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Cultural Transformation and Linguistic Transfer: Chinese 'Transplant' of Shakespeare

Traditional theories of translation usually impose oppositions between literal translation and literary translation, and between content and form of translation. The third and yet more crucial level of translation – the cultural factor – is typically ignored. In the formalist sense of translation as a science of linguistic transfer, the success of a translation seems to rely mainly on a stress on the formal side of the opposition or at most on a gestured balance between the two extremes. Since it dwells in the ideological or discursive sphere, the cultural level of translation is not always discernible. I shall focus on the cultural transformation that occurs in the linguistic transfer between the source and the target languages in terms of recent cognitive and post-structural studies, and consider translation as a three-dimensional interface between the two languages and two cultures through the sifting of the cultural context of the translator and the leader. I will draw on some Chinese translations of Shakespeare to illuminate this point. Particularly, I will examine the three most influential Chinese translations of the complete works and some interpretive translations of *Hamlet* in order to show how Chinese translators configure the relationships between form and content and between the literal and the literary in their specific social-cultural contexts.

To begin with, the rendering of Shakespeare's name into Chinese is not as value-free as it seems. Among the many of Shakespeare's Chinese names before he was officially and unanimously addressed as *Sha-shi-bi-ya*, which

sounds to the Chinese ear more Western and erudite than other names, these show a transformation of his image in the Chinese mind: from *she-ke-si-bi* with a second tone on she (incomparable tongue), *she-ke-si-bi* with third tone on she (unbeatable pen), to *hui-ge-shi* (spear-shaker), and to *sha-wong*, of which wong is usually given to the few most venerated classic Chinese poets.[1] And the early published titles of his works (actually the Lambs' tales) went from *Xiewaiqitan* (*Strange Tales from Overseas*) to *Yinbianyanyu* (*Poetic Romances*)[2] and *Shashi yuefu* (the *House of Shakespeare's Artistic Treasures*), which was the popular title later used to refer to the *Strange Tales* when Shakespeare became more popular in China in the early twentieth century (and *yuefu* usually refers to renowned classic poetic works). Thus, rendering Shakespeare from one language into another cannot avoid culture – the cultures of the source and the target languages, both historical and present, of both the author and the translator's times. In post-structural terms, Shakespeare's "creation" of texts was the result of a negotiation of linguistic, cultural, and physical boundaries. And translation is another type of "creation" in the sense that it negotiates the two cultures and languages in an interface between them, a "rewriting" of the original in and by a new cultural context and for an audience in this context.

This character of translation is implied in recent cognitive studies of language and of writing as a result of body-mind coordination. Writing as a cultural as well as linguistic phenomenon is a circuit-like action, which links the writer's inside and outside worlds and connects mind and body since the writing process simultaneously involves both mental and physical activities. This finding has to be expanded with post-structural perspectives of culture to add the mind-body two-dimensional findings of cognitive science with a socio-cultural dimension and apply them to translation studies. I thus see writing as three-dimensional action (mental, physical, and discursive) and translation as endless interaction in the triple, spatial, intellectual locations – conceptual, formal, and

[1] The name *Sha-shi-bi-ya* first came out in 1902 and was first used by Liang Qichao (1873–1927), an early advocate for Chinese learning from the West and of the 1898 *coup d'etat* leaders. Liang mentioned great literary names, including Homer and Shakespeare in "Yinbingshi shihua [Poetic Talks from Yinbing Study]," published in the May issue of *Xinmin congbao* [New People's Serial Journal] in 1902. This Chinese name *Sha-shi-bi-ya* has been adopted thereafter. For more information on early introduction of Shakespeare to China, see Meng 1994: 11.

[2] Also called "Ghost Tales" by Lin Shu, *Yinbianyayu* was one of the most popular translations of the Lambs' *Tales* in the early twentieth century. The Chinese classicist and English illiterate Lin rewrote into the classic Chinese from his English-reading student Wei Yi's Chinese rendering of the Tales.

ideological – and among the writer (and his text), the translator, and the reader, in historical contemporary times. Translation, like writing, is a form of writing, a cultural re-writing.

The development of cognitive psychology and its applications in language make it possible to challenge the Cartesian Enlightenment separation of mind and body. As a result of the philosophical separation of mind and body, traditional theories take writing as a pure formal, meditative, intellectual product abstracting the canonical, "great works" as common experience of all human beings transcending time, space, race, class, and gender. Subverting this model, cognitive findings about how experience comes from body to the mind (bottom-up) are revealing to the understanding of writing.[3] Yet a cognitive approach will be even more illuminating to translating practices if we combine it with a post-structural conception of language as a preconditioned social practice. On one level, writing is a language activity, in which psychological and social activities are intertwined. The writing process is an integration of mind and body, reason and emotion, cognition and discourse. In post-structural terms, writing is not supposed to be isolated from cultural practices. In other words, the rational, the ethical, and the emotional are all connected in historically specific moments. No abstract form is valid without material as well as intellectual (discursive, or even ideological) contexts. On another level, writing happens in the interface of the three spheres – mind, body, and the world (social life), which is at once inside the former two and exferior to them. That is, writing is a process of thinking, yet thinking is an "embodied" mental activity, so that writing becomes a three-dimensional circuit, touching the three spheres, which are material and spiritual and discursive. On a third level, the mental process has already been structured by bodily experience of the material world and by ideological constructions about it before the writer comes to write. Just as cognition is not free from social, cultural practices, bodily experience has been preconditioned by social life. So have writing and translation.

The characteristics of translation as a physical-mental-discursive activity determine that we cannot isolate absolute form from culture. I would argue that the isolation would be more invalid when we consider the cultural context of the translator, who will have to handle the cultural differences behind the two concerned languages. In this sense, translation is a process of cultural transformation. What determines cultural transformation is beyond form. It is the social-cultural forces in the translator's time and personal intellectual contexts. These contexts determine his choice of form to a great

[3] For recent cognitive studies of language and Shakespeare, see Lancashire 1999 and Hart 1998.

degree. Thus the discussion of form and content of translation and the separation of literal and literary translation are arbitrary if the cultural factor is not considered.

Like the Western formalist counterpart, the Chinese pursuit of "xin-da-ya (loyalty, likeness, and refinement)", a Chinese formula of best translation initiated by Yan Fu (1853–1921), overlooks the cultural specificity of the translator's time, considering translation as a science to study how to exactly convey the original. However, the separation of form and content legitimizes emphases on one or the other, which further dictates the literal (word-to-word) and literary distinction in translation in the Chinese discourse of translation. As a result, some Chinese translators see literary (paraphrasive) translation as a competition between *xingsi* (likeness in form or look) and *shensi* (likeness in content or spirit) and eventually as a "competition between the two cultures and languages."[4] They distinguish literal translation or transliteration from literary translation, and *xingsi* from *shensi.*

Furthermore, the context determines how the reader receives a translation. The reception of a translation depends on the time's taste. Translation as cultural exchange is not merely linguistic transfer, thus the "exactness" of individual expressions will not ultimately determine the reception of a translation. Cultural transformation happens not only in the communication between two cultures but also in spatial transformation between the writer and the translator as reader. The cultural process will be clearly seen in how Shakespeare is "transplanted" into the Chinese cultural soil.[5] Most importantly, in the Chinese case, a cultural transformation is discernible even between different translators – Liang Shiqiu, Zhu Shenghao and Fang Ping – and between the translators and their readers. We will see these "Complete Works" translators' social and personal contexts in which they complete their translations and the social contexts of the reception of their translations: Liang and Zhu in the 1930s and the 1980s and Fang in the 1990s.

When Liang began to translate Shakespeare, the New Culture Movement had toppled the Chinese feudal tradition to a large scope. Like many activists of the movement, Liang advocates that modernization or westernization be the way to solve the Chinese problems, to save the disaster-ridden nation from demise, through removing the old culture and by introducing a new culture basing on the western progressive model. One of the means is to adopt a new literacy or writing system *baihuaxwen* (vernacular Chinese) against the archaic *wenyanwen* (refined or literary language). Liang uses vernacular prose against Lin Shu's archaic poetic style of translation (*Yinbian*

[4] Xu Yuanchong, qtd in Xu Jun 1996: 169.

[5] Chinese translators and critics usually call translation *yizhi* (transplant), a botanical term, meaning the replant of a species in another placein – in Chinese soil. See Sun Dayu's note to his translation of *Hanmolaide* [*Hamlet*]; Fang Ping 2001: 456.

yanyu).[6] The personal situations represent the disparity of social conditions for the Chinese intellectuals and for the Chinese society at that time. Anti-feudalists split in the 1930s and Liang as a university professor, enjoying a high social status and a relatively carefree life, stood on the cultural Right of his time. Professor Liang, as ridiculed by Lu Xun, the head of Left-Wing writers, "translates Shakespeare for 1000 silver dollars a play."[7] In his literary studies, therefore, Liang followed and disseminated his contemporary Western views in his essays and lectures on Shakespeare. He insists, for example, that the aesthetic sphere is autonomous and that literature has its own purpose and represents universal human nature (Meng 1994: 16). Liang's translation program was first supported by China Educational and Cultural Foundation established with the U.S. "remission" of a portion of the Boxer indemnity. The boxer indemnity came as a result of the suppression of anti-foreign boxer rebellion and the eight-nation allied invasion of Peking. In his translation, Liang is loyal verbatim to his sources and to the conqueror's way of writing. Literal loyalty in translation was easily imagined as loyalty to the culture of imperialist invaders. To some xenophobic Chinese, receiving foreign, especially invasive, sponsorship is an action of surrender to imperialist power, and betrayal of the nation. In this context, Liang's loyalty to the source text, instead of advertently appropriating it, is problematic. Thus, at the same time Liang was introducing new culture to challenge the traditional Chinese culture, he was more akin to foreign cultures. Westernization or "foreignization" of reading habits is considered problematic in the Chinese culture especially in a time of national crisis. On the contrary, many Chinese Left followers of Lun Xun understand Lu's nalai zhuyi (taking the foreign) as not copying the West, but selecting the nutritious portion and digesting it with the Chinese stomach.

Consequently, Zhu Shenghao's localization of Shakespeare out of patriotic enthusiasm would be more commendable though Zhu was not literally a member of the Left. Patriotism is said to be Zhu's motive to "take on this most important historical task" (Meng 1996: 21). An acclaimed national hero: "the Shakespeare translations of Zhu Shenghao (1911–44) can truly be called an heroic accomplishment" (21). He was stimulated to translate the complete works of Shakespeare to rival the Japanese who ridiculed China's "non-culture" for lack of a complete Shakespeare. Living in poverty

[6] Liang's friend Dr. Hu Shi, another returned scholar and advocate of New culture, also condemns Lin's classic Chinese translation as "worse than no translation." Hu continues, such "translation has certainly missed the merit of the original... Lin renders Shakespeare's drama into classic Chinese narrative, being such an offender of Shakespeare." *Xin Qingnian* [*New Youth*] 1918, 5.1, qtd. in Meng 1994.

[7] Lu Xun, "Youshi Shashibiya [Shakespeare Again]", qtd. in Meng, 1994: 13–14.

and poor health, he completed translating thirty-one plays. During the short time of translation and striving for a living, he had to run from the Japanese cannon. The first drafts were destroyed in the fire of war. Living in the harsh conditions of poverty and ill health, he showed dedication to this patriotic career of translating Shakespeare; he said: "I may not eat, but I must translate Shakespeare" (Li 1994: 10).

Zhu endeavored to offer his struggling people a readable translation. In Zhu's time, most translations were "transliterations," if we may use the traditional terminology, like Liang's, which sound jarring to the Chinese ear and are difficult to comprehend. Against this situation, Zhu emphasizes clarity and fluency of translation. He would never consent to word-to-word "literal translation". He articulates his guidelines of translating Shakespeare thus: "my primary principle is to make every possible effort to reserve the spirit of the original design [in both content and style], or, the next best thing, to convey faithfully the meaning and charm of the original in a lucid and smooth style" (Meng 1994: 23). He continues, "wherever there is incongruity between the source language and Chinese grammar... I have to change the total syntactical structure of the original text." For he "must convey the author's intentions, which will otherwise be covered with abstruse translation."[8] This translation, if not slanted to the advantage of the target language and culture, is an appropriation under the shield of nationalism. The actual target of rivalry is not in the source culture of translation but in the translator's contemporary life, the Japanese invader. Zhu's nationalism is commendable, a nationalism emerging against the Japanese invasion of China (Meng 1994: 23; Liu 1994: 385).

Both Zhu and Liang were against the grain of the old culture – the Chinese feudal, and yet were different in treating the foreign. Zhu appropriates the occidental other in translation, whereas Liang Xeroxes what is foreign. The returned scholar Liang followed his American educator while the home-educated Zhu seems to have served his people better by "paraphrasing" Shakespeare for a Chinese reader with fluent Chinese in sometimes slanted translation – a localization or sinicization of the other for the Chinese cultural self. On the other hand, Liang served his Foundation. In a 1931 letter from Hu, Liang receives his boss's order, which mandates, "translation must not become paraphrase."[9]

Admiring the young Zhu Shenghao's heroic deeds, Fang ambitiously takes the glorious work of contributing a new complete Shakespeare to the

[8] Translation of this quote is based on Mason Y.H. Wang's and Murray Levith's translation with revision and addition. See Meng 1994: 23.

[9] Hu was then in charge of the foundation.

cultural construction of post-Cultural Revolution China.[10] Yet, one of Fang's purposes is to challenge Zhu's prose translation. Fang's translation has come out to welcome the new era at the end of the twentieth-century (first published in Mainland China and reprinted in Taiwan in 2000), purporting to provide the Chinese reader with a better translation, which might match the original in both form and content. But the idea of a poetic translation of Shakespeare has been around for decades, and Fang as a literary critic, translator, and enthusiast of Shakespeare, has experienced all the changes of the Chinese culture throughout the years during which he revised his understandings of Shakespeare. Like other Chinese intellectuals who survived the personal tribulations and national turbulences in the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976),[11] Fang especially cherishes a Shakespeare who is thought to write to celebrate humanity rather than write for class struggles as the Chinese Marxists asserted even before the Cultural Revolution. He pays more attention to the comedies, which are full-bodied with liveliness and fervid enjoyment of life, than the tragedies. In his essays, published since the late 1970s, he shows special interest in Shakespeare's female characters, most of whom ale allegedly elevated as the embodiment of *zhe-shan-mei* (the true, the good, and the beautiful).

Fang launched his idea of a poetic translation of the complete works at a conference on translation as early as 1989, when the Beijing publishers, most concerned with monetary loss a new translation might bring them, refused the idea of another complete Shakespeare, and when the "career of serious culture was in great depression" (Fang 2000: 492). Finally, a provincial publisher offered to invest on this venture and make a "contribution to the cultural construction" (*Ibid.*, 493) in 1993. This new culture both Fang and his publisher aim to serve is a product of a depoliticized contemporary belief in an aesthetic denial of politics – the politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Subverting ideological critiques of the previous decades, Fang has shifted the focus of his Shakespeare studies to the

[10] Additionally, Fang would like to share Zhu's patriotic enthusiasm in Shakespeare translation. In his afterword to his most recent article, Fang considers a significance of his poetic translation as being an achievement that China's neighbour to the east – Japan – has not reached. Zhu's impetus to rival the Japanese jingoists in translating Shakespeare has been carried to a new level. However, there is perhaps a danger – in such countering endeavors-of falling into the quagmire as born with the rival's jingoist initiatives since patriotism in a different context would sound nationalistic. See F a n g 2001.

[11] Fang had to wait till 1979 to publish his translation of Shakespeare's plays – *Shashibiya xiju wuzhong* [*Five Comedies by Shakespeare*]. During the Dark decade, he intermittently translated three plays "with a feeling of guilt" as he describes his underground translation of Shakespeare. Such a feeling is mixed with "a fear that a young woman under the feudalist patriarchal rule has sneaks out to meet her lover in the night, shivering for risking the offense of ethical codes" (my translation p. 503).

exploration of aesthetic values of Shakespeare and now gestures to improve both content and form of Shakespeare translation. He at once pursues formal perfection (in terms of poetic, stylistic, and aesthetic likeness to Shakespeare) and brings his new understanding of Shakespeare's texts into his translation.

In formal consideration, he builds on the experience of former translators – Sun Dayu, Bian Zhilin, and Lin Tongji's experiments with the use of Chinese "sound group."[12] Against Zhu's appropriation, Fang advocates translating the plays as poetic drama. The poetic translation of Shakespeare "means more attention to the form of the linguistic art, more stress on the flesh-blood inseparable relationship between form and content. [A decent translation] does not merely convey or retell the surface meaning, but is attempted to make a correspondence in terms of tone, mood, and imagery between the source and the target languages." (494). Fang rightly picks an example of Zhu's clarity at the cost of missing of the original imagery: "They have made worm's meat of me" (*Romeo and Juliet* 3.1). Zhu's paraphrase of the line goes astray as such: 'wo yijing si zai tameng shouli le (I am dead in their hands)." Fang, nonetheless, does not avoid interpreting in translation; yet he aims at different interpretations. He argues, "the translation of canonical literature is practically an interpretive art; a translator saturates his new understanding, acquired through studies of Shakespeare, into his translation, so that he makes his own style of translation" (Fang 2000: 499). This is why he calls his translation *xin quanji* [*Ibid.*]. The newness means a "new understanding" of Shakespeare as a playwright rather than as a poet, and a new perspective of his plays as texts for the stage rather than the study. Hence, Fang argues that Shakespeare's plays are not dramatic poetry but poetic drama, and endeavors to provide a new Chinese canon to satisfy "ear readers" rather than "eye readers" (using Robert Frost's words), who Fang thinks Zhu's translation serves. Here Fang seems to have imposed a new separation, the separation and opposition between the audio and the visual aspects of language and of human cognition in the translation of literary works and in the reception of translation. Whether this separation is valid, I will argue, it will not eventually arbitrate how a translation is received since translation is after all a cultural product and will be consumed by a certain culture in specific cultural moments.

Again, the socio-cultural factor – invisible and yet most powerful in its grip of social beings before they are aware of it – comes to claim its merits in translation reception as is the case of Chinese translation of Shakespeare. If Liang's translation is typical of foreignization (his Chinese text sounds

[12] Fang 2000: 493–505.

foreign to the Chinese reader), Zhu's is an example of emulation, that is, sinicization. With this localization Zhu has brought a modern Shakespeare to contemporary China. As a result, the Chinese audiences seem to understand the Bard more than modern English-speaking students who have to read Shakespeare's early modern texts. The challenges and difficulties for the native speakers do not exist in Zhu's contemporary translation for modern Chinese readers. The Chinese is purely the language they are using now; and most cultural difficulties are removed through a cultural replacement – transformed into Chinese cultural equivalents or glossed with apologies of the translator's being unable to convert them. The removal of the distance between the Western Bard and the Chinese reader must be attributed to the translator's contemporizing approach, which has made it easier for the Chinese reader to assimilate Shakespeare as their own cultural hero since the publication of Zhu's translation in 1978.

On the contrary, Liang's universal human nature was problematic both in his time and in Mao's China when class struggle was the key word of social life.[13] The contrast of their fate in reception is underlined with the Chinese political life of that era. The popularity of Zhu and infamy of Liang are both due in the special Chinese political context, a cultural judgment not necessarily being subject to whether they provide "paraphrasing" or literal translations of Shakespeare. Liang was denounced as "bourgeois reactionary man of letter" while Zhu was received as a proletariat hero. Unfortunately, however, Liang's word-to-word translation deters his Chinese readers and affects the Chinese reception; it is difficult for them to read Chinese texts of "foreign flavor." Needless to say, Zhu's Chinese flavor of foreign works sells well among the non-original readers. Though critiqued by poetic translators, many critics find a poetic essence in Zhu's translation for his conveying the spirit of the original texts. As Liu suggests, "There is poetic flavor though in prose" (Liu 1994: 386). Linguistic fluency did play a role in the distaste of Liang and the love for Zhu in Mainland China and in Taiwan as well.

Zhu's translation is also popular in Taiwan,[14] where Liang completed his translation, which was published in 1967. Mainland China did not see this translation until 1995, which might also account for his unpopularity. Yet again, the special political context of China contributes to this situation. Liang fled to Taiwan with the Kuomintang and was condemned in the mainland as a "reactionary scholar" and "walking dog" of the bourgeoisie. He regained his reputation in the 1980s when the ideological taboo was

[13] It seems that the Chinese receive Liang's presumption of literature better when the Chinese society is more commercialized and more modern after Deng's time. This is a topic I will discuss elsewhere.

[14] Yu Erchang edited and published a reprint of Zhu's translation of twenty-seven plays, together with Yu's translation of ten histories in Taiwan in 1957.

removed and his works began to be published for mainland readers. Since then has enjoyed more readers in the mainland for his writings but not for his translation of Shakespeare, which has never challenged the popularity of Zhu's. Liang might have come too late to shake the long established dominance of Zhu's translation. Zhu's translation has been popular in Chinese since its publication and has enjoyed the widest range of the Chinese leader, only few of whom can read the English text. He is a translator who enjoys an award-winning biographical TV program; his translation has also been awarded by the central government.[15] Thus, according to Meng, "It is the publication of Zhu Shenghao's translation that has made William Shakespeare a Shakespeare of the common people." (Meng 1994: 23). In this sense, the "Chinese people's Shakespeare" Zhu has brought to them has been entangled with such ideologies as nationalism and Marxism-Leninism-and Maoism.

There is more criticism of Zhu's translation in recent years by translating critics and English-reading scholars, including Fang and other proponents of poetic translation, who complain about Zhu's prose translation. Fang challenges Zhu's translation for its formal inexactness. There begin to appear some acclamations for Fang's translation. For instance, Cao Shujun applauses its publication, claiming it as a "new breakthrough of Shakespeare studies;" a publication magazine selects it as one of the Fifty Books That Touch the People's Republic."[16] Will it be able to replace the dominance of Zhu's translation? We will have to wait to see. But one thing is clear: all the three translations of the complete works of Shakespeare are susceptible to filtering by the changing culture of the target language, which is modern China, and by the translators and their intellectual background.

Therefore, the interpretive aspect of cultural transformation in translation is reflected in the translator's particular reading of the specific play. Here, different cultural readings determine the choice of linguistic form as in Chinese translations of *Hamlet* by Liang, Zhu, Sun, Bian, Chen Tia, and Fang. Liang focuses on the 'universal nature of man', following his editors of the English sources and American scholarship of his time. He elaborates the transcending essence of Hamlet's character in his lectures and other publications and has taken this reading into his translation. His interpretation of Hamlet as thinker of transcendental questions is transmitted in his translation of the first line of Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" soliloquy: "si-hou hai-shi cun-zai, hai-shi bu cun-zai, – zhe-shi wen-ti (One is being or non-being after death – this is question)."

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[15] See "Zhu yi quanji huo shoujie zhongguo tuszu jiang (News on Zhu Shenghao's Translation of The *Complete of Works of Shakespeare* Awarded the First National Book Prize" in M e n g 1994: 477.

[16] See Book Reviews in *Zhonghua Shaxue* [*Chinese Shakespeareana*] 2001, 8, 5–9.

Predictably, Zhu's reading of the dramatic moment is not transcendent but indicates a similar moment in the translator's life, the turbulent China of the 1930s. Zhu's reading of the play and his translation of the line show contemporary concerns in Chinese diction: "sheng-cun hai-shi hui-mie, zhe-shi yi-ge zhi-de kao-lu de wen-ti". Zhu uses Chinese terms 'shengcun' (survival) and 'huimie' (destriction), which are abstract and refer to the survival of a people, not of an individual like Hamlet. As discussed earlier, Zhu did live in a time of the Chinese people's struggle for survival and had a more keen sense of the national crisis than other translators did. As his biographers portray, Zhu cares his personal survival or demise not as much as that of the nation.[17]

Sun Dayu explores the depth of Hamlet's character and undertakes a comprehensive character study in his notes to his translation, which occupy more space than his translation. The initiator of poetic translation of Shakespeare, Sun was the first to apply the idea of Chinese *yinzu* (sound group; one Chinese character is pronounced with only one syllable, and a sound group of two will involve two characters) to rendering the English blank verse. In Sun's long note to his translation of the line, he analyzes Hamlet's inner conflicts. He sees the soliloquy as a revelation of the prince's philosophical thinking of morality. Hamlet has just returned to attend his father's funeral from Wittenberg where he studies and likes moral philosophy. Thus his soliloquy is pedantic. The best form for this will be to keep a normal rhythm of two-or-three character pattern with variations of other "sound groups:" thus, "shi-cun-zai / hai-shi / xiao-wang: / wen-ti / de-suo-zai." Sun thinks this "transplant" will fit Hamlet's personality, status, and disposition of the moment, and at the same time may follow the pentameter blank verse pattern.

Following Sun, Bian prefers poetic translation and is utterly against Zhu's "paraphrase" of the line upon a different reading. Bian emphasizes the repetition of *huo* (live); he argues that the translation has to reflect Hamlet's hestitation in action and his contradictory ideology; thus, he translates as: "huo-xia-qu hai-shi bu-huo: zhe-shi wen-ti." According to Bian's reading, Hamlet has a crisis in his world view – his social ideal is conflicting with the evil reality; Hamlet's hestitation has a social reason – social evils and social inequality in the face of which he is impotent.[18]

Another Left Shakespearean like Bian of the 1950s and the 1960s, Chen Jia, who was ironically castigated as a "Rightist" in the Cultural Revolution, reads the play in Marxist terms. He finds an answer to the difficult question of

[17] Wu Jiemin and Zhu Hongda, *Zhu Shenghao zhuan* [*A biography of Zhu Shenghao*] Shanghai Foreign Language Educational Press, Shanghai 1989. The book became a best seller immediately upon its publication.

[18] "Preface" to Translation of *Hamlet* in Bian 1956: 1–22.

the line in an analysis of Hamlet's ideological development. He finds, in Hamlet's soliloquy, that "there are two themes:" one, to rebel against tyranny or endure enemy's insult; the other, the hesitation to rebel for fear of the unknown world of death. Chen summarizes the main idea of the whole play in one sentence: Hamlet attempts to rebel and yet is afraid of the suffering after death. Accordingly, the "best translation" is "fankang hai-shi bu fan-kang" (rebel or not rebel) or more simply "gan hai-shi bu-gang" (to fight or not to fight). Chen interprets the character as a humanist hero fighting against tyranny and suppression of the ruling class. Hamlet's hesitation is a demonstration of the bourgeoisie limitations Renaissance humanists share; he isolates himself from the people.

Fang's anti-political reading revises both that of Chen's and his own of the 1960s. As discussed earlier, Fang has changed his political interpretation to depoliticizng readings, focusing on aesthetics and on Shakespeare's relations with the stage. With this new understanding, he adds stylish and colorful words to the Chinese line: his translation purports to catch the fashion of Shakespeare's time: "huo-zhe hao, hai-shi si-le hao, zhe shi ge nan-ti ah." Fang uses *hao* (good) twice, *nan* (difficult) to modify *ti* (question), and the interjection *ah* (Oh) because now he thinks that stylishness was allegedly the vogue of the English language in the Elizabethan-Jacobean era and that Shakespeare primarily wrote for the stage, and thus followed the fashion of his time and fashioned himself with his eloquent style.

Intriguingly, Fang's seizure of Shakespeare's "fashion" has been fashioned by the translator's post-Deng Chinese culture. Meanwhile, Fang aims at fashioning his new, aesthetic reading of Shakespeare with the English Bard's *new* Chinese canon. About two centuries ago, the German translator A. W. von Schlegel, caught the imagination of his time and that of the following century by inventing a romantic Shakespeare in his translation. Yet, Schlegel's "new poetics" of translation, together with his influential translating practices, defies the notion of "faithfully conveying" the original text in order to serve his Romanticist agenda. Rather, he takes his translations of Shakespeare as "autonomous and analogous representations of the original."[19] Against the romanticist conception of a poet-philosopher Bard, Fang's late twentieth-century new understanding of Shakespeare claims to restore the dramatist Shakespeare, "stressing the close relations between his texts and performances" (Fang 2000: 495). What agenda is Fang serving here? Will twenty-first century Chinese stage practitioners adopt his translation? Will his *new* Shakespeare replace Zhu's next best Shakespeare? Watch China.

[19] See Chen 1956: 141–159.

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