the novel when you got there, because I made the film again, I made the Concrete Revolution again so I took my film group to my hometown again. They looked at it and said 'it's very gentle, this place very elegant and all beautiful and people are very nice and the rocks and mountain, you know the grass that are so gentle but your novel is just so bleak'. And again I look at myself in years that's sth wrong in memory you know writing on this story. That's different you know.

M: There was sth I've noticed that most of the autobiographies in Britain is that the English version come before the Chinese originals.

G: Xinran wasn't writer in China and she came here because she was best friend of Yung Chang so when Yung Chang worried John Holiday and John introduced his friend Toby to Xinran, and then Xinran started to go out with Toby and Xinran said ok may be I can use all the cassettes I recoded in China.

M: Have you written your book in Britain or in China.

G: All the books seven books I published in Chinese all three years ago before I came here. And three years ago when I came here I started to write an English book which is now Random publisher house publishing now called '*A Woman Lost Language*, it's in English (...).

M: So *Village of Stone* was written in China, and then translated into English.

G: Of course, I was a writer in China not like the people become writer here.

M: Obviously when you were writing this book your audience are Chinese.

G: Oh, I lived in China thirty years, when you are inside of china you never think of you are Chinese, so you don't have that identity, so you write for your own sake you write for your own pen. The only question you will ask yourself is when you left your country and you were like 'oh so where is my audience, where is my readers. Before if I can to think I am a Chinese writer I am writing for Chinese audience I am stupid when I am thinking of that. But now I do think, you know, that's huge problems for my everyday's life because my agent does not speak English and very an old English man, and my publisher Random House you know thousand people work there in the South Bank of the river but no one can speak Chinese but they love my work, I have six books they've never read one word, they cannot read. So now I have huge problems you know.

M: Yes you are talking about the audience, because before I thought you are the same case as Xinran.

G: The story she wrote the life story she lived is so different from me, you know I look at her, I thought 'oh good the world has got variety, it's good'.

M: In the stage when you were writing in China, did you anticipate that your work would be translated into English and would be received by English speaking world, was that like anticipation at the whole of back your mind that it works like one day....

G: I only think of that, I think five years ago but I was still in China because five years ago I published like really four books and then I got really bored of my own life, bored of my love life and bored of my life in Beijing because I am a screen writer for ten years when I studied in Beijing film academy and ten years underground film script, because the censorship in China, the film are all underground. And now the film I got proper paid, and I end up just write novels and books you know, so I just really bored of my life and one day I just thought 'shit, I am just gonna to write sth big and ambitious, I am not stop doing this film thing, I am just going to write a bit novel and I am going get that published and just gonna leave'.

M: And translate it.

G: I don't think translate you know it is very technical word.

M: Somehow it can get through to the audience that happens to go outside of china.

G: Yeah, but in China we are so governmental society when we are thinking of these things we don't think it in the individual way we think 'oh, this book published by shanghai foreign language publisher, and publisher will choose the translator' so we are so collective you know but in west immediately you think 'ok I am gonna find my translator, I am gonna my agent' you know all these ideas and now I am changing I have to accept this system when I was in China the life was so collective.

M: In your view what is the most difficult for the west readers to understand about your book?

G: Well the big answer everybody will easily say cultural difference you know but what is cultural difference, so in the way I ignore the cultural difference, ok if you say my book has never been understood because of cultural difference then what about some Noble prize winner from India, so you know you cannot really get excuse from that but again you know if I read political novel that's say Ma Jian 's work , like his new book the *Noodle's Maker* , terrible review, that's really bad review everywhere, but *Red Dust* is good because he writes from heart it's like a novel on the road, it's so personal, so ...

M: But it's very popular in the USA

G: I guess it's so difficult in Europe because there is so much cultural reference because he use time you know the story stopped a few years ago. Of course the cultural difference is very difficult and then to me the first problem is translation you know, I cannot mourning more because I only had one book being translated, so I cannot say the cultural difference, because you know five of my books have been translated and the cultural differences will be less you know because more people read more Chinese books and they will understand more. I think the huge problems with translation is so few people work on the literary work, there is business people, they can translate business work or contract but they don't do these things. They don't translate poem and I had these difficulties, I wrote a lot of poems but I cannot find anybody really delicate time because I have to pay these translators say 'ok, lets work on these twenty poems, they all know if the people they understand Chinese oh then which day they've gonna to publish them' I say 'no way we've got to publish them within three years, and publish them in ten years maybe possible.' That's very difficult, you see it's the most spoken language in the world, but in the west it's impossible. So that's really sad. (...) There is a conference in Oxford I've just attended, the writers meeting with a lot of translators, and people talked about impossible to translate Chinese language. I said 'stop it and hang on the minute, it's still very possible to translate from French to German, German to ... you always use a,b,c,d but to our Chinese yes that's a long way, so stop mourning now' look at me I am young but I am an old writer in my experience I feel so difficult to find a translator to translate my books. this novel I have like seven languages (Portuguese version, French version, Dutch version,). But the problem is only English and French versions are from my Chinese text others are all from English. So you know they are third hand text and it's impossible to show strength, so it's like documents are different, it's really you know they all read you know my English novel to German.

M: Talking about translation, I want to know in your view what is the most difficult about translating your book into English?

G: I think tense. You know in Chinese we don't have tense, especially this kind of novel, because it's about past and present, and memory travel between, and when you are writing Chinese and you don't have tense, it's very it's consciousness of stream, so I think I guess they have to make a big difference in the foreign version you know. I remember I worked with my translator in the email, she lived in Beijing but she came here for one week just to intensively work with me. She kept asking me 'what about this paragraph, what kind of tense I am gonna to use' I said 'you decide, you are English not me' but she really need to be

careful she really change the tone otherwise. Because when I write this little girl, seven years old I said 'I am seven, I walk on the beach and I am looking at the sky' and I become very very modern and post-modernist style because the time and space are jumping around so it becomes very modern, she has to decide I was or I am, and then 'I was' becomes very conventional and very classical novel, but we have to mark it, it's logical and in the time scale, but if she translated in the present tense, and then people loss logical and become innovative novel, that's different, because Xinran's book is somehow conventional so it doesn't have that problems but my book is always alternate in time and space, that's a big thing. How do you preserve the time, time and space that's really difficult.

M: How often did you meet your translator while writing your book?

G: She has been my friend for five year when I lived in Beijing. I went back to Beijing three times for three months but in three years but we just exchanged email and telephone, she knows me very well. My Chinese text is quite kind of nervous and anxious 比如说中国的 text 会是 '我心痛了, 我走在沙滩上, 我要死, 我想冲破这个监狱, 我要生命' that's very nervous short sentences but if another translator would know how to do it, you know. Cindy, she knows me, she choose vocabulary, if she choose upset or nervous these two vocabulary she will try to use nervous, if some vocabulary, if I see something, I see ok these things are not attractive in Chinese, she will choose dull or ... you know much stronger than she suppose to be translated, but she knows me and my text, she would use much stronger vocabulary than literary vocabulary, so that's something really subtle but makes huge difference, so the novel becomes much stranger, and people told in French, because my book sold twice of copy in France. In England, it just nothing, just several copies. But in France we are running out the second print, but in England just the hard copy, hard copy has still been selling, in August, the paper copy will be coming out. French people know Chinese culture and they know who is 'Lao She' but in England nobody knows 'Lao She'. my novel sold much better in France. And I won the prize of international human rights, film festival in France. So all my works won prize in France but none of my books won here. It's very strange and also.

M: You mentioned you were discussing with your translator while you were back to China, I want to know what kind of issues you discussed with your translator, especially with regard to some changes.

X: Oh, lots of changes, my Chinese text is twenty chapters, and my English version is twenty-two chapters. My translator asked me 'ok between chapter five and chapter eight I feel like something missing' of course something missing, yes, because you know the story is not coherent but chapter five is about that little girl seven year old and next chapter suddenly that little girl become seventeen year old and have her first lover. Between these two chapters there is no any hint and no any coherence, in Chinese that's fine you know I write novel like that, yes she was ten and suddenly she was forty-five, I don't care what happen between these chapters, I said 'ok that's novel, and I am subjective, I don't care the story how does it go' but then when she started to translate it she is scared she's lost, she said 'that I am going to worry you know if the English readers' gonna to accept it, because there is a big gap between

the past and present' I said 'ok I don't care, that's my novel', but she said 'no no we have to work on that' so I remember I wrote for three hours in her flat in Beijing, so I said 'ok I will make you a new chapter if you like' so I just put a chapter, because it is quite quick you know, it's emotional writing, so I wrote plus two chapters between; one chapter is about this little girl's grandmother died, it's aiming to the timing being ruled, old generation is dead, emotionally the reader would accept ok something moving and I add another chapter is about this girl grown up. So there were about two chapters coming up, I just wrote in her flat and then I said 'just take it and translate it'. And then I said 'doesn't it work' and she said 'that's more logical for reader to accept it' so you know it's big difference. And also my editor Rebecca in Random House when she edited this book she always asked me 'well, here suddenly you mentioned some future stories, I think we should delete this, because that is very confusing for the audiences, suddenly talk about future, well I mean in Chinese context, who cares about the past and future, you know this is novel' she said 'that's very confusing' so she tidy the whole text, she clear up the whole text, I am not sure it's good way or bad way, you know because we are underneath British publish system you know, I have to compromise easily and say 'ok, take out it then no problems' but again I just don't know which way is right, I have to trust her as an English editor.

M: I read your acknowledgement in your English version and you said, you express your appreciation for your editor Rebecca's a creative editing, could you tell me which of her aspects of editing you see as creative?

G: Well, I don't know if the word creative is good word or bad word for editor, because editor shouldn't be too creative for my text, because you are not a novelist, you cannot re-write my novel, if you are too creative sorry I don't want you, I am the master of my own book, you can write your own poem at your home but on my novel, so I don't know this's the good word and I don't know how should I put that word, because she is fantastic editor she always says 'well here I think we need to delete all this,' you know but then you don't have power you know she has power because she is my publisher, she can say 'I don't it unless we delete that' so it's such power game as far as a writer we have to respect that, but then again, I think she is very good but, I think she is good on this book, I am the new doing that, I don't know, everyone has a different personality, she is very considerate, but don't think she will take a big risk to publish a strange book, that's I am wronging because I am doing something strange now, and so she will go like 'it is a good thing, but I am sure the market' so I cannot say.

M: If she made some changes, I want to ask you then in what way the changes she made affected the content of your work? Actually you mentioned already but I would like to know more detail about it.

G: She did not change the text, this novel has Beijing part and village part, they are equal in the Chinese text, you know, in English, as an editor, she said she has to take out a lot of Beijing part. Because she said it's not so strong like village of stone you know, the scenery described, Beijing, the city theme, so it's not as strong as village of stone. And I couldn't understand it and I said 'ok, before you write a pure village story, Xinran can do that job, I

am the new generation, I want to write these contrasts between city and village, so I don't want you to take out my city part', because my city part is very important about China now you know how disturbing city life, how 不安分的 city energy. I know writing about the city is not, of course, not very strong as contrast, but then you don't take that part because that's me, I am a young writer, it's my statement, I can write about city, not like Xinran's generation, they only can write about that, village part. So it's my merit. So she listened a bit, she didn't take very much, but in the beginning she said 'we should take out the old Beijing part' than I would say a fifty year old writer can write that novel not me. So she listened quite a lot, so we still have some now. So that's quite different actually.

M: It was your intention to change them anyway.

G: We started from very differently, she has her own idea and I have my own idea. But in China writer is boss you, writer is so important, the publisher dose not really do the change, but in the West the market is boss so she has to think the market they wouldn't like to read things like that. We don't know the market yet. And on the another hand we publish Chinese novel which is no market unless I write about Mao, that's different so in the no market, there are less make a book you know.

M: What kind of suggestions did your agent Mr Toby's given you on the English translation of your book.

G: He did not any, he didn't know this woman.

M: What kind of input...

G: Well he puts money to her, I don't think he loves my work more than he loves his wife's work. The truth is he loves my translation. But I paid Cindy for a couple of, like ten pages. Because I was poor I don't have money to pay her so we can't translate the whole book, so I brought the ten pages to England, so I said 'oh, Cindy, I am going to find an agent and maybe the agent can send it to a publish' and he did, and he sent the ten pages to Random House and Random House said 'it's fantastic translation, that's do it' so Toby paid Cindy properly. But anyway the agent takes 25% of my royalty. He loves my translation and he totally trust it.

M: Did you expect that you book have received so much popularities in the UK.

G: I don't think it is popular in the UK at all. It is very well reviewed, but one year only five Chinese books you know so maybe I am the one of the five Chinese books they can talked about. So in the way you talk about rich men in the poverty. China we have thousand years literary histories, it's not like American history they have strong literary but they only have two hundred and five years writing but we have thousand year with so many books, I know how many writers I know in Beijing they are my friends, how many fantastic artists I know in Beijing, they've never get published. There are only five books in the uk get translated into English and there is only one agent controlled us, we share one editor called Rebecca Carter. Every writer should have their different agent and have their style publisher. There is one little book from China, let's nominate that book because there is no other book, Xinran's

book, her translator is not good, Ma Jian's book in the way writes something twenty years ago in China, so it's not something updated. So my book is ok is about now a young people from village to city, it's representative but this representative is such skinny and small concept, because you don't have other variety. I feel really thankful for the whole situation where I got everywhere nominated, and I went to Millbury writers Festival, I went to Australia, Singapore, New Zealand because of this book and I went to anywhere all the book festival in Edinburgh, Hye-On-Wye I did a talk, but again I asked all the book festival people I said 'who did the talk?' And a Chinese writer said 'you are the first person' we have so many writers, but on the other hand there are no Chinese writers expect for Xinran and Yung Chun, they can speak English, now Chinese writers they cannot speak English especially man Chinese writers, like Majian was refusing to speak English, so English media they wouldn't appreciate you, It's a very complicated situation.

M: do you have any further thoughts or things that I have not covered you want to say?

G: No.

Telephone interview with Hong Ying

MENG Pei (M): Your book *Daughter of the River* has attracted lot of attention from British readers and the literary press, could you tell me a little bit about what initially made you think of writing this book?

Hong Ying(H): 我很早就想写了。在我 18 岁生日时，我与我的生父会面了，那时有许多感情，如此说怨恨，以及对亲人的不理想，那时就想写，但没有写。现在许多事情也经历了，也冷静了不少，最后再回头看看过去发生的一切，得有勇气面对已发生的一切，写作的时机已经成熟，所以 1996 年时，在写了一些书以后，才开始写这本书。这是我在国外发表的第二本书，第一本书 *Summer of Betrayal*。 *Daughter of the River* 是 1997 在台湾出版的，在出版中文版的同时，也翻译成十二种语言。第一本 *Summer of Betrayal* 卖的不好，不知是什么原因，也许是因为不是自传吧！

M: What kinds of audiences did you have in mind while writing your book?

H: 应该有的，比如说我的母亲，我的两个父亲，我的姊姊，哥哥，以及我们同龄的同时代的人们，尤其是女性，有许多人说我的这本书是代像我父母，兄弟姐妹，这些社会最底层的人，这些不能发出声音的人发出声音。

M: What in your view is most difficult for a Western reader to understand about your book?

H: 我想在描写方式方面会使他们费解一些，因我的描写方式与 *Wild Swans* 这类的自传是不同的，英国读者已习惯中国的传记是那样的，所以看了我写的传记会难懂一些，因为我的小说的大背景比如说 - 文革，大饥荒都是自由的由故事而带出，对这些背景没有任何解释式的描写，所以懂我的故事必须先非常了解中国历史上曾发生的故事，从这种角度来说这本书是写给中国人的。

M: The English version of your book came out before the Chinese version, which seems quite unusual to me, how did that happen?

H: *Daughter of the River* 是这种情况。是这样的，我与我的 agent 在出版第一本书的时候就签了合同（7 年）。我在 1996 写中文版本的时候，他们知道我在写这本书，也就自然而然的要翻成英文卖出去，但这本书不是为了翻译而写，我是想要在台湾出版的。在中国是不可能出的，也没有想到为了翻成英文去写。因为若是那样的话，我会做一些处理，随俗一些（英国的‘俗’风），但我并没有那样做。

M: Have you found your translator?

H: 是我找的翻译，我的第一本书他就能翻，但是 agent 和 publisher 都不同意，所以这本书我就坚持他来翻译。我给他翻译的版本是在台湾已发表的版本。

M: What in your view is most difficult about translating your book into English?

H: 我想我的写作风格是最难的，我的翻译也这样说。方言很好处理，他说他用美国黑人的地方方言去翻我的方言，但是作家的语言风格是很难掌握的。他是汉学家，我是作家，我们在会议上或类似场合都有接触。他很喜欢这本书，写了一份很好的评论报告。我的 editor 和 agent 也都同意了，因为无论如何他们都要做一些 editing 的，比如说把美国英语转成英国英语。

M: What do you think of the English translation of your book?

H: 我认为很好呀，25 种翻译中，荷兰版翻的最优美，英文版翻的最准确，他对我的风格把握的很准，很冷静，不带感情。不够理想？没法说，因为我的英文也不够好，但我认为翻译不可能做到绝对的一致，也不可能尽善尽美，这 after all 是两种语言。

M: What kind of issues did you discuss with your translator, especially with regard to major changes, if there were any?

H: 有。他会问我一些奇怪的词，方言比如说，他也会建议删去一些，我一般是没有意见的，因为翻译应该有一定的自由，在做改动时他会问我。是有许多删改，但我不可能有什么要求，翻译有自己的想法，editor 有他的自由。我说随他们吧，但不能改得太多。

M: Have any changes been made by your editor? If this was the case, have you been consulted about these changes? And what were your views in that regard?

H: Editor 没有做什么改变，就在美国英语方面，他们做了改变，变成英国英语。在语言上做了一些改变，因为他们想用更优美一些的语言（英国语言）使翻译更英国化，因为英文版本在英国早出了一个月（比美国早一个月）。有关 *饥饿的女儿* 改成 *Daughter of the River* 是因为出版社的 chief editor (Liz Calder) 认为这个书名不好，英国人会受不了的，英国人不喜欢，所以要我改一下，他们建议改成 *Little Six*，我不同意，于是我就改成 *Daughter of the River*，因为我的家乡就在江边，他们也觉得这个书名不错。最后翻译完成后，我与我的 editor 坐在一起，一个段落一个段落的过，我一般都同意他们做的修改。我认为 *Daughter of the River* 翻得很好 editor 也很好，不象我的 *K* 的 editor 给我改的很乱，加了许多性描写，我很生气，但 *Daughter of the River* 没有这种情况，editor 基本上是以翻译为准的，*Summer of Betrayal* 翻得最好，翻译叫 Martha Avery，但她后来不做翻译了，*Daughter of the River* 翻得很准确，但谈不上美，本来就不想让它那么美。

M: Did you expect that your book would receive so much popularity in the UK?

H: 没有想到，我没想到写了通俗些去迎合读者，这书发表以后，许多著名的作家，以及评论家写评，出版社很惊讶，一般是他们出钱请人写评论，现在是反过去了，评论家主动写了评论，出版商不用出钱，我还为此得了许多钱，报纸连载了我的小说，出版商请报纸连载，但是谁给谁钱要看有没有人买报纸看连载，由此决定谁出钱，因为连载书店也订购了许多册。*K* 也很好卖，但远比不上 *Daughter of the River*。*Daughter*

of the River 是写的最好的，在我所有的书中，我的 *K* 这次在意大利得奖，我认为是因为 *Daughter of the River* 这本书的成功，因为所有的评委都看了这本书，并对这本书的印象极深，这为我的 *K* 的得奖打了基础。

M: Do you have any further thoughts or things you would like to say that I haven't covered?

H: 我觉得我的读者还是在中国，因为他们能深切的懂得我写书的感觉，西方的读者在我看来还是少数民族，他们再激动，他们看到的还是很表面的东西，他们永远不可能走进小说里去。还有，在西方写书和出书对作家的限制还是有的，比如说写什么体裁和内容要和 agent 商量经他们同意才行。有的 agent 限制少些,有的多些,但都会有的。

Interview with Ma Jian

MENG Pei (M): 《红尘》得了(Thomas Cook)旅行奖,吸引了许多西方的读者,我想知道你最初写这书的想法。你为什么要写这本书呢?

Ma Jian (MJ): 当时我的代理人他对我的一本书感兴趣,叫《马建之路》,上面都是我的一些旅行的照片,当时他看了以后,说这些照片很精彩,让我写一书来介绍这些照片后面的故事。我考虑了一下就开始写了。写的时候最麻烦的是,我当时旅行之时已经隔了十五年了,我没想到要把它变成一本书,如果当时要想到将来要变成一本书,我会准备很多资料,收集很多东西,所以虽然写起来有很多困难,因为记忆失去很多东西,但是我还是觉得有意思,因为通过回忆也可以把当年你经历过的东西再经历一遍,这对一个人的思考或人生也是一个深入。

M: 你能不能说一下你是怎样认识你的 agent – Toby

MJ: 我认识一个朋友叫徐李李,是个画家。我到了 London 以后他告诉我“你最好找一个代理人,英国干什么事情都是代理人制度。”那么通过他的介绍,所以我就认识了 Toby Eady。

M: 你怎么想起来与他合作写这本书,当时有没有其它的选择?

MJ: 当时我是想让他出版《拉面者》,Toby Eady 看了以后说这样的文学书英国人兴趣不太,顶多二三千本,他说如果你写一本 *Red Dust*,那么会有很多读者,你能不能先写出这么一本书,就这么开始了。而且他提前给我预付了起码六千的稿费,这是很多代理人都不可能做到这一步的,这说明他的确认为这本书很好卖。

M: 他怎么知道这本书好卖呢?你还是写了一点东西给他看是不是?

MJ: 没有。他就是简单地看了一下照片,我简单地给他解说了一下我的经历。因为我是第一个走完中国的人,那么在当时的社会能够走完中国,困难是相当大的,当时社会也没有什么能够去旅行。我当时和他说了,最重要一点是八十年代初的时候社会的变化是相当大的,人们从一种意识形态的国家一下就转型成一个改革开放的国家,人们都很不适应,都不知道自己该做什么。那么最早个体户正是社会的最底层,因为他们是走投无路的人,那时候吃“官饭”还是很骄傲的,那么这批人慢慢地起来推动社会的变化,所以他们是首先有了身份有了钱,有了社会地位,然后改革开放才慢慢开始的。那么女人也正好(相仿),我认为在中国改革开放的开始,女人起了很大的作用。那么在我身边就有很多女人和外国人谈恋爱,基本上都抓在 jail,有的自杀,可以说死了一批女人才导致改革开放,因为连共产党都不知道你们怎么敢与外国人接触,而这些女孩子反而是最勇敢的。这给我留下了很深的印象,我觉得改革开放,与人的变化,如果没有一本书把它记录下来这段历史那就过去了。

M: 这本书就是记录这段历史了?

MJ: 对。

M: 那就是说除了 Toby Eady 给你一笔钱然后把你介绍给 publishers, 你觉得他还起了什么样的作用呢? 在你的写作与翻译的过程中?

MJ: 没有。

M: 在书评你的书中, 他起了些什么作用呢?

MJ: 也许他做了许多工作, 我不知道, 但从表面看代理人在这方面的作用并不大, 因为这主要是出版社在做事, 代理人主要把书介绍给出版社, 出版社信任代理人, 我想很多事情是出版社在操作。

M: 你这本书被划为旅游文学, 你觉得为什么这样划分呢?

MJ: 我根本不知道, 因为在这个国家, 我就根本不知道有这样的分类。

M: 也就是当时你并不知道为什么这样划分。

MJ: 我当时写的时候对旅行文学这个概念也不很清楚, 我也对他们说我只能写成一本小说, 至于这本小说归于什么类我倒是没有兴趣。后来我也注意观察了一下, 在英国他们这种旅行文学确实类别是很大的, 他们可以在法国比如说一住就住三年, 在非洲几个月写一本书, 这是他们的传统, 因为英国很小, 他们需要跑到别的国家去玩, 那么这样的文学是一个很大的传统了。后来我就接受了, 只要在风格上没有必要与任何人重复, 我就以我自己的愿望去写。

M: 你觉得这种划分是不是对以后的出版有利。当他们把你划分成旅游文化, 他们告诉你原因了吗?

MJ: 当然, 他们说你这个做为旅游文学会怎么样怎么样, 我说也可以, 无论这个小说是虚构还是不是虚构, 这对他们来说都有一个问题, 那就是一个旅行者在中國走来走去, 那么想要他们认为这是一个旅行的文学, 但从我的写作方面, 我是设计了一个写作结构, 一个小说结构, 这个结构就是当一个旅行者出去的时候, 象一个圆圈一样, 当他转了一圈以后, 他又回到了北京。就象一杯水, 当它烧开了, 但它还是那杯水, 这个变化就在这个过程中。

M: 为什么没想到它应该是个自传呢?

MJ: 没想到! 当时我小说里的地方其实也只是我旅行去过的地方的五分之一吧! 选了一部份, 有些地方在那儿生活, 也许很无聊, 有些地方比如说新疆、东北、安徽, 很多地方我都没有写, 因为比较无聊, 它没有什么故事。另外我也要把它集中一下往大西北, 寻找一种佛的精神, 往这个方向发展, 所以很多地方就删去了。它根本就不是我的传统, 文学性更高一些, 里面的人物也是我选择的, 但不是虚构的, 删去了大量的没有意义的人物。

M: 当你写 *Red Dust* 的时候你想到你的读者是谁吧？或你的第一读者。

MJ: 没有，完全是我自己在写，不喜欢任何人参与。写的过程中 Flora 问我写了多少了，我都讨厌，因为我不愿意让人们知道我在干什么，因为写完了以后给读者，是另一回事，但是写作的过程中，如果要面对读者的话，那就很滑稽了。

M: 但当你写这本书时，你想到没有，它会翻译成英文，有没有想到你的翻译，所以做一些调整？

MJ: 这个一定受到一些影响，因为在我写的时候，差不多写了一部份，Flora 就开始翻译了。那么这一翻译的时候就出现了一个问题，她要不断地问我，她所提出的问题就导致我写作时要尽量简单化，这肯定会出现的。因为和译者不再一个房间里，这个问题不会出现，但如果你们俩正好在一起，你随便写一个杯子，她肯定不满意，什么杯子，是玻璃的还是瓷的，带把的，不带把的，都不一样，这就把我的问题变复杂了。再一个在中文里的时间，这时那时都是很随便的，因为中文读者有一个默契，但是在英文里你必须确定。

M: 你觉得你的书的哪一部分西方读者感到很难理解？

MJ: 对他们来讲，我觉得最难懂的是我们活在一个专制的社会。这个专制的社会人的思想、人的语言方式都已经变了，对于他们来讲是很奇怪的，因为他们的专制已经是一百多年前的时候，与我们一个时代的他们都没有遇到过专制，可以说在西方专制已经消灭了，在中国还活着，我们的父母经常给我们说的话就是说话要小心，就对西方人来讲简直可笑。而且我们从小就有怕政府，因为我们把共产党与政府看成一个东西。西方人正相反，政府是为我们服务的一个机构而已，你怕谁？那是你选的。所以意识形态，后面的那种意识形态的东西，人的性格的东西，西方人很难理解的，因为这导致我们言语的风格，导致我们说话的方式。比如说我们不透明，比如说我们有双重人格。中国人那种(双重性格)你在你父母身上(会)发现:他们和这种人说话是一种性格，与另一种人说话，他们马上又是另一种性格。中国人你如果见那些官员，你可能见的还是少了，官员见到更大的官员说话是一种性格，见到比他低的，说话马上就变了，这在西方也是很奇怪的：你这人怎么来回变脸呀？但是中国人就这样，我们见了小孩都会变的，对吧？见了孩子会说：“去到那儿玩去”，一见了年长的“老爷爷您好，您多保重”，这简直是两个性格。在西方是一视同仁的，对年长与小孩是一样的，大家都说好，我觉得最难理解的就是这个问题。

M: 但你觉得他们最难理解的东西是不是他们最感兴趣的东西？

MJ: 你这句话说得有道理，也就是说人们对自己司空见惯的东西已经不太感兴趣了，对于自己不了解的，不知道的东西也正是他们感兴趣的。这就看你怎么叙述，因为我们也可以庆幸我们不活在那儿的社会，所以当我们的读完这本书的时候，我们发现我们正好不再那里，这是一种心情，或者对那种社会产生一种反感，我们会觉得我们这个社会反而相对的安全，或者说通过对比，我们会找出一些问题来，比如说你一辈子没

有进入到专制社会，你会知道专制社会的人是这样活着，或者你没有去过中国的那个文化里面，你会觉得社会的结构竟会是这样。

M: 英文版本只有一个版本，但中文版本有几个版本。你觉得为什么会有这么多版本，而且版本之间也不一样？

MJ: 因为在中国出版，他们改了我都不知道，总说要寄给我看一看，到最后出版了我也没看过，改得不象是我写的书了，这就是在中国这个共产党国家出版的下场，它必须有一个审查，最后的东西变得不是你的东西。台湾、香港版都是编辑改了一部分不懂的，就是个别的句子，没有大段大段的变化。那么至于中文版与英文版的区别，最主要是我与 Flora 的区别，Flora 在翻译的过程中，因为她与我住在一起，她觉得哪儿不好，她就不要了，我根本不知道，那么就变成她的小说了，我根本不知道。英文版出来了，意大利版出来了，我根本不知道译者是谁。我与 Flora 天天在一起，但她变了多少我根本不知道，但是有一个问题，那就是我必须信任她。我如果不信任她，这种变化是很恐怖的，但如果我信任她，她有这种文学的感觉，他对我的小说感(总体)有个了解，她再怎么变我也不害怕了。

M: 应该你是很信任她的

MJ: 对，这是前提，无论她怎么变，我都认为她对，她抓住了小说的本质东西，只要她认为在叙述中她认为这一块多余，那删去就删去吧！我根本不知道，毕竟那不是我的小说，我的小说永远是中文的，叫原造。

M: 当我们说起翻译过程，我想知道，你觉得你的这个书最难翻的是什么？

MJ: 我觉得最难翻的是 Flora 经常问我的问题，你要去问她，我记不清她经常问我的问题。

M: 我看了 *Red Dust* 中文版与英文版，觉得他们非常不一样。我想也许有一些改写发生在翻译过程中或编辑过程。如果在翻译过程中有这样的改写，你怎么看这些改写。

MJ: 首先有什么改写，我都不知道，因为我不能读，只是听别人说，那么这种过程对我来说，我希望永远不要发生这样的事，那就是一边在写，一边在翻译，那压力太大了，因为我在写的过程中，我都会变的，突然这个人物我就不要了，这段我需要在前面再加一万字……很多问题都牵涉着一个翻译对吗？那么翻译也跟着动，最后我写着什么跟她做着什么，我们俩找不到一起。我现在正在翻译这本小说，我不完全写完，我根本看都不给她看，因为我不想任何东西参与进来了，最后变成双人创作的感觉。因为我这改一段，她那么也要改，对她来说她也要参与一些意见，最后的英文就是她哪些听了哪些没听我根本知道了。

M: 如果有什么改动，你的翻译是与你商量的对吗？

MJ: 是。

M: 那么如果有分歧，到最后采取谁的意见？

MJ: 其实与我商量的一部分只是一小部份，而不是一大部份。她最后怎么变，哪些东西改掉了，我是不清楚的，但我只清楚一点那就是小说结构不能变，比如说这个小说里有 12 个人物，她不能变成 11 个，她顶多这一段她认为太多余了，不舒服了，把它删去。

M: 当你与 Flora 商量这本书的翻译过程的时候，你们一般谈些什么呢？

MJ: 我们谈的最多的还是社会背景，因为社会背景对一个西方人来说，由于他们没有在我们国家生活过，她不知道这句话语言后面的真正意义是什么，甚至也很难知道这语言后面的幽默，这东西只能在那儿生活，甚至南方人与北方人也不一样，北方人的幽默南方人听不懂……，因为你不懂语言后面的故事，东西文化里面这也是最大的一个差异，我们经常会谈论这方面的问题：你为什么这么写？那我就要讲出我为什么这么写的道理，这种事比较多。

M: 当你写这本书时，你预料到你这本书会很受欢迎吗？

MJ: 没有，我没想到。对我来说，后来到最后就 15 万字吧？如果没人管的话，这本书不止是 15 万字，可能就是 50 万字，如果让我放开写的话。这个过程我承认是受翻译的影响，我只能选最精炼最精炼的故事来描述。如果是二千字的东西我尽量用一千字写完，因为我急于把它写完，急于把它变成急于要读的东西，那么我就用最快的速度，这种速度导致了语言的简练，版本的小，但写完了以后，从中文的角度，我根本不过瘾。

M: 你以后出版的书，和你这本书比起来，哪本书是最好的？我指的是在西方出版的书。

MJ: 他们都没有我以前写得好。我在西方出版的很少嘛，只有三本，对不对？（《拉面者》、《亮出你的舌苔或空空荡荡》），要是从文学的角度来看，我还是喜欢我的那本《亮出你的舌苔或空空荡荡》，虽然它很小，但它是我早期的东西。我为什么说我早期的东西要比现在好呢？因为我早期的东西，那时候完全是我一个人的一种问题，与社会的关系不是太大，这样写作的语言与思想是不一样的。和 *Red Dust* 比，我喜欢《拉面者》，因为 *Red Dust* 对我来讲并不是一个我满意的作品，以后也不会是我满意的作品，因为从中文角度来讲，我是想写出五十万字的东西，我写的很简练、我写得不过瘾。我自己这种体会是很深的，我最好的书，到现在也没有翻译过，比如（《九条叉路》），比如说（《思惑》），全是我很大的长篇。

M: 为什么没有不翻译呢？

MJ: 我对 Flora 说过，她说这些故事可能西方人觉得没意思，代理人觉得这些故事好象……比如说《九条叉路》我是写的云南插队的，跟云南（基诺人），他们把那种山神、石头神那种崇拜放在一起，那种矛盾，对汉人来讲改天换地在毛泽东时代是正常

的，担对他们来说呢，就是把他们的神给毁灭了。小说描写的是一开始他们就活在人神之间，我不知道 Flora 是不是给 agent(谈)，因为我做什么事都通过她，我肯定说过，但她这一关就把我给掐死了。

M: 你还有什么想补充的，或想说的呢？

MJ: 关于写作，我想最大的问题，是一个中文作家在一个不是中文的国家里，他的写作是非常痛苦的，因为对他来说讲他每天见到的人，每天见到的事务都不能进入他的小说里，那么他只好靠他的记忆，他的回忆来写作，而他的记忆，只能是写他在原语言的社会里，比如说我有五年没有回中国，我将失去五年中国的记忆，这五年我不能描述，我描述也不如活在中国的作家描述得好，那么这种痛苦是非常的大，一个作家与其它行业的人最大的不同就是：离开社会就是一种自杀，最有意思的是为什么历代封建皇帝都把作家给赶出去、流放、流亡，他们怎么不流亡那些商人呢？但是一个作家一流亡，就是一辈子的痛苦，这种经历对我们的打击是很大的。对年轻作家就不一样了，他们与这个国家的关系就不一样了，比如说你 19 岁就生活在这个国家，这就是他记忆的一部分。我是指的一个成熟的作家，他的语言，他的风格都已确定了，那是(一个)问题，因为一切要重新开始。

Interview with Wei Hui

MENG Pei (M): Could you tell me a little about what it initially made you thinking of writing this book?

Wei Hui (W): Basically people always say good you know ... the time I was in living in Shanghai, you know my friends are kind of avant-garde artists this kind of wild kids .. I didn't feel so clearly that the Chinese new generation is totally different, their value, their attitude and their style. They are totally new generation so I just felt like 'ok I know this like and I want to write a book about the new generation except these about cultural revolution whatever since time are changing and new things show up I just want to (..) to write the story which I am familiar with, like club life, rock and roll or the kids you influenced from Western culture, pub culture and worship about them. So that's how I just generally writ because the timing is there and new things show up.

M: How did you deal with the fact that shanghai baby was banned in China in 2001, can you presume the reason why Chinese government banned your book?

W: The newspaper says the sexuality or negative. But I still want to say it is a official reason, for me I feel like the whole society, you know, the mainstream culture they are really afraid of the so called new thing- the kids like look monster to them. The value is so different, they are, the way they talk, the way they live is totally different from the old tradition, so I guess the way my book portrayed the new generation is so vivid and all most like so real, so they feel kind of upset, I think that is the main reason, anything new show up, the main stream always, the first reaction is 'oh what's this' you know, people don't like, not only in China' everywhere human being don't really like these change, so the first reaction is well it is monster, they don't do anything, they just simply press it and banned it. I think the sexuality in China there are quite a lot of books sexual still get published and were not banned.

M: Well when you are writing Shanghai baby, I want to know what kind of audience did you have in your mind.

Wei: What do you mean? Oh the imaginary audiences, ok, I think just young people, the is the every my instinct, because I speak for them, somehow I thought it might feel empathetically towards the scene, it's kind of picture and life style in my book, I can not say all Chinese young people living in the style, this kind of style you know, but since in China the gap between country and urban is quite big and still the urban city culture are dominating, so it's also very good judge through how to say for people to tell these changes happening in china between urban and city coming more rapid and dramatic. That's why I do think it's strange and so the target is to the new generation, young people, I don't real feel like specially speak for man or woman, I just feel ok fine I will just write these. They were ()

M: I want to know at the time of your writing, did you know that Shanghai baby would be translated into English?

W: No, not all I even cannot imagine I can live or travel in the West and go out China, it is impossible for single young woman in China. Chinese visa almost guaranteed like reject of visa, let along you are single and young, it's very like suspicious that you would be like a emigration there, so it's very hard.

M: But what made you publish your book in Britain.

W: No, it's not that I want to publish, it is because my agent and publisher come to me, I just go with flow, sometime there is a big picture there you know and they arrange things for you, you don't really have to try so hard. They just contact me, my agent contact me and then the publisher go to my agent because they know each other well. So it is very easy.

M: Do you have a Chinese agent.

W: No, I don't have Chinese agent. In China we don't have agent.

M: What did you come to work with your translator?

W: It's good question. Translation somehow is like a (), it is always bother me if it is bad for example 'Marry Budd' translation is much better than Shanghai Baby. The reason is that the second translator, she is woman first of all she can catch the woman's voice and you know I work with her like literarily word by word, for example she translate the one chapter, she would email me so I will check every words. The first one was .. because my English was not that advanced enough to be able to do that, and I didn't do anything, he is a man so, now I read it I feel it lost a little bit poetic and girls voice, the quality of heart, it's very subtle, basically he did a great job, otherwise the book would not sell so well.

M: How did you know get to know your translator?

W: This one, he come to me through internet, the second one I tried so hard I interviewed like thirty candidates it was frustrating I just could fine one until this lady come to me and she gave me a sample of translating , so it's hard work to find a good translator.

M: So with your translator, what kind of questions did you discuss with your translator especially with regard to some chances made to the Chinese text?

W: Because language is very different Chinese and English so in certain way she has to change into well in my eyes I like literal, she said look it is too literal, it is not English, people would laugh at it, it's so twisty you know so funny. In that case I do compromise. I do understand something might be impossible.

M: How about *Shanghai Baby*?

W: He didn't ask me any question only some vocabulary, for example some dish in Shanghai he didn't understand he would ask me. He asked in very simple way just say 'what's this?' the second translator ask me more sophisticated questions and I really involved deeply with second translator. Sometime I hated the way she twisted my work, it sounds so great in

Chinese but why she made so plain in English. But she said it is English it's different, so I have to compromise.

M: In your view what is most difficult about translating *Shanghai baby* into English?

W: Difficult? Because I didn't really get involved into translation, I didn't ask questions so much but the weakness I can see now about *Shanghai baby* translation some kind of subtleness for example I really feel some passages he cannot and also very current, I was like very young I was at the time use(ing) young language, our own secret code in some certain way we say it but unfortunately he is a fifty year old man so he cannot really (use) like be current (language) because my work is quite catch the new challenge (trend) and very current.

M: Why do you think *Shanghai baby* has become very popular in the west?

W: I think some one would say ban in china is such a () for you, someone even say sexuality. I say no sexuality don't even think about that in the west much more films based on much more provocative works, and also the fact that first of all I can attract media attention you know give me a chance to stand on the stage to show this work but after all it like PR camping, but this book something about this book has a strong appeal for example people always see Paris, London and Tokyo as modern. After read my book they say 'oh I cannot believe China is so modern now. I mean if look at shanghai now shanghai can be Paris, London or Tokyo, you cannot imagine such kind of life style can happen in a communist country like China. Most of the novels still talk about Cultural Revolution for example some novels or some non-fiction or some even worse like grandmamma was bound little feet. So that's very old, China is right now running so fast so my book is like very strong fresh words from China, let people see what is urban culture, the youth culture and the totally modern china, the new face you know so I want to show our really, especially the pubs there are many American and Japanese.

M: How did you work with editor?

W: The first book I didn't work with the editor, oh I worked a little bit. The editor, he found the French version is much better. The first stage English translation he just cannot read it so he had to find French, he can speak good French so he compared the French copy (to English) and he did most edition by himself, and I remember when I stayed in London in 2001 he captured the opportunity, we spent four hours together he asked the questions and I just answered. He is a wonderful editor.

M: I am just wondering if the editor changed sth regarding *Shanghai Baby*.

W: Certainly I guess in this situation I have noticed he uses some French words '十里洋桥' for example because in the first page in the *Shanghai Baby* he use French words I believe that is more preciously than the original one (English one).

M: Where does he use the French words apart from that?

W: I don't know you can check because his French is wonderful. You check the first page in the Shanghai Baby. Just like shanghai in 1930s 十里洋桥 is like so much bright light and CDs Shilinism the word he used similar but much more complex.

M: I would like to know about your agent -Toby Eady- what kind of suggestions did your agent Toby Eady has given in the English translation.

W: Nick is a very simple editor and he gives all the power to him. Agent really don't involve nowadays. Your mean translation or edition?

M: After the work is translated, what did he do to make the book sell?

W: He is a very good gentleman, he also like introduce some media, there are not many agents would do as much as he did. In some sense he is really like, very rare , very good and very old-fashioned agent.

M: In what way he did more than other agent do?

W: For example, agents not necessarily do media, he would do that, it's one big thing.

M: Did you expect your book –Shanghai Baby – has received so much popularities in the West?

W: I didn't in the West nor in the UK. It was the best seller over the eleven countries, it is even the number one in Island, in Singapore and Japan. I think it's very hard for Chinese book written in Chinese, Jung chang, she wrote her book in English, it is rare for contemporary Chinese literature originally written in Chinese get such success in the west basic still and by that time now people can read but by that there are strong censorship in China, there are many interesting books in China.

M: Do you have any other thoughts or things that you like to say that I have not covered here?

W: No, that's all.

Interview with Xinran

MENG Pei (M): You books *Good Women of China* and *Sky Burial* have actually attracted a great attention from British readership and literary press, could you tell me a little bit about what made you initially think of writing this book ?

Xinran (X): I think my first book and second book both in my life I learnt the first lesson and second lesson, as you know I got out from China, my life has been weathered and watered by Chinese media and Chinese education system, Chinese society and Chinese culture as well. But that time since 1950's , late 50's to 1980's until I work , I think whole Chinese society's like a desert in the culture, custom traditional, your know education as well. As many people know already that time China had been exhausted by world wars, by Japanese, Second World War and also Korean War Cultural Revolution, Vennan War, all of this kind of historical matters. So for me, when I start being a journalist, I was very shocked by what I saw in countryside. Because I thought when you living where is safe, and equal living in the countryside, even we were very poor we took () for the food for the meat for the rice you know. I thought what I have got to stay. Once I went to the countryside I found there is a big difference between the cities and countryside, also I realise life could be very different in China between the women and men as well so this is why I start research on this project about 8 years and I discovered many stories, I interviewed more than two hundred women , I was doing is like what you are doing today; sometimes I could record sometime even I couldn't tell people I am a journalist because they scared, they've never been told how to talk, how to speak aloud, how to make their own () on sth so that's very difficult but that's () on me to say how I am and, what kind of life, in China, in my life time but I still can feel China's my eight of experience research just like a drop of water compare to the ocean . I did feel and I still feel my experience is the drop of water you can explain a cup of green tea, or a Chinese woman's life, so this is my first lesson in my first book. The second lesson is in my second book *Sky Burial* because after a few years I've been through this journalist experience, I was very stupid and I didn't realise how stupid I was. I thought I knew quite a lot and I learnt quite a lot so I use a lot of adjectives and adverbs judge since I thought what was right and what was wrong but actually after this story I dig out and I listen to her and I didn't believe her I thought she was mad, because I've been in Tibet before I met her. It was impossible for me as any Chinese woman without knowledge or language to stay there which is a mountain area high more than 4 or 5 thousands higher, very higher and very few people living there and life style is on whole's dark follow the season to moving all the time, you never see any house at all and life is very cheap, and very how do you say.. very difficult . so I met her she told me she's been there thirty four years because her husband died and she's got a certificate she was told she just married her husband and three weeks later after their wedding her husband was sent to Tibet as a military doctor and then afterwards he died she didn't believe it's true. She was only twenty-six, she was very emotionally and she didn't believe the message was right so at the time, army need doctors as well, so they allow her join the army and went to Tibet and then she told me and say what really touch my was the first time we stayed in the same hotel, very kind hotel, two stars hotel and we have a very small two single beds, what she's wearing Because I've been in Tibet long time ago,

always wonder when people travel pray all the way from north to south Tibet, which is Dalai Lama come from LAsA. Without luggage, people moving around the world I've never seen any Tibetan carry a luggage. I always wonder where is their luggage because the first time being there, that's very short stay, and then I've realised the Tibet wrap is their luggage. I thought to myself 'this woman must come from there because she knew how to manage, but I was very stupid as I didn't realise until the year after I went to Tibet again, I lived there and a few days later I realise everything she told me was true. Also I want to know I ask my mummy, I said 'do you know this story' my mum told me very very calmly 'everyone in the army in 1960 knew this story' I was so surprise I said 'why I didn't know that?' No one told me and I never read from the text books, or newspaper even research for me so difficult and my mother said 'how much we know each from the history to today, how we talk about between the generations in the Chinese culture and customs?'. You know not only the language problem, is the knowledge, is custom, is the culture, traditional thing, this is made me think how I understand my mother, so I decided dig out the story for myself, for myself actually to understand my mother's age, my mother's time. And I did the interview more than fifteen each side, China side and Tibet. When I got their stories I was so socked by the ignorance, by the poor knowledge, by the misunderstood, actually everybody goes to each other is for the great glorious reason by the Chinese said 'I go there for the liberation', and Tibetan said, you know, 'Chinese know nothing, they don't understand us, so they treated Chinese, British, all of other people as the same. So all of these made me think, when we use adjectives and adverbs as most journalists like it to make these information in the coloured, this is right or wrong? Because these colour has been limited by the journalists knowledge, research, information, and personal understanding and also personal thought in the clever way and stupid way as well. Afterwards I said to myself I won't use to write adjectives and adverbs, and I want to respect the facts if I can explain and describe things by the verb, by the facts that is the best way to the fact, especially the history you need to use lots of research to explain. So it's why I said to myself this is my second lesson in my life. So these two books for me: the first book I want to write to present Chinese women's life to the Western, because I come to the London, I was very shocked by how little they know about China, and about Chinese women as well totally well pictured, like they believe Chinese panda in western media is like the panda eat not bamboo eats bone, meat, you know totally wrong picture for me. So I was very shocked by this, so this is way I wrote the first book. The second book was for myself then again why do the publicity for the first book, and people ask me 'there's a swimming pool in China? Otherwise how could you swim' and they ask me lots of this kind of questions, even the people say 'do you have international airplane, so it really shocked me. You know what China is, why people punish the Chinese students when they want to see the world, they have a long queue in the visa office of each single embassy in the world because they punished all the government but the students carried this, actually this is really not unfair, so I gave the book to the publish, actually the second book is for myself because in my life I kept writing to her all the time, because I really respected her as a person, inspired woman for the love, for her husband for years, that's why I want to give this book to ...

M: She is in China or she is in Britain?

X: I met her was in China 1994, afterwards, I was stupid let me her go, afterwards I never met her again. I went to army, I called her, I went to many places try to find any records. The thing is the Chinese records are very poor, very very poor, unbelievable. Partly it's Cultural Revolution, partly is Chinese never have this kind of recode system, they just remember who is the empire, who is the thirst founder, you are not in power, no one know you at all. So the history is forgotten history so it's very difficult for me.

M: Exactly, but at the time when you were writing what kinds of audiences do you have in your mind when you're writing these two books?

X: This is completely different as I mentioned to you the second book is for myself, this why I wonder the translator finished the first translation my editor said it's very dry, it's not very juicy or.... It is too dry, they said it is not much adjectives and adverbs, not very literary. But I said the first book is for myself, is from my heart to my heart, I don't need to dress them too much, I want to be very naked, let human being talk from heart to heart. Secondly I still believe, when they said this to me I said I respect the salt much more valued, who do you say. You know salts people when they give you menu they always tell you the beautiful and delicious source but I believe the basic come from salt, very simple, the salt, original. So I respect that because no matter how many source you made, it's basic come from salt. So if you talk something, you know what is salt make the taste, I think is the best, because that is simple. Simple is power, so this is my principle. So the first book was dry because I don't think that needs much cloth or make-up. You know the silence is powerful, if you can understand what silence is, could be very powerful. This book, I believe after read a lot of people will remember these story, not because beautiful words, which is repeated by the thousand media and writers. This story is silence, very powerful. So this is the second one. The first one I have to honest, because it is written for the western because I tried to let people realise why Chinese people have this kind of life, not only we are who we are or where we are or what's kind we are, it is very important to come from our roots, this roots could be anywhere so people said because communist party is ok... my family has paid high price; so many people died in the Cultural Revolution, we have to be honest to the fact. I think this kind women's problem happen in any country, even developed, America, UK, France, go back to fifty years ago, or even thirty years ago even now in the countryside still the same. I was told by a French journalist 11 of them in Paris, first time I was there, the first journalist come to me said 'you know I am so touched by your book because it exactly happened in France in the countryside' I said what you mean, I thought my image wrong she said 'oh this countryside, it is mountain area in France women have to serve men; to have lunch first and then they have a right to eat' I said 'no it's impossible in France' She said 'yeah, just check' afterwards the same day I was interviewed by a 11 journalists except one, 10 out of 11 said 'yes absolutely truth'. So this' really shocked me and also made me realised China is not far away from rest of the world even from a developing world. The problems is we don't know both side so we thought we have the problems. Like lots of the women psychologically they have lots of problems and they say only this happen to me. Lots lots of people have a lot same experience.

M : What in your view is most difficult for western readers to understand about your book?.

X: I think the most difficult is they always ask me why stupid Chinese women don't stand up to keep fighting for the human rights and democracy and freedom. This is really made me to face the question. I can understand why but I just cannot understand why they ask me this. I told the story, very simple I said 1995 I met a woman in Hunan, in the centre China, Mao Zhe-dong's home town. I ask them question I said 'if you have a chance to make choice for three questions: one is democracy and freedom, land and money, one is husband and children, which will you take?' there is women who is working in the rice field she said to me 'land and money, do tease me, never belong to women, and then husband and children, that's my God and my life, that's mainly for women, democracy and freedom', she said 'how much each kilogram of the democracy and freedom?' I said 'this is not for sale'. She said you see the freedom is that oil?'. Because Chinese pronunciation of *freedom* is same as Chinese cooking oil. And then she ask me about pig. She thought '*democracy*' pronunciation similar with pig. Ok of the nation if the more than 79 percentage population had no idea what is freedom and democracy, how could you manage in this way ? this is ridiculous. So when people ask me this question, I thought myself, you know, my God they have no idea what is actual situation in China at all; the population, education system, cultural roots and even religions and society and independent legal system and sexual knowledge. They have no idea about it, how could they understand Chinese women. They do understand for example before 1990's in China we would be never allowed freedom of the religion, freedom of the talks, no one know how to talk at all. When started my reading of my interview, I ask people 'did you have a nice day' most of them lost. They've never been asked. They just single way; because from the emperor to earth to tell what you should do, you just do it. If you say why or what... you could be killed, just like that. So went to the countryside to interview some peasants, why educated peasants reply your question with (), why funny? It's very interesting ... we never had independent legal system, never, not in the communist party in the history. The western and different farmer specially developed country different is the religion roots is the part of part of legal system roots as well, do you understand what I mean? The king and the church.

M: That was historical not now.

X: Yes, today is come from that kind of roots, little by little but two hundred years. The first concept to today is about two hundred years, people say you have democracy, you have the legal system, you have, go back to history to see it little by little, it come from

M: From religion?

X: Yes, from religion roots, not from religion, from religion influence. I can see the difference between China, not only China, but oriental society, and the legal system and governmental system are completely different, the Christianity, completely different, very interesting, actually it come from the roots for instance, and more. And also in China before the 1990's we've never had sexual culture, they have a beautiful, if you see they have lots of this kind of books but before 17 century never come to the ordinary people, after 17 century only scholars have a right to read and China start public sexuality in 2002. The first time

China 5 thousand years history if the whole population, yeh, grow up are formed by this kind of forbidden, culture, is no way you can judge them or understand them by your knowledge.

This is actually very unfair for most of the western to see China with their own knowledge by their understanding formed by their own cultural and religion roots. You have to see why they come from like that. So this is for me very very difficult. My book *Good Women of China* should be ten times or even fifty times bigger than that. Because I didn't realise until the book talk. People's question wake me up. I said my second book is my second lesson. Why touch the Tibet, why touch the 1950's. I was so shocked, so shocked was really happened in people's eyes, on people's mouth, because I was very well educated but very simple colour and in a very strong view that they went to Tibet is for liberation, people, farmer, slaves etc. It is true, yeh, but the system wait and stand up like the soldier said to me he met a slave who was afraid by the Chinese and immediately run back to the monastery and accept the king because he believe the next life, he doesn't curious life, he needs to go to heaven. How many Chinese understand that, like today American understand what's happened in the Middle East. Why they believe you give what you give is the best for what they needs.

M: And English version of your book *The Good Women of China* actually came before the Chinese version, how did it happen?

X: Because first of all I taught in SOAS 1998. My student come to me, who is Italian boy, he come to me said 'why Chinese women in my history text book is terrible. In the book said 'Chinese women physically they are short of emotionally selves because they don't need sexual partner, they don't wear beautiful cloth, even they don't have taste, and eat noodles everyday' they are in the book. He asked me if it's true and he asked me 'why you are so different from these' I was so shocked. So I said I am going to write a book about Chinese women is emotionally rich really, that book is for western, so why finish writing my first hope is you see real published on the west, and also we tried to publish the book at the same time in China as well. Shanghai join the publishing and bought the book very quickly, but the book were stopped with other 39 books. I didn't want to tell people. I want people take time to understand China. No one can improve this country over the night.

M: It was published first in Chinese in Taiwan or in Hong Kong.

X: Taiwan was the beginner, is very quick one.

M: The Taiwan version and Main land china version, what do think of these two versions, which version do you think is closer to what you were intending to write?

X: The Taiwan one.

M: The Taiwanese one.

X: Taiwan one didn't cut much, this is A). B) I was very lucky, I've got a very good editor, she really understand my book,. She said this book talk about women's life include, you

know the sex, basic, it is not for people to see freedom of the women. It's the book to help people to understand Chinese women's life.

M: So the publisher in main land China you think has changed some part of you book.

X: Yes, also they said my words was too shape.

M: So they made it soft. Your second book *Sky Burial*, are you intending or are you planning to publish in Chinese in Taiwan or in mainland China?

X: Yes, the second book hasn't gave out because I wan to see the result of the first book (publishing in China) and also the second book honestly is written to myself and now the western has very good review and also very strong review as well. So I think maybe, and I've also learnt from translation, (which is) lost quite a lot, for about 25% translation has lost.

M: That much!

X: More than that, more than that. So I will want to,,,,, I want to editor of this book to have readers and audience to understand more clear in (next edition) in Chinese. Because even Chinese when they read it, a lot of people ask me question as well. Kownledge is very important. For me, because I have been for years for this research, so for me is not the question any more. You know like breakfast, lunch or dinner, I think two or three years I have go the result. Now because I understand so it's very logical. The readers when they read it still ask me because I gave the book to some students to read, 12 of them read that and say 'I don't understand, what it that for?' even in Chinese language they don't understand and also that book for me is so difficult because she told me story half Chinese and half Tibetan, yeh she can't , she couldn't give me the name of the Tibetan in Chinese, she learnt them from Tibetan. She knew what it is in Tibetan language so she cannot give me the Chinese one.

M: How did you understand the Tibetan language, was there somebody who translated it from Tibetan into Chinese?

X: No, I went to Tibet, even a lot of people to find out what it is? Because afterwards I couldn't remember what she said to me, like the breakfast even the person's name. I really cannot remember because very difficult this is another language then I asked her (that) exception for Tiananmen definitely I know, so I asked her afterwards she fed up with me and said 'just remember the name, that's better'. There is 'summer customs', so I ask people you have summer customs, people said that is ' '. it's very difficult for me to confirm her story again, again and again. Actually I followed her story, follow the seasons, completely rewrite the ...

M: Was that the reason for you to find two translators to translate this story?

X: Yeah, I want to know if someone (is) knowledgeable (enough) to get it, and also when Esther translated it and people say book is very dry, and also the knowledge they don't make sense what she said, I know it's very difficult for Esther too, so they said Julia Lovell is high level and very, you know, s very people has Chinese literary PhD. Actually, I think she

doesn't understand completely as well. She understands my Chinese words..... I cannot, this is my principle if I don't understand this item completely I shouldn't do something in the wrong way. You know what I mean a lot people describe the box. This is a Chinese box, and people say 'look, it has a Chinese poem I just tell them it come from Han dynasty or Qin but I cannot say exactly what it is, so I cannot use the adjectives and adv to describe it . I think it's the wrong way. And also the newspaper come out already So they think it is very dry not very literary.

M: Eventually which translation did you use or you used the both?

X: Actually, I much prefer Esther's, because Julia Lovell she is very good, because she is high literary level so she is very different, for me Esther 's language is very detailed so she transfer the language meaning more than Julia Lovell, and Julia Lovell is translate the literary meaning. For me that book is not much literature. I want people to understand is from the language meaning as the book. You know the Chinese verb, English just use *take* Chinese has a more than hundred difference say how do you take it. This is why I like Chinese words because we have five hundred yeas characters, the history so very rich verb. English language is based on *Bible*, most come from *Bible*. As you can see it's not like Chinese. I cannot judge English, just for me.

M: When you write the two books, did you expect that they would be translated into English.

X: That was the first one.

M: Did it in any way affect the content of your writing?

X: I think I thought about this. Because for Chinese writing I didn't need to mention what it is. When you face the western readers you have to explain when east women use this for what, for example we cook dumplings Chinese we use special *Lou Shao*. The western use completely different item and different way to use. If you write for English or other language, you have to explain this item, explain this action, explain this body language. Like in my office I have a colleague he likes to use his pen to dot this table means he disagree. You know it is very Chinese language, you know it's very Chinese. That is why I thought about this. But not the second book , the second book is very difficulty because of the language because of the Tibetan. I don't think I am qualified to explain. Actually I tied to avoid it. You know because I am honestly with one family met many many people but, just like you, do the interview for two hours, how could you describe this personality . This is why I didn't spend a lot of time to describe the Tibetan family she stay with, because she couldn't tell me in the Chinese way. Imagine even I met some of them I can see what she mean, her meaning, her calm not means Chinese.

M: Regarding the translation I want to know in your view what is the most difficult about translating your books.

X: I think is the cultural knowledge. You think their English are very very good, but not actually, because when they cannot get it they go the dictionary , the dictionary is the twenty

words become one or they say ok because of this verb they have to plus more than five sentences to see this verb, if your editor and translator have enough time.

M: Do you think your editor and translator have got enough time.

X: in other language (English) if they see the picture they see the meaning, they don't want to get this passion come out, for me it is painful because I love Chinese language, I love verb. In my view I have two principle A) I never use the same sentences start my program and in the same story I never use the same verb because I like to give people the feelings different language very different pictures.

M: So do you think your translator did understand the way you use the language and translated in the

X: They do, but very difficult for they to transfer the information to another language.

M: What big issues or what kind of issues did you discuss with your translator specially regard to the major changes.

X: I think just cultural knowledge and historical facts.

M: when the translator made some big changes in your ...

X: No not. Esther always discuss with me because she is very careful with the language this is why I am very happy with her. Julia Lovell she is high qualified and I am quite scared with her. I like her very much we are very good friends because her level is very high so she is the person who give me the impression that she just picked what she thinks the best. But I sure her English level and my Chinese level maybe is the same one, even her English level higher than my Chinese level, but if the other way around, I am not sure of her Chinese level is as good as my Chinese level..... This is why I always say I prefer Esther's translation, because I can say Esther's translation is followed my writing, very close to my writing but as English literary (writing) book, Julia is much better than Esther. Because Julia Lovell is professional literature writing researcher, and Esther is a language teacher, this is the different level. Like myself, I believe I am a very good journalist but I never believe I am a very good writer. I think because the language they made beautiful.

M: I understand that some of the changes have been made by the editor, have you been consulted by the editor?

X: Most of them, I think Rebecca, this is why I like Rebecca very very much, she doesn't feel the same because she thought I was hurt and I was suffered by her cutting. She is a very very good editor, top. Why I said she is very good because of her question, her question is very detailed means she really thinks, she really you know educated. Some other language they never ask me such question like that. When she make up the question, make question means double thought.

M: Sorry, what do you mean by 'Questions'.

X: During her editing, she always ask me many many questions. Some questions are very detail. This means Rebecca has read carefully and she thought carefully. This is good, some of the language they never ask you they thought they understand even actually understand in the wrong way.

M: So you are very happy with the changes she has made?

X: Most of them, not hundred percent. First book I was happy because she tried very hard to understand. She did a big change is the structure for the homosexual in the other order. She changed after I had a very open-minded (talk) with her say Why I listed the stories in my order, I explained. I think Rebecca, I want to be very honest with you , because Rebecca is very good so she got very strong character. Her only problem is pity for me; she always try to restructure book before she had a long talk with the author. She always believe she understand the book better than author. This is her problem actually my second book she tried to restructure again and then after our long discussion, she said 'oh yes we should let it stay' you know. Because this is (what) I really worry as an editor if you believe your taste no matter how great editor you are, how great artist how great painter you are, you always you part of your work is copy machine, because you are the person, you are limited by human being. The book is different because the author is different the story is different. But if the editor always try to disturb this book, after people can discover, or can find all of your book you edited in the one point same. It's very dangerous, because we are humane being, if some thing you never change you cannot change, this is your part of your personality already. So that's two books with Rebecca two big problem is every time

not only with me, all of her writers we had discussion together, they said the same things. She try to restructure book before she had a long meeting with the author. She read it and restructure it then she meets the author with the new book. Actually I think it is the wrong way you should listen to, ask the author why you put it this way. Is there any way we can change because what I thought. This cost her a lot of time. She read very carefully and spend a lot time to do and afterwards she put everything back, she said I have no time to do. This is her redo it and actually this is her attitude to respect the book , respect author.

M: So sometimes she had to go back or she didn't want to ...

X: My two books exactly she just go back, I felt so pity for her because she is so busy; she wants to improve her position in the publishing house and she want to get more power and year she has to do more than ten books why you spend time like that, but she is very good and she wants to show people she is very good and she can make the book, well how do we say, better. If you don't understand people how do you judge which is the best, so this is Rebecca's problem. She is a very good editor.

M: Xinran what is the understanding of the role the editor has played I mean what the rules the editor should be aware of.

X: I worked as an editor for a magazine. Yes it's different. But magazine is quite similar. The first principle I always asked the writer if I have a question I don't understand or if I think the point is not good enough or it's very good, I made three points; one point is very very good in this I want to make it stronger so I asked the author, the second the weakest I asked author why this couldn't be better and the third is not very important I want to tick it off. So I always ask, because the weakest is normally not good point, weakest sometime could be very good to support the strongest.

M: your first book *The Good Women of China* you told me there were twenty something storied initially?

X: there were thirty stories and came up fifteen stories.

M: Was the editor cut them or

X: No I have cut them, it's too much. I think they have to analyze backwards. First of all obviously it's readable, and marketable otherwise they don't need work for the company. The word company, they have made money make market. So these two are very important and then go back readable and marketable is in the different levels; high level or low level.. High level is to reach cultural information we talk about the translation, but these based on conditions A) I think is cultural information, otherwise it's no point to translate if the state can happen in this country why do you say it is Chinese book. So I said to Toby, my husband, 'my book is given from the other and Chinese book in the western is not take away in the western, is the Chinese book from Chinese restaurant in China' even just tinny in the street, doesn't matter. Very important it's my principle. I don't want to be a popular Cantonese food in a big restaurant in London, no, that's not my book. So I said it to them and one of the editing is my principle as well. Normally I don't fight with them ... they take off all of the Chinese knowledge in my second book was very painful for me. Because Rebecca, she said it's not make sense so she just took away. I said could you try to make that sense, because I sent eight years research she said 'what's this? I couldn't understand it.' I said 'can we have to understand it, this is the value of the book' if every body understand it as love story. She said 'if it have a story, that's fine, it happened in Tibet' I said 'without that it doesn't have a support, knowledge and customs support, this story could (have) happened here , what's the point for me (to write this book). I did the research and dig out all of the customs daily life is I want to tell the story is different. Because she couldn't get time....I quite understand, honestly I cried here for 14 hours. I ask myself I write this book for what. Because I asked her 'why you cut that so much' She said 'it's not make sense, a lot of things I cannot understand' include she.. really Rebecca's second book is for me is really really painful, suffer experience. I tell you because you do research about translation. Her first problem is, the big big things until now I am worried is she put something copy the internet to my book. Like Buddhists was send by the Chinese princess from the Tang dynast to the Tibet. I was so shocked when I read that. I said 'where this come from'. She said 'from internet' I said 'please Rebecca never believe internet. You know she didn't ask and she didn't tell me. She said she did research she want to know who the Buddhist influenced Tibet. I said 'I tried very hard and I want to find out and I found it, it's from 200 AD from north, actually civil war

come from all from south (Nipple). You know this is very important, she get this. I couldn't find out. It is still a question. So she just put in. She took off a lot of sentence like ... she put in the copied Tiananmen Square. I said 'no impossible, Tiananmen is huge', She said 'no no I have never heard about Tiananmen Square is huge' I said 'do you know the size of the Tiananmen' She said ' I cannot get it from the internet' I said to her ' Rebecca I promise you, you drive from Tiananmen Square, each side more than five minutes so at least fifteen minutes you can run Tiananmen Square. How could you cut it. In 1950s just for daily life not the big movement, you know this kind of things she cut cut cut. It really make me painful. And afterwards we had a emotional talk. I said 'Rebecca you cannot go on book is cut like that. And she said 'I haven't got time recheck or to edit sentence by sentence' So I cried 14 hours, I said to myself. She was very honest she said she want the book to improve her position. So next morning I submit it. It is very difficult to the both translators, Julia Lovell, I am sure almost just ... Esther just translated very very details, but the details made it lost. Rebecca felt not make sense, she cannot because of her knowledge she cannot understand. So give her CD and tapes, as you watch it because all the customs 60 or70 percent in there, because I watched 240 hours to make sure what include there, what they do, what is the big festival, how did they manage. You know because my language even my Chinese I cannot manage I don't know what's that. The image can support because Esther watched the video to make the translation. So I said to her 'you can watch it' she said 'I don't have time to watch it'. For me ten years like my life, for her she hasn't got time. So the second book for me is big big problem.

M: So you are more happy with the first one?

X: This is my decision. I shouldn't complain this. I understand Rebecca, you know as a young mother of two kids... I have sympathy about her. But the problem the book you need time. And also translation you really need time, you don't know the knowledge behind the word, how could you transfer into another language.

M: When you translate it into Chinese would write something to help people to understand your book?

X: In Chinese language people felt they can understand before I use Chinese knowledge to explain that. If you have no Chinese language then it is far away from Tibetan language.

M: Actually you second book has received popularity as well. Very successful. Is it out of your expectation?

X: Yes.

M: Make you surprise?

X: I am quite surprised, made her surprise as well, she didn't put her name on my book. She was so worried. I beg her four times, because I think I write it for me. The first book was so successful, if the second book, people say I changed editor means I was disappointed with my editor. I wanted to tell people I respect my editor and translator so much, and I don't want to change. She was so scared. Afterwards, the first review was written by ..., she wrote a very

big good review, I was very surprised. I got criticised as well, he said how I know Tibet, very few but they did. I don't worried because I am not politician and also I am not expert about it. I just tell people what I heard what I did what I saw.

Interview with Nick Robinson

MENG Pei (M): Could I start by asking you about your educational background and how did you come to work in publishing and editing?

Nick Robinson (N): Background was studying art history, and I worked, after I left university for an arts magazine called *The Pilot*. Then I worked, then I got fired from that, but then I got a job at “Chatton & Windus” who are a literary publisher who in those days were independent. Then I worked there, then I worked for a packager producing illustrated books. So I was a commissioning editor, then I set up my own publishing company in 1985 and then we bought Constable and that was Robertson publishing. Then I bought Constable in 2000 at just about the turn of the century. So my background is editorial, but I don’t edit many books today. I mainly publish and deal with running the company rather than editing but I’ve done a lot of editing in the past and I got involved with *Shanghai Baby* because the translation was so literal and so bad in terms of that it was not ... It may have been a very accurate translation but it was not readable from the point of view of the sort of person who might buy the book, the same sort of age as we are ... women of the same age were not going to be able to read the translation as it was very 19th Century. So then having bought the book, no one else would, and it was bought by some interest in America and by us and the editorial director here said she couldn’t edit it and the editor at Simon Shuster said she didn’t have the time to edit it and didn’t want to do it because it was too much work and I said, “well I’ll do it” because I hadn’t edited a book for a bit and that’s how I got involved in doing it.

M: In selecting the book, what kind of criteria do you require to translate a book like *Shanghai Baby*? What kind of criteria do you take into account in seeing this book as worth taking on and editing and publishing?

N: Ah ... My criteria would be...there would be two. One, how much visibility has it got? How successful has it been in its own country? We just bought a Japanese book called *The Train* which is a best seller in Japan at the moment. I’m trying to buy an Italian book *Cardinal Wall* which is a best seller in Italy. So I’m not a literary publisher in the sense that I have a passionate belief about the literary publishing that should be done (trails off...inaudible). If I came across something which I loved but I don’t think would be successful, yes, I might publish it. I mean I buy American books which we publish. We don’t translate but sometimes we publish because we think that just on the quality not just on commercial revenue. But to translate the difficulty for the publisher in getting the book translated you are hugely increasing the cost so you have to know it’s going to succeed. My view is not to have a list of translated books. If you do that as a publisher, if you say “we are going to translate foreign literature into English and that’s what publishing here stands for,” in the end the books at its (inaudible). There are too many for us.

M: That was the first criterion Nick. You said you would have two criteria.

N: Well, first is visibility. Is there a way ... not only necessarily has it been successful, has it sold many copies, but can I get publicity for it because in the current publishing climate in England I have to know I am going to get publicity to be able to get the book in the

bookshops. If I can find a way to get the book some publicity then I will publish the book. I have just taken on ... well, he writes in English but he's Bulgarian, a Bulgarian writer who's a crime writer and I like the books and he's written 3 or 4 novels but I've taken him on because I think I can get him publicity. It's two things, I've got a base, I've got to have publicity and quality. Just get me quality on its own and many publishers, there are lots, there are 3 or 4 UK publishers like Christopher Mark Who's ... (inaudible)... I'm interested in publicity.

M: Right. In the case of *Shanghai Baby* what was it that really grabbed your attention and made you think and decide that this was something worth taking on?

N: No, I took it on originally because the agent said to me, he didn't try to sell it to me, he asked me a question, he said "I have a book which I'd heard of in China called *Shanghai Baby* and it's just sold, it's been banned in China, and it's sold on the pirated editions by all accounts over a million copies but we don't really know what's happened. It's written by a girl in her mid-twenties and it's about a love affair and it's been banned and all I've got is a summary of the plot and two very badly translated pages." He asked me what I would do with it, because he had talked to two very big publishers and they had said they didn't want to buy it and he couldn't understand. He said "what would you do?" I said "well I would publish it." Because I think anything which has caused that amount of interest and has been banned immediately arouses a publisher's curiosity, I said to him it sounds to me from his description like a woman's coming of age novel in the same way that François Saignon's *Bonjour Tristesse* is about falling in love for the first time and that is always an interesting subject. He said if I'm going to be the agent for the book, and ... in China I need to have a publisher and I will talk to her but we need to make an approach soon. I said yes I will publish it and made an offer. I bought it unseen.

M: How did the translator from *Shanghai Baby* come to be chosen?

N: Chosen in America by Simon and Schuster. It was chosen in America. Toby Eady who was the agent who had already worked on a number of works, he was the agent for a number of books written in China so he was going to control the translation and then Simon and Schuster in America got involved and they said they wanted to choose the translator. I think this is what happened with him and they chose the translator. Ben seems a very nice man, I think he knows Bruce Humes in California. I think he was in California. I just said: "yes it seems like a very good idea. I will buy the book, great, I will do it in England. Let's see what happens." This is something that publishers don't do very often, we try not to do but it seemed the only way. So it was a risk from my part.

M: What was your assessment of the translation?

N: The original translation when it came in? In a way it's ...? So I wouldn't like to be rude about it. (break in talk) There are two ways in my very practical publisher's way of looking at translating a book: you can have an accurate translation if you look at Constance Garnett's translation of Russian literature in the early 1900's and then you compare them ... There's a Russian writer (inaudible) who is translated mostly by Garnett and there's once a translation

later published as “Dark Avenues” in the 1950’s and the first ones Garnett’s ones ... I’m sure they are very accurate but they are very dull. If you’re thinking of translating something literally to get the meaning without getting the mood, it seems to me you can either emphasize one or the other. You can get the meaning exactly right but if you write it in the style or the manner where the age ... it’s very hard to express this ... If you have a woman, like with *Shanghai Baby*, you must get a woman to translate it because the way a woman chooses a word, the word a woman would choose, the translation is only an equivalent. If you were describing, if they are writing about sex, a man’s view of a woman describing sex would be naturally influenced by what a man finds exciting about sex, whereas a woman’s attitude toward sex will be different, Therefore if a man makes that translation he will bring to it, he will literally translate the words but the words he chooses in translation will always unconsciously affect and distort what the woman was trying to write. That will also be true with age, if someone who is 65, maybe a brilliant academic translator is going to translate someone who is 22, what they will naturally choose that will make sense, because in the translation there is about 100 or 200 choices on every page. There’s no truths, there are only choices. So this is very important. What I felt went wrong, and I don’t know the translator, but when I saw the translation of *Shanghai Baby* it seemed to me to be translated by someone, a man, who lived an academic life and liked reading 19th century books and here we had a book written by a girl who liked going to nightclubs and liked 20th century books. This made for a sort of confrontation, a mismatch and the translation was constantly fighting against what the author was trying to convey. What I did was get a woman editor who I worked on with it, it seemed to me what Wei Hui wrote ... I think Wei Hui is a very clever writer. She’s sort of in different ways but I think she’s a beguiling writer in that she appears to write very simply: the dialogue is chat chat chat chat chat chat ... very chatty. Then when you get through the book, suddenly she will put in a paragraph or point that she’s very serious about and it’s very perceptive and there were these paragraphs and *Shanghai Baby* really falls in each chapter. A scene is set, there is some dialogue that moves the plot forward and then at the end of every chapter there is a bit about the internal life of the author which is very difficult, it seemed to me, to translate and very difficult to ... because when people are writing about contemplative things and it’s not very long but that needs to be done carefully. So I got a woman editor and we got the French translation of the book, so we had the English translation and we had the French edition, because my French is quite good, and I got her to do ... we talked about how young women speak and then we tried to get an accurate idea, which the translator Bruce did a good job in that it was accurate but it had no life. It wasn’t like a young girl talking but the sense was there and then we had the French to get an idea ... you have two ... views on what someone is trying to say, you’re more likely to get it ... it will be less distorted. Then the woman editor did different attempts. Not wrote ... just changing words saying “do you think this word is better than that word?” then I would do a bit of work and she would say “I don’t think a young girl would say that.” A girl doesn’t say it like that, they say it like this. Then I worked on the bits at the end of each chapter, particularly those which were very complicated. But when she writes about having an inner blue light, you know everybody has this idea that their soul is a blue light, which is what the translation ... I wish I could show the original translation, I could show you what we changed. But I think there are concepts in any language which you can get in one language which is

not possible ... that's the problem with translation and it seems to me the further away you get ... I've never worked on a book from the Chinese before, but that was a particular problem. The whole way the Chinese language works is the translation mainly being an approximation. And it was a huge help when Wei Hui came to London, although at that stage her English was not good, I spent a couple of afternoons with her talking, because we would reach places where the French translation and Bruce's translation would be completely different. I remember one case, it said, in English "my mind is like an eagle which flies from peak to peak ... or tree to tree." And the French translation said "My mind is like a fly which drops around the room." And I said this is worlds apart. So I asked her "which one is right?" and she said "both." (laughter). So what can you do, I forget which one we went with. I think in this case we went with the fly because I don't think young girls say ... I think the idea of what she wanted was the idea of restlessness, that she can't settle in a room and the fly is a better metaphor.

M: This is very interesting. I think Nick you already anticipated what the next question was going to be about: what kind of things do you do as an editor? What does the job of editing consist of?

N: Generally, not just in translation, my belief is that ... writers make very bad editors and editors often make bad writers. They know the mechanics of it. The editor's job is to bring out the best in that writer. The editor, who is a really good editor, by the time they are halfway through editing the book will be able to write in the style of that writer because the editor must have no style of their own. They must try and get under the skin, to work out what is the voice. If you're translating someone in English, what is the voice they are going to have? Then your job is to bring out their personality and character, what they would do, how they would react to a situation, whereas writers make bad editors because they are always going "no, this is what *I* would say!" (Laughter). So that often goes wrong when young editors who want to be writers come into publishing houses they make lots of changes but they are not ... so a good editor is like a servant. A trusty servant working out for the writer what is in the best interests of the writer.

M: How about translated work...it's more complicated...

N: Even more so, I would say if you are just translating, you would need to read the writer's other books and translations. It would be very hard ...

M: I would suppose then as an editor you would try to bring out the best of the ...

N: You do because I think with editing and translation you are trying to work out what the author ... what is it they were trying ... what is the purpose of what the book is trying to do ... let's go back not to translation ... but a book is trying to speak to preserve in a permanent form someone's perceptions really ... and to express their sense of who they are and their identity in one form or another to other people and keep it in permanent form and the editor's job is to try to understand what that is. It doesn't mean we are all sitting here philosophically going "what is the real purpose of this person's life?" It means that it's not necessary to correct the writer, there's no right or wrong, there is just the essence of what

somebody is. So sometimes it happens. I've known editors who ... there's a story about Picasso, isn't there, where he was asked, as you know Picasso was doing a lot of work very fast and someone came to him and said "this is a Picasso, is it genuine, because we've got documentation and you did it." He said, "yes it's by me, but it's a fake." (laughter) OK, that is in a way, it's an editors job to stop ... (inaudible).

M: Picasso has got lots of witty sayings ... Yeah, well Nick actually even the next question you've touched on it as well, I was going to ask you what you thought were the most difficult aspects of editing *Shanghai Baby*?

N: I have nothing more to say on that.

M: Were there any big changes like paragraph or chapter changes involved in *Shanghai Baby* or just small change?

N: No, There were no chapter changes, I didn't change any chapters, I didn't move the book about. I didn't take an early chapter and put it somewhere else in the book. I didn't delete any chapters. I removed ... I don't think Wei Hui knows this ... one or two paragraphs where we could not reach a sense and it seemed to me there was no point, where what we were trying to translate, neither the French edition or English literal translation seemed to work. I talked to the agent about them and said: "I'm stuck here, they should go." That's my memory of it. It was four years ago and I've worked on a number of books since. But I don't think we made any radical changes.

M: Looking broadly at the whole process of selecting a book from say China in terms of getting it translated and editing it ... what other factors come into play to shape the whole process beyond the sort of literary criteria as such?

N: The process from the writer finishing the book in China and being published in England or and it being successful in England? Just publication, up to publication.

M: Success can be part of the process as well and acquiring a certain degree of visibility amongst the British readership ... what kind of factors shape that process that you think are the major ones?

N: Well the process normally works with an agent who knows the country or the market and knows writers. I think that's extremely important, for example someone like Toby Eady who found *Shanghai Baby* and brought it to the West as he did with *Wild Swans* and has a Chinese wife. Do you know him?

M: Yes I know ...

N: I think someone like Toby Eady is enormously influential in this because I think he has travelled in China, and to China often where as his publishers don't have a particularly ... I know a lot about English bookshops and about printers and how to get books into bookshops, but I don't know a lot about China, I've never been to China. The process is the person who is making the choice, there was a moment when we were discussing with Wei Hui, she was

over for the first promotion and was very tired, she was getting quite cross and complaining to the publicist here that she didn't want to do something and she came to see me for a drink and I said "Wei Hui neither of us knows, you know, you weren't doing this promotion for the first time you've been in France and it's a bit of a nightmare I understand, and I haven't published a book from China before so what we will do is ask Toby what he thinks we should do and we will do what Toby says." And she said that's a very good idea. Because Toby has the experience of doing it before. So I would say an agent who knows what they are doing in all circumstances and who has experience in the country of translation is hugely influential.

M: Nick, how do you assess the potential marketing success of a book with British readership? Are there indications or signs or is it based on previous history of translated books, how they fare with British readership ...?

N: The situation has changed, how a publisher assesses how something will sell in the time I have been publishing has changed. In the last five years the most important thing is what I was saying about the visibility, the ability to get publicity. No one is quite sure about how many books a year have been published but it's somewhere in excess of 120,000 books, in a not very big country and the bookshops don't really need that many books so which ones will they stock? They will stock the ones that they know that people will come in and ask for because otherwise people will go into their competitors' shops and ask for them and then they will lose a customer. It doesn't mean we will only do things that will get publicity, but you have to think, how are we going to market and publicize a book before you take it on? When I started I used to read paperbacks. I used to go to second-hand bookshops because I didn't have very much money, and buy books to read and think 'that's a quality book' and I would republish it, buy the rights cheaply and republish it in paperback and the booksellers would order the books because they had space. Now they don't have space. If you do that they go 'why is anyone interested?' They can get it on the internet if they want a second-hand copy of that book. That has now become, what I think is a great pity but it is ... (trails off).

M: Is there any chance that you've chosen this book but even though weak publicity but still fail to...?

N: Oh yes! (laughter) It's very risky business. Publishing is one of the great risky businesses, I mean it's really risky business. You have to judge ... I will give you an example ... (thinking) ... the decision to do this book came (inaudible) was writing a book for us already and an American publisher was in the news said do a book on Zarkawi quickly, biography, who is this man, we will get it out quickly. So, she said yes: 'I want to stop doing the book I'm doing for you, I want to do the Zarkawi book.' We said we don't want a biography, this is very dangerous because what happens if Zarkawi is killed and it takes 6 or 9 months to make a book and then no one is interested so then we get the publicity and we brought the publication forward. She's written the book. It's about Iraq and Zarkwai and we think we will get publicity. So we put it out in the shops but it doesn't mean the book will sell. The book will sell if it delivers on the promise that we are making that it's a good book. I think it is a good book. But sometimes you publish books that aren't very good, you know there's something wrong, you get publicity ...

M: But it depends, doesn't it, on the reviews that books get on trusted authorities on what the books like ...?

N: Yes and no but sometimes these things don't sell. I published a biography of T.S. Elliot's first wife that there was huge interest in. We had reviews of a page or half a page in every national newspaper. We sold 3000 copies. We thought we would sell more. There was lots of interest, lots of publicity, very good reviews. The newspapers ... people read the reviews not always to see what they should buy but because they are little essays on subjects they would like to read about. We could put half of this book into a newspaper, all the ... will go away, then why would anyone want to buy the book? Sometimes you can do it with a book. I did a little book I bought by an Israeli poet called *The Cell Bird*, it sold 500,000 copies in Israel, this was about 10 years ago and hadn't been published in England, sold lot of copies in Germany, but hadn't been published in England because again the translation was very literal and clumsy. It was very short, The Israeli poet, we got her over here, we talked to her, we translated it. And then we sold serial rights. *The Daily Mail* bought serial rights saying 'why is this book such a best seller internationally?' and published the entire book and everyone in the office said this is a disaster because no one will buy this book because they only have to buy the newspaper, because it's all in the newspaper now. And I thought 'disaster!' But The book was a huge success because people read it in the newspaper and thought 'wow, I like that, now I want to keep it and own it.' So if people react you cant tell it's the publisher even though they are different you have to think very hard.

M: I suppose you have worked closely with all the translators. Can you tell me a little bit about how you collaborated with them during the editing and translating of the book (*Shanghai Baby*)?

N: With *Shanghai Baby* we didn't really because Wei Hui at that stage didn't speak any English. So there was no chance. That's why the French edition was so useful because it gave me something else to see, what someone else thought about the translation. What Wei Hui was helpful with was when we sat down, when we had things we couldn't understand when she would ... like I was saying about the eagle and the fly ... and when we sat in Toby's office and talked about problems whereas *Marrying Buddha* was much easier because I went to New York and I centred the translation in the conventional way: she got it translated, I edited the translation and tried to get the same level of dialogue and the same feeling of the book and then I said to her, now her English is so good, we spent a day sitting and going through all my queries and she had queries and observations. But with *Shanghai Baby* we didn't have that because she didn't speak English.

M: How about the translator, were you in contact with the translator?

N: No, I am not very interested in talking to the translator. (laughter) I like translators but I think the ... (laughter) ... this may be very controversial ... I think what I was saying about editors not having an identity, there is a problem there because the translator is in the same position as the editor. Yes a good translator, who is the man in America who translated Homer? Brilliant! And then turning them into works of art of his own. There's a sense when

translating literature, the translator becomes a star, a good translator. But really what we really want to find out is what the author has to say ... very controversial ... not popular. There's a great movement ... publishes the translation to say ... to give the translators enough recognition but really if you ask me ... if we put *Shanghai Baby* ... Wei Hui ... and then made a big thing about the translation here, half the audience for this book would go 'Oh my God, it's a serious work of literature.' There's a real problem ... 'Oh it's a serious work ... the translation ... Oh, it's not for me.' This is one of the problems about publishing books in translation from overseas in this country, I believe at this moment, famously in England, it's hard to get this translated, you know they don't like foreign literature. Because too much is made of the fact that it's foreign. What I wanted to do, was to preserve with Wei Hui that it is a Chinese book, but immediately make people feel that it's foreign but it's not too foreign so that ordinary woman, the people walking down the street, the same audience she has in China can read it. What tends to happen in literature and translation is that the audience in the author's own country, that market level, that level of education don't buy it when it's translated and only university people buy it because 'Oh, this is something hard!' and I think that this is a mistake.

M: It is a mistake, actually someone in translation studies wrote an article about this kind of thing, the idea that people perceive translation as something very academic, hard to reach and something not accessible for them or more people ...

N: Yes, and I think that's very very important because ordinary people need ideas coming in from other countries, it is incredibly important. I would rather not have, I mean we do put the name of the translators, if we had been asked to put the name of the translator on the cover I would have said no (laughs). I think these things are not important to people. They are important to the translators involved, to me it says Robertson on the cover but the public not interested, and we have that on the cover simply because it helps booksellers.

M: This book *Shanghai Baby* has sold very well ...

N: Yes, very well. It's been a huge success for us.

M: Some of my classmates talk about this book a lot ...

N: Yes it was very successful. It's successful because it has a universal story about a young woman discovering, however much you may want to separate sex and love, you can't. You know the story of the book ... and this is a universal truth that you can't ... and it's about Wei Hui finding out about it and that is why the book is popular. And I think that was a misconception banning the book, saying it was shocking and represents ... and this is why we didn't transcend, it's not a particularly shocking books in a Western sense.

M: Maybe the whole sexual aspect ... I think the whole notion of how it was a celebration of Western masculinity as opposed to the feminine ...

N: Yes, the Chinese character is a feminine...

M: I think the Chinese government would have more of a problem with that than with the...

N: But you see from a Western point of view the Chinese man is sensitive and very sweet and the German businessman is terrible and unattractive sort of jerk and that's the way women would see it, Western women would see it, and that's why it's sympathetic ... this sort of sweet Chinese boy ... she betrays ... and that's why it's so awful because she has betrayed him ... and that's the point of the book, and the book is actually great. And that's what I mean about men and woman seeing books in a different way. The Americans wanted to have a sexy cover. I thought it was a terrible mistake. In America they put a girl in a short dress, looking, and making it look like it was an erotic book and I wanted to keep the cover as the Chinese because I thought this picture of Wei Hui without makeup on looking ... the two sides ... that's her publicity photo and that's her real photo.

Interview with Rebecca Carter

MENG Pei (M): Rebecca, could I start by asking you a little bit about your professional background? How did you get into editing?

Rebecca Carter (R): When I finished my first degree, I started comparative literature, I did a Master's degree in comparative literature. And then I lived in Italy for a year, when I came back to England I knew that I wanted to publish books but I also knew I was interested in publishing books in other languages in translation because in Britain. We don't have a huge tradition in reading, you know, I think it's very hard to get the British readers to read the books that are translated from other languages, they are more inclined to read books written originally in English, but I was very interested in doing that. So when I got my first job in publishing, I tried to find a job that would bring me to the point where I was able to do that. And I'm publishing books in translation and I was very lucky, but I worked actually for a woman. She is a literary scout, and her job is to tell publishers in Europe about the books that had been published in English. Because when I worked for her, I made lots of friends with publishers in Europe. Now I've known a lot of people in Spain, Germany or France who tell me about good books in those countries that we can translate into English. Does that make a sense?

M: Yes, it does.

R: When I started working in the publishing industry, very soon I also heard about Ma Jian, and published *Red Dust* in translation and I also published lots of books in lots of different languages.

M: Actually I noticed people usually pay attention to the writers of the literary works, the editor's role somehow has received little attention, could you please tell me a little bit about what a literary editor normally does in relation to would-be published books?

R: I mean the process starts with finding a writer, maybe you are sent a writer's book by an agent or maybe you just read it and you think. If it doesn't have any agent, someone sends it to you directly, and you decide if you want to publish it. And from that moment, you are a bit like, I sometimes think editors are a bit like the producer of a film or a director and kind of producer, and the director of a film, because you are in charge of editing and you have to talk to the person who designs the cover, you have to write the bit that goes at the back of the book, you have to do all those things, but you also have a close relationship with the author and you have to make the text of the book as perfect as you think it can be and that, I mean, if I work with an English writer, sometimes that will involve them writing several drafts of the book as good as it can be. With the book of a translation, it's a bit different, because obviously I cannot read the original language because I don't read Chinese. So I have to, I want to buy a book in Chinese, I have to rely on the reader who I would maybe give that book in Chinese to a reader, maybe write me a report, and on the basis of that report I will decide whether or not I want to publish the book. And then I have a moment when I will have to wait for the translation to arrive and I finally can read it in English and I can discover whether the book would require what I think is necessary and then I will work very closely

with the translator to make the translation as good as it can be. And sometimes it will also involve the author, and sometimes it might just be a conversation between the editor and the translator if it is not something that's actually changing the underlying Chinese text, it's just a question of what I think of this English word and that English word and then you don't need to consult the author about that, it's just the relationship between me and the translator. But *Red Dust* was interesting, maybe I've got to ask about why *Red Dust* is interesting because Ma Jian is translated by his partner who lives in the same house with him, so in fact if I said I think this bit of the book actually gets a bit boring she could say 'Ma Jian, how would you feel about taking out this bit of the book?' And if I said I think I need to know a little bit more about this, she could say to him what about writing a little bit more, actually this is a very creative relationship for me with Ma Jian because I could get used to Flora as an intermediary whereas quite often with the book in translation I don't know a great deal of the context with the author, you know I am more talking to the translator.

M: You are talking about Ma Jian we will come back to that, but at the moment I want to know what is in your view the most important quality of being an editor?

R: Being an editor is a difficult thing because actually there isn't one quality, you need two qualities. One quality is to be able to publicize a book and make other people want to read it, so if I am talking to you, I talk so enthusiastically about this book and you immediately think I must go and buy that book, you know. That's a very extravert quality but the other quality is very introvert, the quality which is be the perfect reader for a book to understand what the author is trying to do and try to help the author to communicate with the reader in the best possible way. So it's two things; one is a very sociable thing and one is a very solitary thing.

M: You have been described as a creative editor, could you tell me how many Chinese books have you edited and what genre were they?

R: Actually there's more novels I think than non-fiction, and I tell you my authors which is Ma Jian, *Red Dust* is obviously an autobiography and *Noodle Maker* is fiction and *Stick Out your Tongue* is sort of although it is based on his trip travel to Tibet, it also works as fiction. There is an author, who is an interesting author, who is called Da Shijie, he actually writes in French and his new book is coming out in June. Xinran's *Good Women of China* and also *Sky Burial* which is sort of fiction and sort of non-fiction and Xiao Lu's *Village of Stone* .

M: it's a semi-autobiography.

R: It is a novel but it's obviously based on her life so, but I think you have to say it's a novel but it has autobiographical elements.

M: When you go about editing a Chinese autobiography, what aspect of editing do you think you have to pay extra attention to?

R: Well, I suppose, well, there are lots of things in Chinese books we can talk about.

M: Could you give me an example?

R: The issue of narrative tense and grammatical tense, you know, because the Chinese language doesn't have present, past and future tense in storytelling, therefore it's quite interesting because if you are in an autobiography telling your life you could try to make it very, it's happening now or you will put it very much into the past, you could put it into present tense or in the past tense. The autobiography, I don't know, I mean autobiography is necessarily something that happened in the past as you are talking about your life before so it's not actually an issue maybe, but that way of telling the story is very different from Chinese and British. In *Red Dust* Ma Jian is very, because it is autobiography, it's very immediate in the way he talks about something he wants to make you feel as if you are there now, you know, that's interesting. And but how you do that in English is very interesting and the issue of the tense, I suppose, the fact that you cannot take for granted that the British or American reader would necessarily know the complicated history of China, so things that you might take for granted if you are talking about the Cultural Revolution or something people don't necessarily know here, so you have to try to make sure, you don't want to westernise the book, you don't want to make it seem specifically for Western audiences, and you also want to make sure that the Western audiences can understand what the author has been talking about, so you have to try to do that in a subtle way. So many cultural reference points which are so different. You sort of try to find a way to do that.

M: why do you see this aspect you've just mentioned as very difficult for you to edit?

R: Chinese books are most challenging perhaps in some ways because the society is so different and the mentality is so different from the British mentality there is a lot to understand, because I am not, I mean some books, I speak French, I speak Italian, so when I edit it if I am looking at the translation from French or Italian, sometimes I just go and look at the French and Italian original, I can see and I can read the original, but with Chinese books I cannot read the original so I am trying to guess what I think the original is sort of like you know. It's not always that easy so, you know, I mean I have been very lucky actually all of these authors I've been able to talk to; I had conversations with all of them about books, so by talking to them I've tried to understand what they are trying to do so if the translation is sometimes not good, I can go and talk to them. With Xinran for example we've spent a lot of time talking about the book which she was trying to achieve because somehow the translation or something was not coming across.

M: I would like to turn to something more specific, focusing on your editing of the books, one is *Good Women of China* and the other ones are *Sky Burial*, *Village of Stone*, and *Red Dust*. My question here is what major changes have you made to make these four books understandable to the Western audience?

R: I don't think that I've made major changes. I didn't have to make major changes. Xiao Lu makes a joke, in Chinese her book had a sad ending and in English has a happy ending. She did this because she thinks Westerners don't like sad endings, her publisher made her change her book. But actually I didn't make her change the book and actually it wasn't me; I don't think we should change, change her book, I think you should make the translation so good that the Western reader can understand what the Chinese original might be like. So with

Village of Stone, really, I don't know, if you read the Chinese original, you will find there are some differences but that's mainly because just the way the story was told really needed some revisions, but I think if I had been a Chinese editor in China I would have asked her to do the same thing. It wasn't to do with making the book accessible for the Western audience, I just made it more a enjoyable story. With *Red Dust* maybe there was something that I found hardly understandable because you really go into rural China, and cases were that people won't know, and sometimes I just said 'could you just add just a little bit here' just to clarify what it is., For example, you're sleeping in a bag with lots of other people, if you go to this hotel in this very very remote place and you have to spend the night like that, and maybe you wouldn't know that he takes that for granted that his reader knows that so maybe you just see this kind of bed that needed more description, only I just do little things like that but we didn't make big changes. I mean *Sky Burial* was probably, I don't know if she mentioned about this or not, probably the hardest book in that case because again it's Tibet which is quite hard to understand anyway. But the major change probably to *Sky Burial* I made was the thing I put to change the tense because the translator had put the whole book into the present, and we changed the whole tense into the past tense just because the way it's told the story just that.

M: But at least you have to make some changes as you said to make the translation more readable, I want to know if there are any general rules or guidelines when you are making those changes regarding what should be left out and what should be edited in?

R: No, editing is just instinct, you know... I think with a Chinese book for example you have to take choice of: are you going to change the name and the name in English, you know, because in Chinese the name means something, are you going to say the meaning of the name or you're going to say the name and that makes a big difference as to how you read. For example, in *Village of Stone* the girl is called 'Coral', which is what you find in the sea, because the sea is the imagery of this book, then it's obvious 'Coral' makes a difference to the reader to know her name means 'Coral', that's important whereas the translator could have chosen just to leave her name as the Chinese. As I said, think about things like that you have to kind of make a decision. But I don't think you can say very general rules, I don't think you should leave things out. Translation is, really, unless you have very very good reason to do so. Really I think you should try not to take things out.

M: I don't mean major changes, but you have to make some changes somehow. So when you make changes to what extent do you discuss with the authors and translators about the changes that you've suggested?

R: Well, I would always consult the translator and if necessary I would consult the author. Because sometimes, you know, for example Ma Jian cannot read English so he doesn't know whether it's better to use the word say, for example, the word 'bed' or 'couch', in this situation you wouldn't go to Ma Jian and say 'excuse me, should we use the word "bed" or "couch"?', because that's a question for the translator really. Obviously if there was a bit of the book where it was really difficult to understand what Ma Jian is talking about, maybe the

translator didn't really understand either, then obviously you will go and talk to Ma Jian about what he intended and he wanted.

M: How about if some disagreement happened about one aspect or another, in what way did you go about negotiating these disagreements with the authors and translators?

R: It depends who the disagreement is between. There is a possibility to have, you know, lots of disagreements; possibility of disagreements between the author and the translator, or the translator and the publisher, or the publisher and the author, or I mean, always of course it would be ideal to just try to talk about the situation and try to understand the points of view of the translator and the authors'. In the contracts we have with authors we cannot change anything in their book without consulting them, with the translators we can change something in their translation. But we have to ask them[translators] if they really really disagree but we think it's totally important to change this to publish the book and then the translator has the right to take their name off the translation, but we can still publish the book. Does that make sense?

M: It does make sense. In your experience, Rebecca what kind of factors constrain or determine the editing process of Chinese autobiographies? Is it marketing, timing or something else?

R: I don't know I mean I think the ideal of editing is, for the kind of book I do, is to try to allow the reader to see what the original book is like so I'm not going to edit something just to make it nicer for Western people to read. My idea is to help Western people to understand the Chinese literature but I am sure that some people publish Chinese autobiographies because they think it's a fantastic story and makes you cry and full of tragedy, you know, it appears very popular with the readership therefore I'm going to make it as terrible and miserable, you know the ending, as possible you know. But it's not my aim to be an editor, my aim is to try to make you feel as if you are reading the original book. Because the aim is to bring Western people to Chinese culture rather than Chinese culture written for the Westerners.

M: Among the four books you've edited, which one do you think you are happy with the most?

R: I think probably *Red Dust* because I think that there's something in that book when I edited it. Ma Jian was incredibly worried about I was going to try to make it into something Western. And he was really trying to talk about what's ought to be Chinese in that book. He travelled a lot, all over China, all different parts of China and that was very important to him and I think we have managed to achieve that, I think. It's a very popular book if you look at Amazon everyone would tick *Red Dust* because it feels incredibly genuine you feel as if you are seeing through Ma Jian's eyes, I feel quite proud. When I first showed this book to the sales and marketing people and Random House, people didn't think it was going to sell many copies because they thought it was quite difficult, they didn't think it was an easy book to read actually. There was something quite difficult about it; the style, the storytelling is very

different. It is not like, you know, conventional British travel writing. Actually I am very pleased that so many people actually loved that book, that's the one I am really proud of.

M: How about *Sky Burial*, what do you think of this book in terms of the editing process?

R: Well, I am very proud of my editing of this book. I think it's the hardest book that I've ever edited because, I don't know, because Xinran was trying to do, she was trying to tell a real story into a novel, and the problem is that the novel, when British people read the novel, they have certain expectations of what it would be like: you read a novel in terms of development of a character, the sense of character and the sense of how the story is told, and developed, the sense of suspense and that's very, I mean, the Chinese doesn't have that same kind of novelistic tradition. So Xinran didn't really have that ability to tell the story in that way, so when I read the translation I was very worried, but in case it came across as a bit boring for the reader, just because of the different way of telling the story between Chinese and English, so we did a lot of work on that and I think in the end I managed to create something that is very readable, so that is true that should be what I intended.

M: It is popular as well.

R: Is it? Do you think?

M: Yes, I have read reviews.

R: I think people have really enjoyed it. I think what I worried about was the character of the woman that you couldn't identify with her. It seems you read it in English, because, you know, we just try to make sure that you could do that. Because I think Xinran was telling me that, we had lots, lots of conversations about it, that you can use character, you know, one character to say somebody is old or something. For example, if you say in English, she said something 'sadly', it's actually quite boring to say 'someone said something sadly', it's a cliché where in Chinese the way you say something if you use a particular character or something and it says a lot more, you know, you can read into it where someone might be talking or, the language had a kind richness in Chinese that was not coming into the translation, it's difficult. That's why you have to find a translator who is not only a translator but also like a writer. That's why the translation of Xiao Lu's book is successful because her translator is also a writer. And (...) she also writes in English so they have a feel for language which is also English.

M: Thank you very much for your help. Have you got any thoughts or something that I haven't covered that you would like to say?

R: Why have you chosen autobiography as opposed to novels or ...?

M:

Interview with Toby Eady

MENG Pei (M): Toby you have a broad experience as an agent and a very successful literary agent in the UK, could you tell me a little bit about what the role of a literary agent is in the whole book production process, as it were?

Toby Eady (T): An author, a Chinese author would come and say they have written a book in Chinese which they think would work in the West. And depending on how I react to the story they told and the person telling it, I will then try to find the way of getting it translated so that it reads for a Western audience because Chinese and English are completely different languages and completely different cultures and it is very time consuming. Well so you want me to give you an example? Guo Xiaolu – the author of *Village of Stone* – came from China. She had translated two chapters of *Village of Stone* by Cindy Carter who lives in Beijing. She is a very good translator because she learnt Chinese on the street. And she (Guo Xiaolu) went into a bookshop, she opened up Chinese books like *Daughter of the River*, *Good Women of China* She rang me up and said I would like to meet you and she came to meet me, she told me what she did. I liked her and I liked the idea of the book because it seems everyone's story of the twentieth century; you leave the farm and go into the city ... And I showed the two chapters to the publisher. They gave in advance the money, which I had agreed that I would pay for the translation, recoup the money that I paid out from the advances that I would get in the future. That was a very good translation and the book sold in several other languages. In Hong Ying's case, she came here with a group of people, originally with *Summer of Betrayal*. They ... they were translated and they showed me what they had translated, that was an English junk. The translation, they didn't realize what is a translation. The real problem is whether the person translating understands what a translation should be. A lot of them do it too quickly, and publishers haven't got the time to make it work, in English. There are a lot of people who say they can translate, who cannot. Translation is not only taking it from Chinese into English, it is actually rewriting a book, and it is the same from French, the same from Russian, the same from Spanish; take a book from another language, it is a different way of thinking, whatever the language is, and you have to sit down, you make out the translation and you rewrite that translation for the market

M: So it was not a case of the books being selected by you; it was the writers who came to you saying ...?

T: No, I selected *Red Dust*. Ma Jian came to see me with Flora who is now married to him ... He came to see me because of Tei Leilei, an artist, and he was talking about what he had written, and I was watching him, and I thought what interested me was that he had written a long short story about traveling out of Beijing in the early 80's, and it reminded me of Kerouac's *On the Road*. So I said to him I would give you 10,000 dollars for starting to write this because that really could work. That's what I guessed. That was immediately sold out, and I sold that to a Dutch publisher, an English publisher and an American publisher straight away. And they took three years, but they live together, this is the key to a good translation, I have come to this conclusion. This is a couple who work together, and he wrote a book she

translated it as it went long, and it took a year longer than it was meant to as the book is a very very good book.

M: Is it the case that you keep following the literary scenes and markets abroad in various countries and see whether literary works that come up have the potential to be successful in the British literary market and go down well with the British readership?

T: The only person I explored in that way is *Shanghai Baby*. I did it because this book was on the internet, four chapters. And I had met Mian Mian a year before and decided I didn't want to work with her. She wanted to work with me. I just thought that would be crazy. And I have been in China then and the next year *Shanghai Baby* came out. I thought that would work. And a very good French publisher Philippe Piquier who is the best oriental publisher in the West has bought it and then we sold it to a small publisher here, and we re-translated it because the English translation was terrible from French translation. We really exploited that book and she wanted to be exploited. She is completely different from anyone else. She wanted to be a pop star. It worked because she is unbelievably good at publicity. She really knew how to publicize. She is a monster but she knew what the publicities were.

M: In your experience, what do you see as an important criterion in selecting Chinese books that get introduced and translated?

T: That must have changed but I suppose what it really comes down to is whether I want to spend my time working with someone for two or three years in a language that I really understand to make it happen. And Hong Ying was always in a hurry, and Wei Hui was always in a hurry. And every other book I have done has been done very slowly, that's because of how people have published in China, like you finish your book and publish it six week later. The understanding between the Chinese writer in the West and ... It's very difficult for them to understand. And the whole process of hard back and paperback it seems quite crazy to them.

M: Is there something about some books that appeal to you and will be selected by you because of their theme or their genre or perhaps some other characteristics?

T: No, there isn't. One of the books I did last year, it was a Nanjin writer, which has been translated by Julie Lovell from Cambridge, and that's with Columbia University Press. But she selected the book, and I managed to have met him two years ago in Beijing, and I was very impressed by him and I said alright we will do it. I select people. I think there is another real key to being successful which is that the Chinese author I select in China has a Western language, whether it's French or English. And it's also about being prepared ... working with someone who is prepared to learn the customs of the country and not being impatient with them and not being frightened about losing face or knowing how to work here. I mean with Wei Hui I employed Xiong Wenwen to travel with her because she was so difficult; she would blow everything. And she has someone to talk Chinese to. And to move around hotels ... because she was crazy, I mean she just behaved like 'I am a pop star'; she was contacted through telephone calls ... because she didn't want to do the interviews, she wouldn't get up to do the interviews. She would pick up a woman and go to lesbian bars. In

the end of it, all everyone was bored of her, because of me, because of my reputation of dealing with Chinese writers, in the end of it, they would say ‘Jesus, that was quite something’. I’ve never been to a lesbian that kind of bar before. I mean she didn’t get the book that was meant to come out in the summer exactly not what happened she thought she could and she left me as an agent and we made her a lot of money. She said ‘I am going to another agent and we thought she was to come back, I said ‘No’. So I mean, Hong Ying’s problem is impatience, and her husband, because she said he could translate it but he couldn’t. He (her husband) is a teacher in SOAS and he really thought he could translate, and she had two very bad translators; (...) and Goldblatt.

M: Oh, Goldblatt

T: Goldblatt does it too quickly and does it like a factory. Every book that Goldblatt translated sounds the same. Every writer writes differently, whatever language it is, whichever country he is from, every book Goldblatt translates the same. He is too impatient too quick and too arrogant.

M: He is a scholar as well, I mean in the Chinese studies field.

T: Yes, he is, but he didn’t learn Chinese in China. What is really key in what you want in translators is someone who learns Chinese in China in the last ten years, who is part of that generation like Julia Lovell or Cindy Carter or Esther Tydesley, because they were in China. You don’t want academic translation of Chinese. Chinese is such a vibrant, metaphorical, lively language.

M: I would like to ask: when a book comes to you, how do you go about making a case for a Chinese book project to the publishers?

T: Well, fifteen years ago it was very very difficult because China wasn’t in people’s mind. Because of the phenomenal success of *Wild Swans*, which was written in English, but really has to be really rewritten. People suddenly thought ‘My God!’ You know, it’s the market we’d never done. I was the first person to do it. And that took seven years from the beginning to being published. And that’s someone who had got PhD in linguistics and thought she wrote English. And then after that people would come to me. I did another book which was written by an American Chinese—*Falling Leaves*, and that wasn’t written in Chinese, but we had five editors who had worked on that before for four years. No one, people, no one would buy the book. I persuaded someone to buy it for a thousand pounds and it was very successful in Australia. What really I do is to take something, the text has a story I have to understand, like I really, you see if you ask me how I do it and I’m going to talk to people. You see you talk books and in book fairs and you say this is what happened to Ma Jiang, and I would say I’ve got this one and that one for writers and people trust me. A Chinese writer has got to have an agent chosen who has got a track record of making money for publishers in many different languages. There is a French publisher (...) who does this and I do it but I only take one Chinese book a year probably, because it is not a big market and there are very few good translators. This is expanding, more and more publishers want to publish Chinese works but they have no ideas what they are looking for.

M: Do you have to collaborate with the publishers in promoting a book before the book comes to the market?

T: You have to teach them how to do it. This is a key, again the key is whether the author can speak the language to the publisher. In Europe people don't mind translating this, but in England and America it's very intolerant.

M: Alright, it's a different market.

T: It's how people react.

M: Actually you have mentioned about the characteristics of a good translator, could you elaborate on that?

T: Do you want me to expand on it?

M: Yes, please!

T: A good translator learns the language they're working in that country. They don't learn it in laboratory; they learn it in the house, they learn it in the office, they learn it in the street, and they don't get it taught in the classroom which is what I call laboratory translations. Really in the last ten or fifteen years, a lot of people have gone to China to learn Chinese when they are young since the late 80's. They translate completely differently, and what you have to have is a translator who has taken Chinese into English or French, would be ... basically you are talking about English translations, French is much better. If you take into English and then you rewrite it. With *Good Women of China* when I met Xinran first she had a very boring translation by an academic and she had kept saying she was a professor and I said 'yeah but she made you dull and now I read you dull'. And what happened was for two years we argued, and then someone walked into my office, sent by a friend of mine who spent four and half years teaching in the countryside in China, from Yorkshire, and I sent her to meet Xinran and they spoke to one and another for three or four hours. I said: all right, I'll pay you to do the translation, and that worked because she understood what Xinran was writing about but she had no idea what happened after that, so I took her translation which was literal, and I rewrote it.

M: You rewrote it?

T: I showed what needed to be done and then having done that, and then I had an editor who was a Malay Chinese who worked for a publishing house coming here for three months and I paid her for editing the book.

M: I thought that was Rebecca Carter.

T: She didn't get it. Rebecca got the book after it had been edited, and then Rebecca, at the time Rebecca got it. I offered, I tell you what's happened, I offered the book to Rebecca when I hadn't edited it and when Christine hadn't edited it, she turned it down, and then when I edited it, several people wanted to buy it and Rebecca said to me 'I should've bought it at the

beginning, instead of paying seventy-five thousand pounds per year'. I said 'Yeah'. She said 'I couldn't see it'. She would never have time to do that.

M: You are more than just an agent.

T: You cannot be an agent to Chinese books, because that's irresponsible.

M: Yes, because you acted as an editor as well.

T: Yeah, but the truth of the matter is we ended up selling these books in twenty or thirty languages. And I am very very (...), long before I met Xinran, very committed to China, Chinese writing and sort of, I was enormously curious, so I did a bit, the pieces I've done and I went to China and no one has done what I've done about that. But I really wanted to make sure, I do not want to do another *Daughter of the River* and *Summer of Betrayal*, which is bad translation because it ruined Hong Ying. She doesn't read it so she couldn't really see, when she could read it she could not understand it in the way I could never understand Chinese because I don't speak it anyway, but, because, because it's English she thinks it's all right, but she ... The question is you take it out of the language and you move it into, into, what's the word, oh, fundamental English and you want to rewrite it, that's what you're looking for in the translator who is someone who is a writer but has no stories but knows the language or her own language. And we've just done the reverse in China with Tim Clissold's book *Mr China*, we've just published it in China. We threw out the first translation because he, he has a very good Mandarin being there for eighteen years, but he said it didn't sound right for the Chinese translation so I paid some four thousand dollars to re-translate it in a completely different way. We've now sold that book in Taiwan and the Taiwanese publisher would pay two-thirds of the cost of translation in China and I am going to publish more books in China but it is just as difficult to translate into Chinese as it is taken from Chinese into whatever, and you've got to get someone correct.

M: So how about the second book of Xinran's *Sky Burial*? It was translated by two translators, how did it happen?

T: Because it's a different book, I wanted to see which could do it better. And it's very interesting; I checked the manuscript, I looked at this translator, and that translator, they were completely different.

M: So which one do you think better than the other.

T: They are very different. Part of one was good, part of the other one was good. We managed to put them together. I did that partly because I wanted to work with Julia Lovell, partly because hhhh ... I wanted it done quickly. Esther was incredibly slow. She is very nervous but now she teaches translation in Edinburgh University.

M: Yeah in Edinburgh University, yeah. Well, she is a very good teacher actually.

T: She taught you?

M: No, Because I am doing PhD at the moment, she doesn't teach me but we are in the same department and I was told by some of the Chinese students that she is a very patient teacher.

T: She is very patient, but she learnt translation from me, how to take the translation from literal English and make it into Western English. So it's very time-consuming.

M: Yeah, translation is time-consuming.

T: Translation is a practical skill, you cannot learn it in the classroom, you have to pick it up as you go. You probably can do two pages a day, Goldblatt prides himself on doing twenty pages a day. Most writers cannot write more than three or four pages a day, top top writers.

M: In your speech entitled *Publishing Between China and the West* in 2004 in Beijing, it seemed you were very happy with the translation in *Red Dust* but not very happy with *Daughter of the River*. But actually *Daughter of the River* is really popular as well. Has that bad translation had an impact on its popularity?

T: Not as popular as *Red Dust* in sales. I asked Hong Ying to write that book, when you ask with a title I chose, what I did, I said 'I give you some money, I give you a commission to write this book about your childhood: Chongqing'. They did beautiful jackets, they published absolutely beautifully. There were two problems: A) she doesn't speak English to do publicity, B) the second the translation was dead and her frustration was enormous. She is very talented and she is a very good writer but she's never had benefited from a good translator.

T: Because she is always too impatient, and she listens to what other people say.

M: I wanted to know: do you normally discuss the existing or potential problems with the authors and the translators? What are usually the central issues discussed?

T: When you take up a book to translate with someone and they want to make much money, they will have to learn how to do publicity in the West, they will have to be patient, and patient and patient, and they will have to learn ... with Rebecca Carter, that's very good, hmm how to work with a Western editor. I think, someone put it very cleverly to me, a major publisher about three years ago, she said what she actually do is work with nought nought nought one percent of the cleverest Chinese, and I said 'Yes, I do' and she said 'you know it's amazing if you can do that because you know they are very competitive' and which they are. That's to try to advise them what publishing means in the West, which probably doesn't mean anything to the one I said. And I do have one other fact which I always worked with. It's the fact that I have people, I used to use consultants who can talk to people who want to work with me in Chinese either in Shanghainese, Mandarin or Beijing dialect. That is very important, the confidence and for them to understand what's really happening ... I am just writing two new papers, which I'm doing this weekend, which I can send you.

M: Oh! Yeah, thank you very much!

T: Next week, one is a bit of a repetition of 2004, but the other one is what I see the future. There's a lot of what we are talking about, that's very useful for me. I will rewrite it this weekend.

M: Thank you very much. And you also said *Shanghai Baby*, which is written by Wei Hui was initially rejected by the London Publishers, could you tell me about the reasons for the rejection of this book in the first place?

T: Because completely stupid, they are frightened. The real problem for you if you are a Chinese author sitting here, I can see yes you are genius, I can really want to work with you, then I can read you, and see if you could give the book to a publisher. They have sales force and the last thing that the sales force wants to do is to sell a translated book and because they produce so many books, which are repetitions, which bookshops take. So what I had ... with *Shanghai Baby* I opted for the big six publishers, they all said 'no'. I then went to this smaller publisher and said 'I really think this book has got to work, it's banned in China and ... bought in France, ... bought in Japan'. I really had a feel for this book. A friend of mine said 'I am just starting my publishing house and I will publish this book if you publish with me, and you will advise me all along the line'. I have someone working with me from New York, and she came over here, twice, and she traveled with Wei Hui. We've brought Wei Hui into England, we've got her a visa. We sent someone over to Paris to pick her up. She wouldn't come along as she needed to come on the train carrying her suitcases. We sold two hundred thousand copies, because sex sells.

M: Is that only reason? I mean sex?

T: There was a French book written in the 50's called *Bonjour Tristesse* by Francois Sagan, which was the first book of this kind after the Second World War by a young woman writing about her affair with an old man. She never wrote another book (...). It was a scandal. Wei Hui was brilliant creating scandals in China. This friend of mine didn't want to take her next book because she was a nightmare, but it has done, he is publishing it because he's sold twenty thousand copies. He made a lot of money, and she made a lot of money, then she did a stupid thing, saying 'I'm going to a big fashionable New York (...) who'll make me a star'.

M: It seems to be the theme which made you expect it to be big success here and made you like you know...

T: I know how to make this book succeed, anything from China that I put my marker on, people believe it. All over the world, publishers believe. The Brazilian publisher who bought *Wild Swans*, I took four years persuading them to do it. All I have to do now is to pick up the phone. In Xinran's book, fourteen weeks on her book sells in Brazil. The new book has already done – *Sky Burial* – like ten thousand copies in Brazil, four printings. But I've learnt how to do it, I've learnt what the market sells. And Australia is the best market for Chinese writings.

M: Is it because there is a large Chinese community there?

T: Because the students and enormous Chinese community has come.

M: And It's successful in the UK as well

T: What?

M: Xinran's *Good Woman of China*.

T: Yeah, very!

M: And *Sky Burial*. It's got very good review from *The Guardian*.

T: Yeah! Because Xinran knows how to do it, because what she did, she was a professional journalist, she knows how to deal with people without ... like that, she draws people in. They're doing a children's play on *Sky Burial* in Manchester the week of ... Children's Festival. She's going up there for two days. They wanted her to stay over two days to be with the children when they did it ... that's the difference. She knows how to do things like that; she's not big, she's very warm, she gives, she's very generous, she gives her time, people love her.

M : Yeah, exactly!

T: Yung Cheng is very proud 'I am a star and I am a writer', Oh, what I am saying is a writer ... She's completely the opposite.

M: So a writer's personality you think matters.

T: Yeah, yeah. To me it's important, can I work with this person, and with people who work in the publishing all over the world. If I can work with them, they say fine because they know I've dealt with Jung Chang for a long time, well I did and I no longer work with her, and I dealt with Ma Jian. Ma Jian and Flora's a very good couple, living together, translating, Chang and Holiday, me and Xinran, couples do better than ... in translation. Because you really have to communicate. But in what way they co-operate would be very important, from Ma Jian's experience, the working relationship is not effective at all to his writing and it means interruption to him.

M: The right messages, keep people to code the text. I mean talk about these key people that you have to communicate the right message to, I mean who are they, I mean...

T: International publishers,

M: International publishers, does that include literary press (...) figures (...)

T: No that comes afterwards.

M: Oh that comes afterwards. Are you planning to introduce more Chinese books into Britain in the next few years?

T: Yes, I've just been asked to start a publishing house which has to deal with Oriental writers. And I've just got back from America and I am going to Beijing in September and I'm already working with an independent publisher publishing books in China. The idea is to get continuity for Chinese writers if they stay with one publisher and one publisher in the West so they have a backlist ... you know what a backlist state is like: when you sell *Sky Burial* more and you'll sell more copies of *Good Woman of China* so the publishers classify you as a writer in the West. They want continuity. The same publisher does Xinran's because they can go on selling backlist books. That does not happen in China so what I have done is going to a publisher, a Chinese publisher in Shanghai, we'll take book, a writer, we will publish in Shanghai at the same time I will be publishing it outside, making that writer sign an agreement, we will be publishing them and I'll then handle all the stuff outside for continuity. And then you will get the Western publishers following you. What they don't want is Wei Hui (...) banned with this publisher and successful and says 'OK, I'm not gonna to do it again' because no one really wants to work with her and she's a genius because she's a trouble, not just because her behavior, she's got to be trouble for the publisher. You invest your time, your respect in an author and you want that continuity to continue. Because what's happened in publishing in China, that continuity cannot afford it, really.

M: We are just finishing actually. I just want to know if you have any further thoughts or things that you want to talk about that I haven't yet covered? Especially in relation to the six books that are part of my study?

T: I really think, the most difficult thing is really about understanding one or another, about how we do business and you do business or all of us do business in China. This is a second background to writing because I have got to give a group of seminars in China to Chinese writers and translators this September in Shanghai, Nianjing and Beijing about how you create a sense of continuity in your own mind, how you look for it and why we value it and why Chinese writers didn't value it before. And the (...) of success has been ... having far more ... six publishers in China instead of one publisher in the West and one is in France ... just continuing with the same publisher in many different languages. What I achieved for Xinran was that, what I achieved for Jung Chang was that, is to build the sense of going on working with the same people and the same publishers because you'll then get the same publishers to take you to the literary magazine, someone to go on to talk about you, with real passion and affection, and it's tremendous for a publishing in any country, it can be total, utter, ridiculous lessons, and a risk and therefore all people which you ... look, you have to, I have persuaded all of the people all over the world: this is the risk we'll be taking, and I'll control that risk for them by my contract with the author. I respect the author, the author respects me, and we will, out of this office, organize when they go in different parts of the world so the publication doesn't conflict. And then around the world I search for editors who are very interested in China or become, because of me, interested in China. Have you heard we've done these two tours in China, taking young editors from all over the world. Xinran and me, last year and this year, we've got to do it again next year.

M: Is it a Journal?

A: No it is a tour.

M: Oh, it is s tour!

T: We took them to Beijing, Xian, Shanghai and Beijing, Nianjing, Shanghai and back to Beijing. And they met writers, publishers, independent publishers, literary magazines, university presses. And it worked both ways. It's terrific communication. What I am trying to do, this is what I do with Julia Lovell, take it and then send it back to me. This is an article about very good Chinese writers who need to be published in the West, and what I'm going to do is to create a publishing list from a major publisher with Julia to create a sort of scholarship list of Chinese writings so that people become more and more accustomed to Chinese classics or modern Chinese writings. Someone like Mo Yan, who needs new translation, it's such a terrific book, so wonderful a novel that teaches you more about Chinese society in the twenties and thirties, that's what I am trying to do. The publishing is basically the same all over the world. It is about people, people trusting people and respecting, well each person does it, that's what Chinese don't understand. They don't respect, what you said is true; I am not only an agent, I am really a book packager. I take a Chinese project and get it right for the publisher. Rebecca can ... after, but by the time she gets it, it's 90% right. If she got it in the beginning, she wouldn't have known how to do.

M: Is it typical of the agent...?

T: No, no I do it, I am the only one who does it.

M: It's very good, and then you take care of several aspects of the process. Once done by one person you are working and cooperating with various people who are involved.

T: Yeah ... I think fundamentally you have to say in your own mind if you are a Chinese author, this is a long process, how do I get first noticed. What I've suggested to this publisher who wants to set up this list and to the Chinese Government. They both put up scholarships for people to learn Chinese and English, and but equally part of the scholarship is to support people to go and work in the Chinese publishing houses or Western publishing houses as a work experience for six months, the scholarship may be for two years or two and half years. All the way through it they're working with the publisher as they do six months in the end all the way through so they take a book in the beginning when it's written. It is a whole process. Another thing is in New York they are going to do the whole issues on Chinese writers and the China new year and they asked me to advise them and I was in New York last week and I advised some and I am going back (to New York) in a four or five weeks time probably and what we do is just to carry on.

M: Chinese books are having a big market in the ...

T: Not in America. It's a worse market, they think Chinese and Americans who write about American are Chinese. Xinran was invited for the conferences,

M: In Paris?

T: And Norway, and you know, she's become an ambassador; she is showing herself, she is showing modern China.

T: ... have you interviewed Julia Lovell.

M: no not yet.

T: She is very important ... She will be the most interesting person I think to interview in England about Chinese. She realizes the problems in translations but she has done three translations probably four: two for me. She knows the writers and she wants to translate.

