

## **Translating Theory: Toward a (Re)Construction of Chinese Critical Discourse**

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Today almost all scholars of the humanities and social sciences have realized that ours is an age of globalization in which the boundary between nations, cultures, religious beliefs, and even academic disciplines has been more and more obscured. "Traveling theory" (Said) is usually realized through the intermediary of translation, which actually functions as one of the major means of cultural communication. As Schulte and Biguenet suggest:

Communication can take place on several levels: the communication through the artistic creation, the communication through the reading and interpretation of texts, and the communication of texts from one language to another by transforming them through the act of translation. At all times, translation involves an act of transformation. (9)

Since the translation discussed in the present essay is mostly that of culture and literature, I think it necessary to re-define the concept of translation in its traditional sense, especially in the Chinese-Western cultural and literary context. Obviously, in the Chinese-Western cultural and theoretical exchange, translation also functions as an inevitable means of cultural interpretation rather than mere linguistic rendition. Various critical theories, academic ideas and cultural trends have travelled from the West to the East. They have, through the intermediary of translation or mistranslation and interpretation or misinterpretation, produced some metamorphosed versions in the Oriental context. In the present essay, I will first of all describe the new role translation may well play in the age of globalization as a response to the various pessimistic views about the function of translation in the future. And then I will try to

distinguish between reconstruction of Chinese critical discourse and the so-called 'decolonization' of Chinese culture in an attempt to defend the legitimacy of translating theory in its postcolonial and cultural sense.

### **The Function of Translation in the Age of Globalization**

In the age of globalization the traditional concept of time and space has been largely condensed with information spreading with a swiftness beyond anyone's expectations. Our present world is thereby regarded as a vast "global village" in which people from different countries, even from different continents, with different cultural backgrounds can easily communicate with each other by various means. Apparently, the most frequently used means is *language*, or most exactly, the English language which has now been established as the most popular international working language, at least in cultural and academic circles. Since translation is primarily a technique of rendering meaning from one language into another, it serves as a major means by which information is exchanged and interpersonal communication is carried out. But that is the only traditional function of translation in its narrow sense, or linguistic sense. In its broad sense, or its postcolonial and cultural sense, translation also functions as a major means of cultural interpretation or representation. It is the so-called "cultural translation" (Bhabha) in its postcolonial sense that I aim to discuss in this essay. How to produce an ideal and most relevant translation has also been heatedly discussed ever since translation came into being. In the Chinese context, Yan Fu's notorious criterion of translation of *xin* (faithfulness), *da* (expressiveness) and *ya* (elegance) did play an important role in promoting Chinese political and cultural modernity although his ideas are not largely discussed in the international context (Wang et al.).

Obviously, every translator affirms that he/she is faithful to the original and thus understands the original correctly while translating. But who will assess the judgements of a translator? The answer is, of course, translation scholars or translation theorists, as well as the broad reading public. Almost all scholars or theorists dealing with translation studies, however, typically fail to convince their critics, for there is no such thing as a translation precisely faithful to the original since the same

cultural content is represented in another language, in the process of which something, both in content and in form, has to be more or less lost. Even the same person cannot precisely repeat words just uttered, let alone other interpreters expressing them in another language. We are faced, then, with these questions: Can we find a solution to this problem? Or will there remain such a thing as the authenticity of culture when it is translated?

Let us begin with a critical reflection on the linguistic approach to translation. Translation scholars or theorists of one generation after another have tried hard to find such a solution. Eugene Nida, who is frequently quoted and discussed in the Chinese context, once offered his concept of “dynamic equivalence” in which the translator “aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture” (159). In Nida’s view, since translation already touches upon the question of culture, the complete equivalence is impossible and unnecessary due to the difference between cultures. What he tries to do is to find a relevant way to represent the original meaning expressed in the source language by putting forward a “dynamic equivalence,” as he understands the function of the translator. This is, of course, by no means a breakthrough in translation studies; he puts forward this strategy from his traditional linguistic perspective, but it may be a tentative solution starting from a linguistic angle. Although Nida’s theoretical construction highlights the (dynamic or subjective) function of translator, we easily find that his position is still on the level of linguistics, or interlinguistic rather than intercultural observation of translation.

Since Nida is chiefly a linguist, or a scholar of translation studies from the linguistic perspective, his theoretical position is questioned and even transcended by scholars of translation studies of a later generation both in the West and in China. Jacques Derrida, as a deconstructive theorist or theoretic translator in a broad cultural sense, has approached a “relevant” translation by transcending the old conventions. According to Derrida, there is no such thing as the legitimacy and authenticity of any translation, for everything is in existence relative to something else. The idea of a “relevant” translation, therefore, is by no means “new in

translation theory, even if it has been subject to varying formulations, particularly over the last three centuries” (Venuti “Introduction” 170). Although a completely “relevant” translation is impossible, a relatively “relevant” translation might be achieved. Here, it is the process itself rather than effect that signifies. To my mind, Derrida’s attempt has actually deconstructed a sort of myth that the original meaning could be repeated, and the same is true of cultural authenticity. If it could be done, then what does translation mean after all? According to the traditional definition, the basic meaning of translation is to “change from one language into another,” or more broadly, to “change from one form into another.” Although this “change” largely appeals to form rather than content, the translator who practises this change cannot be exactly faithful to the original. That is the wisdom behind the saying “translator equals traitor.”

Fortunately, the postmodernist/poststructuralist doctrine has liberated translators from the theoretic and cultural impasse highlighting their own interpretive subjectivity. Any sense of centre or finality of truth or authenticity has been questioned in the process of a deconstructive reading and interpretation. Apparently, in Derrida’s theoretical adventure, we have already seen a shift of focus of (relevant) translation away from a ‘purely’ linguistic rendition towards a dynamic and cultural interpretation and representation. In this sense, I would say that Derrida himself is more a great theoretic and cultural interpreter (translator) than a translator in its traditional sense. And the role played by translator is more that of a “revisionist” rather than that of a “traitor,” for the former usually ‘revises’ the original in the target language by sticking to it in the source language, but the latter deliberately goes away from the original in an attempt to ‘create’ something new.

Undoubtedly, different scholars or translators explore the question of relevant translation from their own perspectives. I myself once did some translation practice, but mostly texts of theoretical or cultural interpretation. So my own position is certainly culturally leaning, although I believe that literal translation in certain contexts is absolutely essential to represent the meaning of the original in a comparatively faithful way, especially in the translation of scientific document. In literary transla-

tion, however, a translator needs to be sensitive to very subtle meanings between and even behind the lines. Literary works usually imply nuanced cultural and aesthetic connotations that are untranslatable if the translator merely sticks to a superficial fidelity on the linguistic level. Sometimes, as agreed upon among all literary translators, it is necessary to add interpretations to the original so that the reader will be able to understand the translated text more easily. In this sense, literary translation is more like cultural interpretation and aesthetic representation than mere linguistic rendition. Thus, equivalence on the verbal level or sentence level is sometimes impossible and unnecessary. Against this standard, Lin Shu, one of the pioneering figures among China's literary translators, cannot even be seen as a translator, though his important role in the process of China's cultural modernity and the history of modern (translated) Chinese literature is generally recognized.

Frankly speaking, to the criterion of the so-called "cultural authenticity," modern Chinese literature is nothing but a "translated literature," for through largely translating Western literary works and cultural and academic trends, Chinese literature has gradually formed a new tradition, or a modern Chinese literary canon, which is different both from its Western counterpart and from its established tradition, and which is able to carry on dialogue with both classical Chinese literature and Western literature. In this context, Lin Shu has translated—with the help of some young Chinese scholars who understand Western languages—many literary works into Chinese. His unique contributions cannot be ignored, for many of his contemporary fellow writers were more influenced by his *translated* texts of Western literary works than directly by the original authors.

Although Lin did almost no theoretical translation, his literary translation practice has undoubtedly offered many exemplary texts for translation theorists and scholars of later generations to discuss and interpret from a cultural perspective.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for an excellent literary translator, to be faithful in spirit and style is much more difficult than to be faithful merely in words and sentences: it is a sort of fidelity on the highest and most ideal level. Hence, I would like here to reemphasize that it is necessary to redefine translation in a new context since its old defini-

tion has been largely challenged and debated for many years; along with the deepening of cultural studies, more and more scholars have realized that translation has much to do with culture. And cultural connotations cannot be rendered merely on the linguistic level. Therefore, it is possible to do translation studies in the broader context of cultural studies because translation often touches upon at least two or more different cultures. It should not be viewed as just a matter of 'pure' literal rendering of the meaning of the original (source) language in another (target) language.

Thus, to Derrida:

A relevant translation would therefore be, quite simply, a 'good' translation, a translation that does what one expects of it, in short, a version that performs its mission, honors its debt and does its job or its duty while inscribing in the receiving language the more *relevant* equivalent for an original, the language that is *the most* right, appropriate, pertinent, adequate, opportune, pointed, univocal, idiomatic, and so on. (177)

Although Derrida clearly realizes that it is almost impossible to achieve a truly relevant translation, it is worth trying to approach such an ideal. To him, the reason Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* fails at the court is largely that he could not extract the "exactly one pound" of flesh, no more and no less, from Antonio. Or in Eagleton's words:

What individuals share most vitally in common is the body: it is by virtue of our bodies that we belong to each other, and no cultural or linguistic community which is not somehow founded upon this fact is likely to survive. For the texts in which Shylock trusts—the Old Testament—the body is not in the first place a physical object but a form of relationship, a principle of unity with others." (72)

Therefore, in language rendition, meaning cannot 'faithfully' repeat itself once you have expressed it in language. What a translator could get is just a comparatively 'good' translation or relatively 'faithful' interpretation, which appears as relevant as possible and as faithful as possible to the original, for every translator is first of all a human subject who has

his own dynamic understanding of the original and creative reception and constructive representation of the original. So his interpretation to a large extent represents his own subjectivity and dynamic reception of the original, in the process of which, revision rather than deliberate 'betrayal' is unavoidable. That is perhaps the ideally 'relevant' translation, to my understanding.

What, then, will translation be like in the present age in which globalization appears as a spectre haunting our memory and influencing our cultural and intellectual life as well as our academic research? Obviously, globalization is not anything created by scholars, but rather an objective phenomenon in our daily life. If we recognize that economic globalization started with the discovery of the Americas in 1492 by Columbus, then cultural globalization would have started even earlier. Under the impact of globalization, cultural and literary markets have been shrinking swiftly. The humanities and social sciences are severely challenged by the over-inflation of knowledge and an almost instantaneous exchange of information. On the other hand, the function of English is much more conspicuous: all the scientific papers should be published in English if their authors intend them to be recognized by international colleagues, and people from different parts of the world usually communicate in English, if they do not depend upon the help of interpreters (Wang "The Mapping of Chinese Postmodernity").

In this way, English is playing a more and more important role in such a global information society. We can easily access about 90 per cent of the information on the internet by means of English. If we still think it true that knowledge is strength, then, in the age of globalization, information is power. And the old slogan "knowledge is strength" put forward by Francis Bacon could in the present be changed to "knowledge is riches." Therefore, in the age of globalization, the requirements for translators are considerable, and translators of high quality with comprehensive and profound knowledge are badly needed, although more and more people are learning to use the English language as their primary means of communication.

It is true that economic globalization has given rise to cultural globalization in the process of which Western, particularly American, cul-

ture is imposing its values upon Third World cultures. Not surprisingly, non-English-speaking people are very much worried about the possible colonization of their cultures and languages. What is the function of translation, then, in an age of globalization since cultures are becoming more and more homogenized? First of all, we should recognize that globalization gives rise to the interpenetrating processes of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism (Robertson *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* 100). That is, the impact of globalization is embodied at two poles: its effect travels from the West to the East, and at the same time, from the East to the West. Dialectically speaking, globalization has created linkages between different social and cultural phenomena, such as identities, social relationships, and even institutions, and these linkages must be placed within a specific historical context (Jameson).

In the age of globalization, communication between different societies, cultures, and nations is more and more frequent. But how can these communications be more effectively carried out? Undoubtedly by means of information exchange in which language—or more specifically the English language—plays a most important role. Just as Schulte and Biguenet pertinently point out, “[t]he interaction with the words of the foreign language expands one’s native language. To produce equivalencies for certain metaphors in the source language, the translator may have to find words in English that are normally not part of general usage. Thus writers who are involved in translating enrich their own language” (8). The birth of the new Chinese literary language in the May 4th period (1919) was largely due to such English-Chinese translation. From this point of view, I think that translation is ever more inevitable, not only as part of daily communication, but also as a major means of cultural exchange and political strategy. It has gone far beyond the superficial level of linguistic aspects, so the research on translation should attach more importance to the cultural aspects of translation.

I hold that in the age of globalization, however much literature and other cultural forms might be shrinking, translation will not disappear. Rather, it will still occupy a vital place in our cultural and intellectual



life, as well as in our daily communication. But no matter how effective or powerful the translation machine might be, it cannot take the place of human beings, for it is human beings who can master the nuances of different cultures and theories and represent them in a comparatively relevant way. And it is human beings who can judge whether a translated version is relevant or not.

**Translating Theory: (De)Colonizing Chinese Culture?**

It is true that the advent of modernity in China is largely a direct consequence of cultural translation, both of Western literary works and of various cultural trends and academic thoughts. In these circumstances, apart from Yan Fu who has already been extensively discussed elsewhere (Wang *Chinese Translation Studies*), Lin Shu, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao have also played a pioneering role in helping to bring Western modernity into the Chinese context by means of translation. Lu Xun, Hu Shi, Guo Moruo and many other important figures of modern Chinese literature and Chinese cultural modernity also enthusiastically called for more and more academic theories and cultural trends to be translated from foreign countries, especially from the West. The famous slogan put forward by Lu Xun at the time was “grabbism” (*nalai zhuyi*), meaning: grab anything useful to the Chinese practice so as to give thorough critiques of traditional Chinese culture. Some of these Chinese writers, such as Guo Moruo and Cao Yu, even tried to identify themselves with one of their Western masters—Guo calling himself “China’s Whitman” as his poetic writing was under the direct influence of Walt Whitman, and Cao “China’s Ibsen” as he started his dramatic career by playing the role of Nora, one of Ibsen’s major heroines.

During the May 4th period, translating literature and theory implied modernizing and democratizing China politically and culturally. The “gentlemen”—Mr. De [democracy] and Mr. Sai [science]—did play important roles in China’s process of political democratization and cultural modernization, which has undoubtedly paved the way for the later advent of globalization in the late twentieth century. Thus we should say that translation of literature and theory at the time was largely done at the level of culture, or more precisely, at the level of the pragmatic

function of these literary works and theories to China's modernity project.<sup>2</sup> As a result, many theoretic doctrines and literary works were not even translated from their original languages, but rather, from English or from Japanese.<sup>3</sup>

We should recognize, however, that the function of translation at the time was inadequately highlighted as a powerful instrument of revolution and democratization. Thus translation of theory has indeed played a significant role in developing Chinese modernity and new critical discourse—a somewhat colonizing role from a conservative point of view, but closer to the outside world from an internationalizing point of view. And, the May 4th Movement that marked the beginning of modern Chinese literature and culture from 1919 to 1949, sped up the process of modernity in the Chinese context. During that period of time, translation flourished with all the prevalent Western cultural trends and theories translated into Chinese; Western masters such as Schopenhauer, Bergson, Nietzsche and Freud frequently appeared in Chinese intellectuals' salons and influenced intellectual life and academic research. All three major Western literary currents—romanticism, realism and modernism—came onto the literary scene chronologically through translation, which in turn produced some different versions of “Chinese characteristics,” and paved the way for the later more extensive translation of postmodern and postcolonial theories and literary works in the 1990s (Wang “The Mapping of Chinese Postmodernity”).

Of all the translators in the early twentieth century and later in the May 4th period, Lin Shu's contributions are most conspicuous and even unprecedented. Although from today's linguistic point of view, Lin Shu's translation cannot be regarded as “relevant” translation on the linguistic level since his ‘translation’ is largely done with the help of someone else who understands a Western language, nonetheless it is successful on a cultural and theoretical level, if we evaluate it from a historical and cultural point of view. Through Lin Shu's dynamic translation and creative interpretation, all the Western literary works and academic thoughts produced new significance in the Chinese context.

Eventually, these translated “texts” have become part of Chinese literary culture, influencing writers and scholars of one generation after an-

other. Since they are characterized by elegance, readability and even attractiveness, they have been largely regarded as part of modern Chinese literature. Obviously, translated literature in China is so significant and essential to the form of modern Chinese literature that many of today's writers would rather confess to being influenced by Western (translated) literature than by classical Chinese literature. And many of today's scholars and critics would prefer to claim inspiration by their Western masters' (translated) works than by the works of their Chinese ancestors. In this sense, the translation of Western theory has played an even more important role in either "colonizing" Chinese literary discourse or helping to form a new "translated" literary or critical discourse.

The May 4th period long ago became history, although its historical significance is still subject to controversy.<sup>4</sup> After the Cultural Revolution, China opened itself up more widely to the outside world and practiced economic reform, allowing more and more Western cultural trends, literary works and critical theories to flood into the country. No sooner had Chinese culture caught up with the trend of modernism than postmodernism arrived. Modernity became an old-fashioned cultural project or theoretic discourse. It has been more or less replaced by other discourses: postmodernity and globalization, although some people think that even in the age of globalization, modernity is still an incomplete project of which postmodernity is a part.<sup>5</sup>

Various postmodern theories offer effective interpretive instruments, to analyze and interpret cultural phenomena in the context of globalization. Obviously, such "translation" or mistranslation and interpretation in the sense of culture and critical theory will more or less "colonize" or "hybridize" Chinese critical discourse, and has a weak or marginalized voice in the international theoretical debate. And Chinese cultural identity has been obscured by the impact of globalization. But as Spivak has pointed out, "[t]here is often a certain loss of style in the descent or shift from the high culture of nationalism within territorial imperialism to that search for 'national identity' that confuses religion, culture, and ideology in the newly independent nation" (*A Critique* 64). Now a successful postcolonial intellectual moving from the "periphery" to the centre and finally becoming one of the "world's foremost contemporary

theorists,”<sup>6</sup> Spivak began her academic career by translating theory—or more specifically, by translating and interpreting Jacques Derrida’s deconstructive critical theory, which greatly influenced her own critical theory and even helped to form her own critical discourse characterized by postcoloniality and Third World criticism.

We cannot but acknowledge that Spivak is a very influential postcolonial critic with her own unique voice and theoretic discourse, and even her own writing style. All the influences she has received from Marx, Nietzsche, Derrida, and Paul de Man have been incorporated to form her own postcolonial style and critical discourse. Actually, it is not Spivak who is “colonized” by others, but who is “colonizing” or influencing others. The same is true of Homi Bhabha, whose postcolonial criticism is somewhat characterized by his appeal to a sort of “cultural translation,” and who has recently offered his strategy of “minoritization” as opposed to the “grand” narratives of globalization.<sup>7</sup>

Since China is a vast country with a 5000-year history, splendid cultural heritage, and rich literary tradition, it has never been completely colonized before, nor will it be colonized in the future even if we bring in as many Western theoretical works as possible through translation. Many Western Sinologists, in their teaching and study of Chinese culture, have been “sinicized” due to their esteem and respect for China and its culture and literature. And the successful production of some Chinese films has actually helped the Western audience to understand Chinese culture despite the fact that they have to be more or less “Orientalized” by aesthetic representation to coincide with a Western “horizon of expectation.”<sup>8</sup>

In international communication and cultural exchange, we cannot say that we could preserve every aspect of Chinese culture, especially in translating our culture into another language. We might well lose something if we want to make a foreign audience understand. The same is true of Lin Shu’s translation from Western languages into Chinese, which has indeed lost much but still preserved the cultural spirit of those Western literary works. To my mind, such a ‘loss’ of our national and cultural identity is no doubt a necessary step toward a conscious construction and even reconstruction of Chinese critical discourse. Thus, genuinely

equal theoretical dialogue between Chinese and Western literary and cultural scholarship will occur in the present age of globalization.

### **Re (Constructing) Chinese Critical Discourse by Means of Translation**

As I have mentioned above, in the age of globalization, “traveling theory” does not always move from the West to the East, or from centre to periphery; it also shifts from periphery to centre, challenging the monolithic imperial centre. The thrust of globalization has broken through the boundaries between nations and continents, between centre and periphery, with transnational corporations functioning as an “empire” everywhere. In this way, globalization does not always appear as a “ghost-like” spectre troubling our life and work, and haunting our memory. Globalization has also benefited people who want to escape isolation, enabling them to communicate more effectively in a “global village.” In academic research, it stimulates scholars to internationalize and globalize their research results in a more effective way. And it has therefore enabled Chinese scholars to communicate more easily with international scholarly circles on any theoretical and academic topics, including translation studies.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, however, Chinese scholars of translation studies have had little or even no voice in international theoretical debate on the issues of translation, despite the fact that Chinese translators have engaged extensively in translation practice. In the two decades since China’s opening up to the outside world and economic reform, this unfavourable situation has been changing, with more and more publications appearing in international journals in English or French and more scholars taking up a stronger voice in international translation studies circles.<sup>10</sup> How shall we realize our goal of internationalizing and even globalizing China’s translation studies when we are confronted with a much more powerful Western empire that has a dominant language as well as penetrating critical discourse?

Obviously, as I have already noted, theory does not always travel from centre to periphery. An example is the movement of Bakhtin’s theory from Russia (at the time, a cultural periphery) to the West (centre) and back to Russia (periphery), and finally throughout the world. As one

of the major thinkers of the twentieth century, Bakhtin's writings cover "linguistics, psychoanalysis, theology, social theory, historical poetics, axiology, and philosophy of the person" (Clark vii). His works range so widely that they cover almost all the major humanities disciplines and human thinking within the twentieth century. His research has also found its way into many theoretical approaches, including feminism, postmodernism, cultural studies, and even the emerging field of eco-criticism.

It was in the very isolated atmosphere of the former Soviet Union that Bakhtin wrote all his important works without referring to prevalent Western critical theories. But his theories, characterized by dialogism, have actually engaged with both structuralist and poststructuralist doctrines and illuminated them to such an extent that the Bakhtin is an important resource in the West and even in China. Although Bakhtin probably could not have anticipated such a wide range of expropriation of his ideas, they have indeed been received favourably in various theoretical fields and 'discovered' or 'translated' and 'rediscovered' or 'retranslated' by both structuralists and poststructuralists. This phenomenon first appeared in the West in the mid-1970s when Bakhtin's work was translated into Western languages.

But translating Bakhtin finally culminated in China with *Bakhtin quanji* (*Collected Works of Bakhtin*) published in Chinese in seven volumes in 1998.<sup>11</sup> Clearly "traveling theory" has enabled Bakhtin's ideas to function both in the centre (West) and periphery (Russia and China), and therefore to bridge this artificial demarcation. The Bakhtin phenomenon has been illuminating for Chinese scholars in our theoretical dialogue with international colleagues, from the West and elsewhere.

How have we been inspired by the example of Bakhtin's "traveling theory"? First of all, we should not be afraid of the transportation and translation of Western theory to China, for globalization in culture is not necessarily the same as in economy. Cultural plurality and diversity always exists despite the severe challenge of economic globalization. It has brought about both cultural homogenization as well as cultural diversity, with the latter more evident in today's context. Countless historical examples have proven that an economically powerful imperial

empire cannot necessarily produce aesthetically elegant works of art; whereas, on the contrary, less developed or even underdeveloped countries where economic strength is comparatively weak and the cultural soil of modernity is rather thin, can also produce excellent artistic works. This found particular embodiment, in the field of literary creation, in the rise of the Russian realist novel of the nineteenth century and the boom of Latin American “magic realist” novels in the late twentieth century.

In literary theory and criticism, the critical and creative reception of postmodernism in China and the appearance of the metamorphosed versions of a sort of “Chinese postmodernity” is another emerging instance.<sup>12</sup> That we largely introduce and translate Western theory into Chinese today does not mean ignoring our own culture and critical discourse. Quite the reverse is true. That is, we should at least get a clear idea of the state of critical theory in the West before we can realize our second purpose, that is, to find topics of common interests on which we can have equal dialogue, and during which our own theoretical and critical discourse is constructed or reconstructed. In this way, the voices of Chinese scholars in the international forum will be strong and forceful.

At the moment, it is impossible for all the people from other parts of the world to listen to us in Chinese, partly because this language is difficult to master and partly because at present, China’s economy is not strong enough to support many foreigners who might wish to study its language and culture.<sup>13</sup> Even if our Western colleagues have really mastered the Chinese language, it is still difficult for them to understand the nuances of Chinese culture and the subtlety of Chinese aesthetic spirit. So the best strategy for the present to communicate with the international community, is to use the English language, by means of which we could introduce our excellent cultural products and theoretical works to the world. As for the critical and theoretical discourses borrowed from the West, we have to use them in communicating with our Western colleagues if we want to present our own theoretical constructions. But even so, these “borrowed” discourses have already been “hybridized” and mixed up with indigenous Chinese critical and theo-

retical discourses. In addition, Chinese discourses have not only been “metamorphosed,” but also have produced new significations that will in return inspire and influence our Western colleagues. This is “traveling theory” in another direction.

From the perspective of cultural translation, we should say that Lin Shu’s translation or representation of Western literary works at the beginning of the twentieth century set a good example for us to follow, although we must first of all lay a solid foundation of foreign languages before starting such translation practice. In today’s context of globalization, Lin’s old-fashioned method needs to be modified because more people have mastered English and effectively use it in international communication and literary translation. Therefore, cultural connotations will become more conspicuous and relevant in our translation practice if we really want to ‘globalize’ our Chinese culture, literature, and literary theory.

## Notes

1. As far as Lin Shu’s contribution to the construction of Chinese modernity is concerned, see Wang Ning, “Xiandaixing, fanyi wenxue yu zhongguo xiandai wenxue jingdian chonggou” (Modernity, Translated Literature and the Reconstruction of Modern Chinese Literary Canon), in *Wenyi yanjiu* (*Literature and Art Studies*), No. 6, 2002.
2. Although these literary masters did not do much theoretical translation, they did introduce or comment on their translated Western writers from their own theoretical perspectives.
3. To point out a few examples of translating literary and theoretical works from languages other than the original: some of Marx’s works were translated either from Japanese or from Russian; Ibsen’s plays were translated mostly from English and German; and Freud’s works were translated mostly from English.
4. According to the current division of academic disciplines made by the Chinese State Council Degree Committee, translation studies is put under the discipline of foreign linguistics and applied linguistics although it used to be an independent discipline. But some Chinese scholars in translation studies are still trying to “demarginalize” this “repressed” sub-discipline in an attempt to highlight it as an independent discipline parallel with that of foreign linguistics and applied linguistics.
5. Interestingly enough, after the enthusiastic introduction and translation of Western postmodern theories and cultural trends, some Chinese scholars come



- in turn to reflect on the question of modernity, which found particular embodiment in the “Habermas fad” in China with his short lecture tour in Beijing in April 2001.
6. See the advertizing phrase printed on the back cover of Spivak’s recently published book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*.
  7. At my invitation, Homi Bhabha visited China and gave a keynote speech entitled “The Black Savant and the Dark Princess” at the Tsinghua-Harvard Advanced Forum on Postcolonialism on June 25, 2002 in Beijing. In that speech he stated that, on the one hand, there is the project of globalization, but on the other hand, there is the process of “minoritization, which might be another type of globalization.” Since the Chinese version of his speech was translated and published in the leading Chinese literary journal *Wenxue Pinglun* (*Literary Review*, No. 6, 2006), it has given Chinese scholars of literary and cultural studies much inspiration.
  8. One of the most recent examples in this vein is the huge success of Ang Lee’s film *Wohu canglong* (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) in the international cultural market and film industry, although it has provoked some controversy among the mainland Chinese audiences.
  9. Although in the past Chinese scholars of translation studies enjoyed debating the three principles of *xin* (faithfulness), *da* (expressiveness) and *ya* (elegance) formulated by Yan Fu, they have now realized the importance of communicating with international scholarship. They not only publish extensively in such international journals in translation studies as *Perspectives*, *Target*, *Meta*, and *Babel*, but also actively involve themselves in Asian Translators Forum and other international conferences on translation studies.
  10. In this context, I should mention that due to their editors’ far-sightedness and cross-cultural perspectives, such international journals as *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, *METS*, *Target* and *Babel* have published numerous articles written by Chinese scholars in English thus conveying to the international circles of translation studies the state of the art of translation in China. *Perspectives* (1996 and 2003) and *META* (1997) have even put up special issues on Chinese translation studies.
  11. *Babejin quanji* (*Collected Works of Mikhail Bakhtin*) was published in Chinese in 1998 by Hebei Educational Press although it was the Western scholars who first ‘discovered’ then ‘rediscovered’ this long repressed Soviet-Russian thinker in the 1960s.
  12. As far as the reception of postmodernism in China is concerned, I have published extensively both in Chinese and in English. See my long essay “The Mapping of Chinese Postmodernity.” *boundary 2*, 24.3 (1997): 19–40. Arif Dirlik & Xudong Zhang eds., 2000. 21–40.
  13. One exciting fact is that the Chinese Government has decided to invest a substantial amount of money to set a dozen Chinese cultural centres in Western countries in an attempt to promote Chinese language and culture worldwide.

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