THE PROBLEM OF TRANSLATION IN MODERN CHINA:
A BRIEF STUDY ON LU XUN AND QIAN ZHONGSHU

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explore translation theory in modern China to shed light on the thought of inter-culturality through translation in the age of globalization, focussing on the works of Lu Xun (1881-1936) and Qian Zhongshu (1910-1998). Through a critical reflection on the phenomenon of intercultural encountering by translation in the period of early twentieth century in China, it attempts to unveil the constitution of modernization, the cultural way of crossing boundary, and the construction of imaginary otherness. The first chapter examines the methodological problems of translation in Lu Xun and Qian Zhongshu, separately, to demonstrate their contributions to Chinese modern translation theory from aesthetic viewpoints. The second chapter discusses the purpose of translation, investigating the cultural meaning of boundary crossing in translation. The third chapter examines the problems of the
translatability and untranslatability from Lu Xun’s and Qian Zhongshu’s aspects, by contrasting with the concept of differences and translatability in post-structuralism theory, discussing the possibilities of mutual understanding between two cultures and languages through the imagined other in translation.
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Introduction

A several question need to be asked: despite the ongoing globalization today, is it really possible that our different cultural worlds become into one, eliminating all the boundaries? Can all of us understand the others without misunderstandings? The problem of crossing culture is the problem of translation. Early twentieth century China is a time of cultural encountering of China and West during when a large number of translations in almost every field flowed into the ancient country. These translations bore the dream of modernization, and thus constituted the Chinese style modernization. Translation is not the solution of the dying country, but an access to the developed world outside China’s weary soul.

This paper aims to examine translation theories in early twentieth China as a point of departure to see what translation is between two languages, and if translation is possible. The first chapter will examine on the progress from the call of New Cultural Movement to call of translation, especially on the theories of Lu Xun and Qian Zhongshu. This chapter aims to see what the theories were back then towards translation. In other words, what the methodologies are of those theorists in modern China. By the examination of translation theories, we not only will learn the attitudes of the intellects, but also, more importantly, they philosophical views on boundary crossing and the communication with the other.

The second chapter discusses the purposes of translation, also continuing on the examination on Lu Xun and Qian Zhongshu. The purpose of translation holds a significant position because, through this study, it reveals the true reason why do we need to cross the boundary. That is to say, although modernization was the main and
sole goal for China since late nineteenth century, translation was not necessary in the strict sense. Many books were *re-written*, though they called themselves translation, embedding much the Chinese point of view and analysis for the Chinese readers. Literary translation, therefore, did not seem to play such an important role in the modernization of Chinese society. Lu Xun and Qian Zhonghsu, however, despite the utilitarianism around them, argued that literary translations asserted stronger social and literary responsibilities towards not only the modernization of the country but also the development and communication between cultures and languages.

The final chapter looks at Lu Xun and Qian Zhongshu in the light of post-structuralism. Discussing the translatability and untranslatability, I will examine how the concept of *difference* is contemplated by modern Chinese scholars. Translation, after all, is a negotiation of differences. In this light, I argue, a complete mutual understanding between two cultures and languages through translation is unlikely possible. All the translations we have done until today only constitute the image of the other, instead of transmitting an a hundred percent message, meaning of the fullness of the original. Translation is necessary, of course, in the process of globalization. However, translation can transmit only partial facts, truth, and meaning from the original. I argue, therefore, translation depicts an imagined other that only exists in translation.
CHAPTER ONE

From New Cultural Movement to Translation Theories

Translation is a word heard increasingly after New Culture Movement in China in 1919, having its mission as a tool to modernize China. Translation has emerged as a dominant movement in importing Western cultures and languages, for before the New Culture Movement, China has little Vernacular written works but classical styles. Classical Chinese, with strict rules and limited vocabulary, differs from daily oral speaking, is thought as elite language which serves only to a small number of privileged population. The classical style is considered also inadequate to translate; “not precise enough,” it was said, “to translate complicated sentence structures and detailed describing in foreign literature.” (Hu 18) Under the great pressure of national-wide revitalization, there is a pressing need for language to catch up the flow and start a modernization within itself.

Besides the problems of Chinese Vernacular modernization, translation has a more fundamental issue that in its translation meaning and language. That is to ask, how to translate from one language to another, first, using the proper word, and, second, conveying the most possible meaning of the original? Language tells meaning in words, and meaning is revealed within the linguistic words, phrases, and sentence structures. The two inseparable portions weave together to express messages to the readers, and yet readers read only in their native languages. Of all the efforts of to grasp meaning from the others, translation carries not only meaning from the others, but also from the other

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1 All the Chinese texts, except otherwise stated, is translated into English by the author.
languages. It becomes the question of what do readers, or translators, expect from the translation—the language, the meaning, or both.

Margaret Atwood’s famous novel *The Blind Assassin*, for example, has its Chinese title as “盲眼刺客” in Taiwan, literally meaning: The Blind-Eye Assassin. The actual meaning of “刺客（ci ke）,” however, carries a more political-oriented killer implication in it, whose definition differs from the original English word: assassin. Maybe due to aesthetic reason, the translator chose “刺客” but “杀手,” a modern word meaning a *killing hand*, which fits assassin accurately compares to “刺客.” The *killing hand*, usually an assassin who is paid to kill, has a sense of business while a *ci ke*, literally a *stabbing traveller*, is more often motivate to kill by patriotism or political power. A slight difference in definition here may or may not hurt the truthfulness of the translation that the readers would notice, yet it certainly affects the meaning which it conveys and silently influences the readers’ receptions.

Linguistic problem thus became a meaning issue when different language style is applied, the meaning itself changes. In quest of solving the dilemma in China, when translation is newly introduced, literati and academia have both experimenting and searching for the most appropriate theory to translate. Of course the problematic of meaning and languages are woven into the fabric of ways to translate together. To translate by language in the purpose to save meaning, or to translate by meaning, using the translator’s own languages, Lu Xun and Qian Zhongshu have two opposite routes in early 20th century.
Lu Xun（魯迅）(1881 – 1936), a highly praised by Communist China writer and cultural philosopher, is at first a medical student studying in Japan in 1904, but withdrawn from school after a year. Lu Xun was astonished, as he later explained in his article, by a brutal film on Japan-Russia war, in which Chinese crowds surround to see Japanese military slaughtering Chinese victims. The onlookers have neither sympathy nor affection, and no patriotism against Japan is seen. He then soon decided that it was not the wounds of a body needed to be saved; it was the thinking and the indifference that needed to be saved. For the next several years, Lu Xun stays in Japan, studies literature, and publishes some nationalism literary magazines, in which his fictions are initially introduced. Many new youths as Lu Xun had no confidences in China, and believe they need to learn new knowledge, technologies and thoughts from Western countries. Many go to Japan to learn in mostly every field they have, for Japan is already much more modernized than weak China, and they determine to see how an East Asian nation adopts a Western style of society. It becomes an urgent need to bring Western and Japanese books back to China, through translations, if not any other way.

“It is not for poetic writing,” Lu Xun explains in his early article the reasons why he is doing such literary works. “My emphasis is on introducing, on translations, especially on short stories by authors in oppressed nations,” clearly states his wish, Lu Xun continues, “Speaking of why, of course, I still have the Enlightenment-belief of a decade ago that it is for life and it must change this life. I detest those labels tagged on novels such as leisure books, particularly considering art for art’s sake as an alias of a life of leisure. My materials, therefore, are mostly from morbid societies and their
people.” (par. 5) Lu Xun clarifies his reasons to work on literature, not for the sake of art or anything else, but for literatures as medicine and wounded scars to wake the unconscious Chinese people.

Though with a determined goal, Lu Xun’s translations are usually neglected, or sometimes forgotten, in Chinese Lu-Xun-studies. In fact, Lu Xun is firstly a translator then a writer. Some researcher has pointed out that Lu Xun has translated three million words, which outnumbers his total amount of original writings. (Wang 346 – 347) This deserted field of study is uncommon in a country that has praised Lu Xun in almost every aspect. The fact is, however, that the translations of Lu Xun today were only commented as “precise” or “fidelity,” but no other words nor further researchs or papers were done. It is reasonable to suspect this avoiding is due to political factors (par. 5), for scholars can hardly have any more approvals words towards this politically-admired author in his translation except saying “precise.”

During the New Culture Movement², Lu’s translation style is attacked by other literati as very hard to follow that “[I] have to use a finger to trace and follow the logic just like reading a map.” (Liang, par. 2) This opposite alliance holds a thoroughly different view of translation from Lu Xun. They prefer intelligibility than fidelity, arguing that with intelligibility, though it may not carry the truth meaning, it is still worth of reading. Provided that, readers would, after all, grasp some, if not all, ideas of the original in their not-so-truthful-translation. A difficult but true translation shuts its door on its readers at the very beginning and thus fails its goal to introduce foreign works to Chinese readers. For Lu Xun, however, fidelity weights more than any literary

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² New Culture Movement: A cultural revolution by a group of Western-educated literati who push China to adopt Western thoughts and abandon classic style in writing to have a new Vernacular Chinese writing about 1919.
reasons. His translation is not for the pleasure of reading, but a mere dictionary in the original word order. He for many times has states that “except a few unavoidable places, I translate mostly word by word.” (176) Or: “Sentences were still direct translation, just as I always did; I want to keep the original tone, too, so even the orders of sentences are not reversed.” (263)

In one of his early translation, Lu Xun writes in the preface:

Without great imagination in spirit, there is no great art. But how China has been dispirited? This translation, though blunt and immature, has strong foundation hidden in its original. If, readers would bear to read two or three times, they should discover meanings: this is the very reason I translated – a wild wish, of course.

Sentences were mainly directly translated for my hope to keep the original tone. I am a layman of Chinese grammar, so there must be a lot of sentences that are grammatically wrong. (249)

Lu Xun has asserted, indeed, in many of his translations about his theoretical idea:

[...] the latter part was translated very badly by me [...]. It is tediously long and puzzling, but I have no better choice for once the passage is scattered, the spirit and power will be very different. (277)

Lu Xun’s first attempt is to publish a short stories volume, *Collection of Stories from Aboard* (《域外小說集》) with his younger brother Zhou Zuoren (周作人) as a co-translator. This selection has sold only about twenty copies. In the preface, Zhou Zuoren himself writes: “Not only the translation itself is awkward, but also many details
that are too poor to be reprinted. But its natural essence still has some values now and in the future.” (2) The selection applies Lu Xun’s theory to translate word by word, which they called “to translate by force” (硬譯). Later in the same preface, Zhou goes on: “Descriptions in these stories are likely to be an estrangement for Chinese people. [...] We ought not to be in such estrangement, as being the same kind species of human. Time, lands, fashions, and bias, however, have obstructed our views from mirroring each other.” (3)

Despite the failure of the Collection of Stories from Aboard and criticism from other literati, Lu Xun insists on his translation, giving the choice to the readers but change his style in translations. “But due to the lack of ability of the translator and inherited flaws in Chinese language, the translation is obscure with many difficulties to be understood; if to break the phrase or words, the translation would lose its shrewd and doughty tone. For me, there is only surrendering besides to translated by force – meaning I have ‘no other choice’ – and the only hope I have is that readers would, though puzzled, still read the translation.” (321) The insisted translation principle is for both to keep the original tone, and, probably more importantly, to modernize Chinese language.

Translation – besides its function to introduce the original content to Chinese readers– there is another significant task: to help us to create a new Chinese modern language. Chinese language (characters) is so poor that even many daily applicants are nameless. Chinese language seems like had not evolved from posing language – common daily conversation could not leave gesture show. Indeed, we have no adjectives, verbs, prepositions that differentiate details and complicated relations. [...] Progressed
European countries had completed such mission centuries ago. [...] Translation can develop new vocabulary, new sentence structure, fruitful diction and precise, exact representation. Thus, as we are fighting for creating Chinese modern new language, we must have discipline: absolute truthfulness and absolute Chinese Vernacular. This is to introduce new cultural language to the public. (361)

It seems inevitable, for Lu Xun, to adopt Western languages. The world is under great changes that it has never been to and no one has ever seen, and being the pioneer and leader of the progress of modernization, there are little doubts that Western thoughts and technologies should be embraced by the sleeping country, China. Importing only thoughts and technologies, however, appears deficient in Chinese language, which has no ideas and proper vocabularies to convey the Western discourses.

I think, therefore, there are too little theories that can be referred to, so everyone is a bit confused. For enemy, anatomy, and masticate are now inevitable, but to have a Book of Anatomy, or a Cooking Book to follow the rules would be more clear and tasty. People usually refer Prometheus in methodology as revolutionaries, thinking stealing the fire for people, though tortured by God, will not regret for their valued endurances are alike. But stealing fire from abroad to cook our own meat, hoping it would taste better, benefits the chewing party, of which my sacrifice is not in vain. (221)

The difference between China and Japan on this matter of modernization is that Japan is entitled by the government to modernize the nation, but, China, on the other hand, process of modernization comes much later than Japan. Japan by this time has
already modernized to a certain degree in industrial, economic, governmental, and linguistic aspects. Special vocabularies such as economy, philosophy, library, science, and democracy have no Chinese translations but Japanese pronunciations and kanji. China easily uses those words in their kanji forms with Chinese readings. Such way, nonetheless, only applies to specific nouns and ideologies. When more and more actions that Chinese verbs or describing words that Chinese adjectives are unable to inform within the old language itself, new style of language is desperately in need.

The fact that China has never use daily oral language as official written language hinders the movement of Vernacular. Besides the resistance from fogyish politicians, Vernacular itself has not yet well-developed is the main real obstacle.

Real Vernacular means really smooth modern Chinese language.

Vernacular here is not limited to ‘house trifles’ speaking language; it is: an oral language that is used from ordinary people’s daily conversations to university lectures of professors. Chinese now talk about philosophy, science, art... it is very obvious that we do have an oral language, isn’t it? If we do have one, then, the written speaking (words) should refer to such Vernacular but in more compact, organized form. [...] such language has a life, has the possibility to be accepted by people. It is a living language. [...] the so-called ‘not smooth’ is going to [...] neglect ordinary people’s speaking custom but to use classic style as written language. Such written language is a dead language itself.

[...]
My opinion is: to introduce the original meaning to Chinese readers completely, so that Chinese readers can have the exact ideas as British, Russians, Japanese, Germens, French readers receive when they read from the original texts. Such direct translation should use a language that is speak-able by Chinese people. […]

Of course, works of art demand a stricter standard than common papers. There are different tones, vocabularies, intonations, and emotions in these works, and they are not only occurring in conversations. The difficulty is larger when using our inadequate Chinese oral language to translate such works, comparing to translation of philosophy, science and et cetera. But such hardship only burdens our mission, never cancels the mission.”

(367 – 368)

Aiming for presenting a translation with the most fidelity, Lu Xun does not want any hint of meaning and frame of language lose during his translation. His attitude towards literary works differs from many literati who would likely to consider art as art itself. The rationale behind Lu Xun’s persistence in direct translation is the belief that literature is a medicine to save and enlighten people. His emphasis of a translation is never the relationship between the original and the translation; his emphasis only lies in the translation and its readers. That is to say, Lu Xun has not focus on the philosophical thinking on the relationship between the original text and the translated text. He does not see literature itself has a life and the translation maybe its afterlife, or another form of living of the original. Lu Xun, on the other hand, draws his attentions to after translation. His care is merely what happen, and what effect the translation has on Chinese society and readers.
Lu Xun indeed wants to keep the essence of the original, but in a much different ways from Walter Benjamin. Benjamin purposes a *pure language* that “is achievable not by any single language but only the totality of their intentions supplementing one another [...] Whereas all individual elements of foreign languages – words, sentences, associations – are mutually exclusive, these languages supplement one another in their intentions.” (Benjamin 257) Lu Xun’s idea which uses translations to supplement Chinese Vernacular is indeed unlike Benjamin’s language supplementing each other – though the ways they announce may look similar, their ultimate goals are in fact in separate ends. *Pure language* conveys more meaning than a mere state of language. Linguistic matters do not supplement the pure language; it is intentions that are in languages can achieve *pure language*. Modernizing Vernacular, on the other hand, is repeatedly stated by Lu Xun about his wish to grasp the linguistic structures of foreign languages.

**Meaning**

Qian Zhongshu (錢鍾書) (1910 – 1998), a literary scholar in modern China, has devoted most of his life on literary/aesthetic criticism on both Chinese works and European works. Though Qian is mostly known by his only novel *Weicheng [Fortress Besieged]*, his academic contribution lies in his huge collection of study notes, *Guan Zhui Pian* (《管錐篇》) [Limited Views.] His massive readings commerce Chinese and Western works, Chinese and Western literary theories into compare and contrast, aiming to build an improved structure upon both sides to advance from historical records. Not an official translator himself, Qian has only translated and published three
articles: Heinrich Heine’s “Preface of Don Quijote de la Mancha,” a chapter in The Histories of Herodotus, and one story in Short Stories Selection of Matteo Bandello.

His talent, however, is shown in his scattered works, especially in Limited Views. Qian cites from different languages and sources into Chinese. These citations came from various origins, besides Chinese and English, Italian, Spanish, French, and German were also evident. Though all of them are comparatively short, usually only a phrase or two, Qian’s translation and knowledge has been acknowledged widely.

When speak of translation, Qian cites:

Therefore, a great Italian poet purposes that a good translation requires incompatibility and contradiction (paiono discordaniti e incompatibili e contraddittorie): a translator must be affected (or ail traduttore necessariamente affetta), following the original step by step to search for the unaffected natural style (inaffettato, natural o spontaneo). There must be distance between one language and another. Translator’s interpretation and style will have distance too, and, especially, there is distance between translator’s understanding and his/her ability to represent it. Friedrich Schleiermacher had identified two different types of translation, which shed lights on discourses of translation genres or styles. For example, one is to “to Europeanize,” so that the foreign authors stay where they are, and leading translation readers towards the original end; another is “to Sinologize,” that the readers can rest, and leading the authors towards the foreign readers. (Entweder der Uebersetzer lässt den Schriftsteller möglichst in Ruhe und bewegt den
A glance of Qian’s massive citations have already revealed his style of writings. By juxtaposing different sources of literary theories, Qian pleads for an understanding of universal facts. Unlike Lu Xun, Qian does not view literary works and arts as tools or simply a material to be used to intentions. Qian, instead, regards art as art itself, and everything he has done in his lifetime tries to bring Chinese and Western literary theories together and prove they all have the same ultimate values towards art.

In his famous article which discusses translation, he elaborates his idea of translation:

The most accomplished goal for literary translation is “to transform.” It is to translate one language into another language without awkwardness – which may due to linguistic difference – and at the same time withhold the original style. An English man in seventeenth century praised such achievement as the ‘transmigration of souls’ of the original – the body has changed, but spirit remains. In other words, a translation should be as loyal as not reading a translation, for a work will never have a sense of translation in its original language. [...] translation is always a journey from one language as a point of departure to another language as arrival point. It is a journey full of hardships. On the road it may experience various dangers and even damages and lost. Thus, a translation always has some changes and differences on meaning or tones that are not exact same to the original text. That is ‘treachery,’ as said in Western slang: ‘a translator is a

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3 See Qian’s detail footnote: 111
betrayer’ (Traduttore traditore). [...] ‘Medium’ and ‘temptation’ explains, of course, the effects that a translation has in cultural changes. It serves as a middle man or messenger, introducing people to learn about foreign works, tempting people to love foreign works just as matchmaking, pushing a literary marriage between nation and nation. [...] An all and thorough ‘transformation’ is an unachievable ideal, and in some aspects, ‘treachery’ is inevitable to some degrees, ‘medium’ and ‘temptation,’ therefore, defines new meanings. Translation was firstly to help readers to read works that are in languages they do not understand, but sometimes it became the reasons for readers to learn the foreign language, reading the original. It aroused curiosities of some readers, and they then yearned for the original, just like their appetites were whetted but the food is not satisfying enough. They always have a blurred vision in translation, not as clear as reading an original work. [...] By this grain, a good translation is to eliminate itself; it transits us to the original and once we read the original, we put the translation aside immediately. A self-satisfied translator is usually the one who writes suicidal translation. He/she thinks there is no need to read the original after reading the translation, but the fact is that when a reader can read a true original, he/she very often abandons the substitution of a diligent work of a translator. On the other hand, a bad translation would eliminate the original work. A blunt and obscure translation refuses readers for the author; the reader could not bear to read the translation, he/she is unlikely to read the original. Such bad translation is not matchmaking but a mischief instead, destroying a direct connection between the readers and
the original author, losing the readers’ interests, and ruining the reputation of the original work.” (83 – 86)

Almost all the theorists or translators would agree on that fidelity is the most difficult but important quality a translation must have. Qian and Lu Xun have, however, two definition of fidelity. Despite the fear to lose any tones in the original, Qian’s transformation argues to have fidelity in spirit or essence, not solely in a linguistic level. Qian admits no translation can be the same as the original in tones and meaning. His idea to transform the original is not to translate word by word in order to keep the structure. Instead, he personally detests such translation:

Unexpectedly, there are many outstanding ‘Europeanized’ elements in [Lin Shu’s] translation. Several vocabularies and sentences seem as written by someone who understands the foreign language but not much in Chinese. Such stiff – or, dead, rather – translation construct a double ‘treachery’: damage the original representation and betrays its own mother tongue.

(101)

Qian furthers ‘transformation’ in another article, “On Not to Stand Between [論不隔].” He explains: “In translation studies, not to stand between is what Yan Fu called ‘intelligibility.’ [...] Not to stand between, but what is in the between? In a translation as an art, of course, it means nothing stand between the original style and the translation. [...] Similarly, when art as translation, the no- to-stand-between needs to assume a

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4 Lin Shu (林紓) (1852 – 1924), a translator translates by listening to his assistances for he does not know any foreign languages. He has a name in translating English novel into classical Chinese.

5 Yan Fu, one of the earliest translators in China, purposes three elements of a translation: fidelity, intelligibility, and polished style.
translation of an original text. In this assumed translation, there are things that the author wants to tell – emotion, epiphany, or object.

*Not to stand between*, for Qian, not only serves to translation studies, but it also applies to every literary theory. He cites Wang Guowei (王國維) several times to support, especially Wang’s words on *not to stand between*: “*not to stand between* is when every word appears in front of eyes.” From Wang, Qian elaborates:

> [... when] whenever the description of the author satisfies our own experiences, observations and imaginations, in which we see the clarity and liveliness (Hume: liveliness) as real events, it is *not to stand between*. A good translation reads like the original; a good literary work, according to theory of *not to stand between*, we should read and feel as we have sighted or experienced personally. We should only focus on the experience and sighting, for what kind of sighting and experiences they are have nothing to do with *not to stand between*. This is an important point that must be stated, or there would be a misunderstanding. Some would say, for example, that *not to stand between* only explains literary on surface level but fail to do so in a deeper sense of a work. This is definitely a misunderstanding. *Not to stand between* is not a thing, not an epiphany; it is mere a state, a transparent state. [...] in such state, everything the author has written is revealed and exposed in front of the readers’ eyes. (187)

Fidelity means the translation reads just as the original. In pursuit of true translation, Yan Fu’s third quality of translation, polished style, has violated his own rule of fidelity.

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6 Wang, Guowei (王國維), 1877 – 1927, a scholar, writer and poet. His *Commentary of Ci Poetry* is viewed valuable in aesthetics theory in Modern China. Qian cites from this book.
“A blurred vision is of course that there is something stands in between, yet when the blurry-eye is intended, it has nothing stands in between then” (Qian 189). A translation, therefore, should not work for its polished style for it is not faithful for the original.

Qian rarely shares his thoughts on the connection between translation and Vernacular, but in which his actual practice has never been inadequate for he too uses foreign linguistic structures and expressions. His works come later than Lu Xun and it is reasonable to suspect that by the time Qian’s writing, Vernacular has been developed quite well thanks to Lu and other literati who push on this matter.

Of all theories on ideas of translations during early 20th century, none exceeds Qian’s declaration, which of fidelity in meaning is indeed much more essential than fidelity in language, in aesthetic and literary views. Thoughts on translation reflect thoughts on literature and art. The differences that Qian and Lu hold reflect their ultimate belief in literature and art. For Lu, as he stated many times in his own works, literature works are to enlighten people from ignorance and indifferences; on the other hand, Qian, though rarely revealed, has suggested among his vast works that art is simply art itself. Qian once writes: “the purpose of translation is for our people to view and emulate foreign literatures, attracting readers to enjoy and study the original.” (143)

To examine through translation theories in early Chinese modernization help to advance the true meaning of translation. To translate is more than to bring one language to another, yet it concerns meaning, which complicated translation from its word by word translation. But why do we translate, after all? Why do we want to understand the others, or vice versa? Take one of the theories, or define otherwise.
CHAPTER TWO

A Purpose of Translation

All other forms of art cross national boundaries. The ingredients, colour, lines, and tunes, are full of universality that they can travel to anywhere else and no translation is needed. The most close-minded Chinese man could enjoy foreign music; the most vulgar foreigner could be a collector of Chinese paintings and sculptures. They may not have the proper taste in their judgement, but their experiences of enjoyment are real. Only literature keeps its secrets to itself, not letting out easily. The literature produced in that particular language is thus limited and blockaded.\(^7\)

——Qian Zhongshu, “On Chinese Poetry”\(^8\)

Qian Zhongshu (1910 – 1998) has never had a second thought on whether any literature should be translated into another language and be accessible for the foreign readers. Literature, unlike other forms of art, is limited to its readers that share the same language with the writing. Translation comes into the equation of literary transmitting from the original language to another language. Literature is a form of art, and art, according to Walter Benjamin, posits a man’s physical and spiritual existence. In this sense, where is translation in this formula of art and artwork? Does translation function

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\(^7\) All texts that are originally in Chinese are translated into English by the author only if otherwise noted and cited.

as a mean to prolong the existence of the art, or does it function as art itself? In order to examine these questions, we shall firstly ask: Why does a translator translate? If it concerns with the hope to read diversely, why not re-write or re-create but translate? In other words, why not produce the original at first place? What makes the translation necessary and inevitable?

Lu Xun (1881 – 1936) and Qian Zhongshu, living in a critical period of time in Chinese history, have both chosen to translate. But what have prompted, urged, and encouraged them to translate? What are the purposes of their translations? What do they expect from their own translation? Questions are posited, but none are answered satisfactory enough besides the general phrases such as “translation is to introduce literature in other languages,” but this still fail to present a decent explanation to the question of “Why to translate.” The real and true reason for translation, in my view, is boundary crossing. The idea of translation itself propounds boundary crossing at the very beginning of the history of translation. Had we not meant to cross boundary, why did we translated texts from another language which we might never needed? In the case of Lu Xun and Qian Zhongshu in twentieth century China, they postulate translation as a mean to learn and approach foreign knowledge and literature, and they both cross linguistic boundary in their practice of translation as a point of departure.

**Qian Zhongshu**

Born into a traditionally learnt family, Qian Zhongshu does not stand with most of his contemporaries to fall into the dualism and binarism between the two camps of translation theories. Qian, in fact, has his unique ideas about Chinese translation theories influenced by a broad background in both Western and Chinese traditions. In a
conference of Italian and Chinese literature, he asserts, “studying foreign literature, we experience many feelings, especially the feeling of familiarity [...]. Such feelings raise questions to be studied: Does the similarity come from the same origin of history, or does it come from a universal humanity? All in all, these interesting facts enhance our knowledge, and help us to understand literature in general”9. Qian devoted his lifelong study to such rather narrow topic in the field of literary criticism. To understand literature in general is to presuppose the universality in literature even with different semantic systems and writing styles. In my view, Qian, though he never spoke of it openly, proposes boundary crossing by writing shelfful papers on the similarities he collected and noted through his extensive readings and literary study. His perception targets the universality in pan-human literary works, and in order to do so, he constructs his theory of Huajing, the realm of transformation, proposing the pioneering theory of boundary crossing.

Qian Zhongshu’s idea on The Realm of Transformation (Huajing 化境), his primal theory of translation, is clearly stated in his article “The Translations of Lin Shu” (Lin Shu de fan yi 林紓的翻譯, 1963). He notes in the paper: “the highest standard in literary translation is hua, transforming a work from the language of one country into that of another. If this could be done without betraying any evidence of artifice by virtue of divergences in language and speech habits, while at the same time preserving intact the flavour of the original, then we say that such a performance has attained huajing,

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‘the ultimate of transmutation’.”

But, one should ask, what exactly is hua (화) and jing (境) in the Chinese context? Besides the meaning of to transform, hua also includes notions of to change, to educate, and to persuade while jing has the meaning of boundary, place, circumstance, condition, and landscape. Huajing, therefore, metaphorically implies the idea of boundary crossing, a departure from the home base and to arrive which ends at a somehow different condition or state. Qian’s use of these two characters in his translation theory, of course, carries the hope of crossing linguistic boundary in the works of art. A translation that successfully trans-passes these language barriers can be said to have attained the realm of transformation.

Even when a text is successfully transformed into another language, however, there is inevitably betrayal. But what is “betrayal,” according to Qian? Qian presses deeper on this question in his paper: “One is bound to encounter obstacles in transit and suffer certain losses and damages. For this reason, translations cannot avoid being somewhat unfaithful, violating or not exactly conforming to the original in meaning or tone. That is what we call e (訛), ‘misrepresentation.’” Notably, the character of e, in the combination of yan 言 and hua 化, symbols amusingly the meaning of “misrepresentation.” Yan (言), meaning speech, language, and word when used as a noun, means to speak, to discuss, to write, to ask, and to explain. In other words, in this synthesis of Chinese characters, the utterance would transform the truth into misrepresentation. This character of e has revealed its own meaning of diction in the

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formation of the word itself, and with Qian’s application of this Chinese character to his theory of translation, a profound reading is thus indicated. The misrepresentation in translation has two meanings that the any utterance has the danger of misrepresentation, and the translation of the utterance has almost no way to avoid the risk of misrepresentation.

Similar idea of misrepresentation of translation associating with the sense of betrayal is also evident in a Western saying, which Qian quotes in the essay as well, “the translator is a traitor” (Traduttore, traditore).” Qian admittedly states the inevitability of “misrepresentation” in both meanings and tones. Qian suggests the linguistic boundary should be trans-passed despite the presences of betrayal in meaning and tone that is expected and unavoidable. A translation reader, due to the nature of the linguistic rendering and literary interpretation, is presupposed of his/her inability to read in the original language, which is exactly what limits the literary works to go beyond its own linguistic boundary. Therefore, Qian explains his criterion of a good translation in the paper: “a translation should cleave to the original with such fidelity that it would not read like a translation, for a literary work in its own language will never read as though it has been through a process of translation.”

To read a translation while experiencing the reading as if reading the original, Qian professes an idea on the equivalence in meaning similar to Umberto Eco, where the latter notes equivalence in meaning should not be a literal translation but concerns with as many as possible cultural implications and expressions between the source language and the target language. But how does one access to “the flavour of the

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12 Ibid. pp. 105
13 Ibid. pp. 104
original”? Qian has given an explanation and detailed criterion what he elaborates as “indistinct” (buge, 不隔）in his short but essential essay, “On Indistinct.”

To be indistinct needs to suppose there is something that similar to an original of a translation. With this something, we could use as a criteria to examine whether the description of the author is true, and can the description satisfy the readers’ impression with clarity and without dispute…….. The criteria sprang from the readers themselves, as Wang Guowei [王國維] said: “languages and words are right before the eyes of the reader,” and this is what indistinct should be……. As long as the author’s descriptions do not go stray from the reader’s own observations, experiences, and imaginations, with vivid and convinced impression as if we had went through it. A good translation is read as if reading the original.15

The above remark certainly is not only a linguistic issue, but rather a philosophical and aesthetical problem, concerning the idea of authenticity of artwork. When an artist feels the desire to create a form of artwork, he/she will need the abilities to present, disclose, reveal, expose, and to show his/her own image of art indistinctly to the audiences and readers. The original text in this sense is no longer the source language of a translation text. It is, however, the intractable original image/imagination of the artist that in the finding of ways to be presented in front of the eyes of audiences. Translation, therefore, is the form of the artistic presentation. When the form is conveyed, namely, in the text of languages, the essence of art will travel in duplicity, not only from a language to

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another, but, more importantly, also from the origin of art to its presented form for it has an additional surplus linguistics boundary.

Of a linguistic translation, because of its semantic logic differences of the form, extra labours should be casted by the translator. As many theorists today would have agreed, a translation is more than a shift between two languages, but rather between two cultures, two systems of references. The shift is thus complex and arbitrary. All implications of a culture are conveyed in the certain language that is used; here, language is the form of the work of art. Translation is beyond the problems of grammatical transferring, but has to do with the transplantation from a constructed cultural world to another differently constructed cultural world. In order to transform the view of the world that exists in the text, Qian especially notes the on what he calls “an arduous journey of the language”16 during the process of translation.

Nevertheless, there are inevitable gaps – between one national language and another, between the translator’s comprehension and literary style and the form and substance of the original work, and frequently between the translator’s appreciation of the work and his ability to express it. It is an arduous journey that takes off from one language and, after inching its way and negotiating many gaps, arrives safely in the midst of another. One is bound to encounter obstacles in transit and suffer certain losses and damages. For this reason, translation cannot avoid being somewhat unfaithful, violating or not exactly conforming to the original in meaning or tone.17

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17 Ibid. pp. 104 – 105
Linguistic boundary is the most significant frontiers of a textual work of art. Text that is conveyed in language has to be translated by a translator to another language. The constructed world in the text posits its existence in the language, a certain linguistic system and cultural reference, and if the text itself searches to go beyond the limitation, it is only to trans-pass the linguistic boundary and to transcend the condition and state of the language differences.

Crossing linguistic boundary, therefore, is the purpose of translation for Qian Zhongshu. Language implies the meanings to go beyond the use of daily knowledge, conveying with a broader and larger world of constructed culture and reference behind the mere writing of language. To cross the boundary of language is to cross the boundary of culture and tradition that are hidden but carried in the passages of linguistic representation.

**Lu Xun**

During late 1920s to early 1930s, Chinese intellectuals had a significant literary debate on the discourse of translation with the upsurge of New Culture Movement: literal translation or sense-transl6ation during the translation wave of foreign literature. Lu Xun is one of the central leading characters of the advocates of literal translation, practicing his hundreds of translations of his personal belief and theoretical proposal even with the notorious criticism of “stiff translation” (硬譯, yingyi)\(^\text{18}\) by the opposing literary party.

Lu Xun, a great and productive writer, bespeaks his ideas on translation especially when a letter that is addressed to him by Qu Qiubai, (瞿秋白, 1899 – 1935)  

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\(^{18}\) Criticized by Liang Shiqiu (1903 – 1987) in the article “On Mr. Lu Xun’s ‘Stiff Translation’” (1929).
who had not yet meet Lu by then, to congratulate Lu's publication of his translation of
the Russian novel *Razgrom (The Rout)* in 1931. In the published letter, “On
Translation – A Letter to Lu Xun,” Qu states his agreement with Lu’s theory of
translation: “Translation – in addition to introducing the content of the original to
Chinese readers – has another important function that is, helping us to create a new
modern Chinese language. The Chinese language (as well as its writing system) is so
deficient that it lacks names for many everyday objects. Indeed the Chinese language
has not developed completely beyond the stage of “sign language” – everyday
conversation almost can’t do without the help of “gestures.” It is widely acknowledged,
during May Fourth Movement, that Chinese language, especially its classical format of
writing, has an inborn inadequacy to serve the new usage of modernization. Qu’s
gesture of supporting is thus greatly welcomed by Lu Xun. Lu Xun has repeatedly said
many times in his works and essays of publications that in his translations he would
“rather have the fidelity over fluency”, for he believes that the fidelity, though
sometimes awkward, may import new linguistic elements and modern semantic usages.
One of the main of May Fourth Movement is to replace the Chinese classical writing
style with vernacular writing. In other words, the literary revolution seeks not only to
modernize Chinese literature but also Chinese verbal and textual language. Chinese
vernacular writing, as many Lu’s contemporaries would agree during that time, is poorly
structured and usually found inadequate in the transition from classical Chinese to

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19 A Russian novel by Alexander Fadeyev (1901 – 1956). The original was published in 1927. A complete translation
by Lu Xun published in 1931, basing on a Japanese translation for Lu Xun barely knows the language of Russia.
20 Qu, Qiubai. “On Translation – A Letter to Lu Xun.” Translation by Yau Wai Ping, in Chan, Tak-hung Leo.
21 Ibid. pp. 153 – 154
22 In Chinese text: “寧信而不順”
dialectical vernacular. In his letter few days later, “A Reply to Qu Qiubai” (1931), Lu Xun explains:

Of course, by ‘not being fluent’ I do not mean that ‘kneeling down’ should become *qui zai shi zhixia* (kneeling down on one’s knees) in translation, or that “Milky Way” should be rendered as *niunaliu* (Road of Cow’s Milk). In other words, if we can simply swallow something as we would sip tea and eat rice, why make an effort to chew? Here a question arises: Why not Sinicize our translation entirely, and save the trouble of our readers? Can an incomprehensible translation be called a translation at all? My answer is: It is still a translation because it introduces not only new content but also new means of expression.23

To import the “new means of expression,” Lu has in his mind to reconstruct the existed Chinese language. Some scholars have proposed, despite Lu Xun’s methodology, to let the vernacular speaks for itself and after the transitional period from classical writing to dialects writing, Chinese vernacular will structure its own new system of language. This idea may appear to be reasonable, but Lu has no intention to see the Chinese language searching its way in its numerous locale dialects and he sees the waiting as a waste of time. Nonetheless, Lu disparages the old Chinese language, and wishes to renew it by installing Western linguistic system. Lu Xun has gone beyond to hope to modernize vernacular, but reach in the hope to re-build the language.

Corresponding to his idea to rebuild the vernacular writing, Lu Xun also finds the foreignness and alienation in a translation are key elements to his readers. Nothing has been more helpful than the sense of exotic does to the translation for Lu. He thus

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chooses to retain such feeling in his literary translation. “To ask only for easy understanding,” he says, “why not conveniently to re-create, or re-write, setting the events in China, transforming the people to Chinese? But if to be a translation, the first purpose, then, is to widely browse through foreign works, not only to be cultivated, but also to be educated that at least to learn where and when had thus happened, very alike to travelling aboard; it has be to exotics, and that is the so-called the sense of Westernness (洋氣, yangqi).”24 Lu mentions in one of his “preface of the translator” that “many objects in the story, though many seemed very ordinary in European countries, are rarely seemed even in a middle class family.”25 Those objects, not necessarily the fruits of Western modernization and industrialization, but its different cultural implication or usage, such as a fire place, a glass bottle, or a glass, could only be found in a “Western restaurant or second-class cabinet of a passenger liner.”26 Such objects imply not much of modernization in the Western countries, but influence the readers, providing them with a secret gaze through the writing of translation to the foreign world. The translation, therefore, serves as a mean for the Chinese readers to see beyond their daily life.

Lu Xun has shown and presented the exotic experiences in his translation both in sentence structure and the foreign objects and materials that are written in the original text. Had his readers been hypercritical or fastidious about the fluency of any writing, Lu would indeed lose his readers and fail to for in a greater degree he has hoped. Yet Lu Xun is aware of his translation which causes troubles to many readers, and he attempts

26 Ibid.
to explain such semantic confusion and grammatical discomfort are merely temporarily during the era of cultural emergency.

Now, we seek to import as much as we can, and then digest and absorb all we can. What is usable is retained, and what is left over is abandoned to the past. So if we were to tolerate ‘a certain degree of awkwardness’ at present, it could not be said that we are on the defensive. This is still ‘taking the offensive line.’ The speech of the common folk is undoubtedly ‘fluent,’ but the basic specimens of language collected from the folk should also be ‘fluent.’ For that reason I am among those who propose to tolerate ‘awkwardness’ in our language for the time being.  

Lu always hold a strong belief that Chinese language is inadequate, and by translating from foreign languages, Chinese language would gradually improve itself and become adequate to the use for modernization of China. For the time being, therefore, he pleads for understanding not only for himself, but for the country’s sake. Retaining those useful linguistic elements and thus transform Chinese language, Lu practices his idea of boundary crossing, and surpasses the limit of Chinese language in the transformation of a new language.

1934, Lu Xun proposes “Take -ism” (拿來主義, nalaizhuì) in one of his editorial on newspaper. His motherland has been “giving” away to the imperial powers by ceding territories and paying indemnity since the dusk of nineteenth century. The ideology expresses itself very well: “After all, we shall take. We use it, store it, or destroy it. Then the master shall be the new master, and the house shall be a new house. This man, however, requires being quiet, brave, distinguishing, unselfish. Had we not take, a man

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shall not be a new man; had we not take, art and literature shall not be a new art and literature.” 28 This statement generally agrees with Lu’s theory of literal translation. What is noticeable is the idea of “destroying” which marks China the active party in the “taking” process that highlights the stage of autonomic selecting. Similar to his theory of translation, Lu suggests both Chinese language and people to “take” anything that is beneficial from the Western cultures and languages and appropriate these things as many ways as possible into the Chinese culture.

One fact should be noticed is that among the numerous translation Lu has translated, many of them are originally written in German, Russian, or other eastern Europe and Slavic languages which Lu has little or no knowledge at all. Such “double-translation,” he explains, similar to his idea on literal translation, is only a temporal negotiation of translation for China. In the early twentieth century, China has almost no translators that are familiar with those languages besides English, French, and Japanese.

The idea that we better to only translate a nation’s literature in which you know the language has nothing wrong in it. However, by doing so, we could hardly have access to the variety of literature that as old as Heron and as young as modern literature translation in China. Among all the foreign languages that Chinese people have learnt, I afraid, English is the most widely known language in China and Japanese is the second most one. If we do not double translated, we can only read British, American or Japanese literary works, not to mention the lost of Ibsen29, Ibanez30, even the most popular fairy tales by Anderson31, and

29 Henrik Ibsen (1828 – 1906) is a major Norwegian writer in 19th century.
30 Vicente Blasco Ibanez (1867 – 1928) is a Spanish realistic novelist.
31 Hans Christian Andersen (1805 – 1875) is a famous Danish fairy tales author.
Mr. Quixote by Cervantes, that we could have no chance read at all. That will be such a pity in literature vision! In China, of course, there must be some people who know the languages of Denmark, Norway, or Spain, but they have not yet contributed themselves to translation. All we have now is translated through the translation of English. Most of the Russian works, too, are translated from English or French. (...) When we have a chance to do a direct translation from the original literary works, those double-translated works should put into neglect. Those translations, however, must exceed the old ones that they cannot excuse themselves with the reason that the translations are “directly translated from the original.”

The idea of double translation may seem unreasonable on an artistic sense, in which only contents, or plots, are translated through the double translation. On the other hand, Lu ventures beyond his knowledge of languages, and expands the limited reading experience of Chinese readers by crossing not only his own linguistic boundary but also the boundary of which that already beyond his reach. By translating those translated text, Lu Xun has discloses the veil of foreign styles of life and culture, and this is exactly of his yet another purpose of translation. Not only to modernize Chinese vernacular through literal translation, but also introduces other cultures and thinking to Chinese readers, Lu Xun translates in the hope to make foreign literature and thoughts more accessible. Though he usually only translates literature from Eastern, he indeed earns himself credits by crossing the boundaries other than joining the club of translating “Western” literature only.

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32 Don Quixote was firstly translated into China by this title.
33 Miguel de Cervantes (1547 – 1616) is a Spanish novelist, poet, and playwright.

Many would say the concept of translation of Lu Xun degrades aesthetic essence in translation, and that he fails to satisfy the literary aspect in translation. It would be arbitrary, nevertheless, to consider Lu Xun only as a literal translator who has no artistic value and pursuit; Lu, in fact, speaks rather poignantly of how “there would never be a perfectly domesticated translation, and should there be one, it were only a superficial copy, which should not be considered as a translation at all”\textsuperscript{35}. It was due to the obvious impossibility of fidelity to be achieved that Lu yields to that particular historical moment and abandons his literary ideas to translate by equivalence in meanings. Literal translation in his days deserves comment because it conveys more replete, helpful and straightforward materials for Westernization of China, but does not necessarily satisfy the translation discourse today. When we examine Lu Xun today, therefore, we should be aware of the temporal feature in his negotiation of cultural development.

The theory of translation of Lu Xun illustrates the incongruity in the process of translation, when a translator forsakes the effort to correspond with the original. The translation text, once translated from the original, detaches from its original, and, using Walter Benjamin’s vocabulary, gains an “afterlife” in its new foreign motherland. In this new homeland, the translation is embedded with new meanings and new tasks to serve its new readers, of which the original may have never intend to. It is true that we can never trace what was initially intended even of the original text, but more importantly in the context in translation is that it would certainly provide another exotic experience for its translation readers. The idea of the detachment of a translation from its original is rather post-modern that Lu Xun has no intention to introduce the original and its impact, but adds on his own interpretation to his translated readers.

CHAPTER THREE

The Imagined Other: Cultural Difference and (Un)translatability in Modern Chinese Translation Theories

One of the key elements that decides the methods and reasons of translation is difference. Cultural and linguistic difference appears in the process of translation that it renders the original work as a cultural entity to the culture of translation. Qian Zhongshu and Lu Xun, though sharing similar ideology on the core purpose of translation, shed different lights on the theory of difference today.

Difference leads, significantly, to the issue of translatability. Does translatability possible if difference appears? How should a translator see difference? Is it possible to eliminate all the differences in translation? Can we eliminate the difference? Does translatability only appears after the elimination of difference or otherwise? In order to answer these questions, or try to answer them, I will use post-structuralism theory with the study of modern Chinese intellects such as Lu Xun, Qiang Zhongshu and Wang Guowei. All of these intellectuals have different views on the concept of difference, purposing different possibilities of translatability.

Translatability, after all, is the most important issue in the study of translation. If translation is impossible, what have been translated? If translation is possible, why do we still have differences as such? Difference and translatability, therefore, are the final issues that I will discuss in this thesis, finding the trace of difference and sorting the problem of translatability.
Difference of the Other

The problem of difference has long existed among cultural discourses with various definitions to apply with. Those definitions, mostly in post-structuralism and post-modern theories, are, definitely significant. Yet, what is more important lies in the origin where cultural differences had occurred and perceived. Difference is something that differed from one's usual sense, a new idea, concept, or experience which may shatter and challenge the conventional, constituted knowledge. Difference is, before it is realized, cannot be fully described and imagined for it is the un-imaginability that aggregates the foreignness of difference. But how do we realize the differences? Does difference only exist between self and others? Who is the self and who is the other?

In translation or post-colonial theories, the distinction between self and other seems not as blur as distinction between difference and otherness. If the self is a language community within which people share similar ethical value and political, social connection in a shared space that legally belong to them, it is an enclosed cultural entity. The other, therefore, would be anyone or any cultural entity that is outside or excluded from the self entity. Here is when difference comes into the picture. When the self encounter the other, and the encountering reveals social and cultural disagreements, we name these disagreements as differences.

One of the modern scholars, Wang Guowei, witnessing the formation of modern national language in early twentieth-century China, had commented on this issue: "Language represents the thoughts of the citizen of a nation. The quality of delicacy or roughness, and the horizon of the broadness or shallowness, all depend on the quality and horizon of the language. Through the observation of the language one could imagine
the characteristics of the citizen of the nation.”36 For Wang, therefore, language is the production of a cultural nation which reveals the essence of the national personalities. His distinction is by the boundary of nationhood in a modern sense within which people belong to the same language community, and anyone without the ability to speak such language is the other. The idea to see a nation as an entity itself is, in fact, the very act that falling into the illusion of Western ideology. Nation, or nationality, though might be imaginable to most of the Chinese people, did not exist as a academic established concept in China until the wave of New Culture Movement in early 1900s. Nation was thus undefined in Wang"s time, although an orthodox understanding would still provide an obscure imagining nationality.

With this ambiguity in the definition, the problem, therefore, is deepened when the boundary becomes blurred. Without a definite definition of the boundary, we cannot draw a clear line to differentiate the self and the other. Again, we need to doubt the customary distinction between the two terms in order to shed light on discourses of translation theory.

The reason why I want to re-examine the definitions of the self and the other is because there should be no fixed understanding of the two categories, and therefore difference may exist among the so-called self entity despite the identical nationality, culture and society within it.

In Derrida’s article, “Monolingulism of the Other,” he emphasizes on the idea that one has only one language but which does not belong to him/her. The language is used by, although in the same language entity such as English-speaking world, an individual in an individual way. “We only ever speak one language... (yes,but) [w]e never speak

only one language.” The language we speak is related to our culture, education, and experiences that all of them build up a unique linguistic system of ourselves, and to some extent exclude anyone else outside our own linguistic order. In other words, the process of our living in this world adds up exactly what we are at the present and constitute our very particular identities which only belong to ourselves. This complex notion is useful for us today to understand the hybridity and complexion in a single culture, shedding light on translation theories even in the context in modern China.

With the coming of the wave of modernization, Chinese intellectuals in early twentieth century had been calling for the Otherness. It was the belief that China had remained fragile and lack of abilities of many things in a point of view of evolutionary was due to the country’s stiff and old tradition of thinking. This self-denial invoked their desire to translate the other in order to gain access to the other, and finally be heard by the other.

Lu Xun is the symbolic scholar during this time to ask for more exotic experience and knowledge to educate and enlighten the Chinese people with Western thinking and technology through the works of translation. Among the translations, Lu Xun advocates for the retaining of the linguistic and cultural differences. Both linguistic and cultural difference have been noted by Lu Xun as the very reason to translate. In other words, Lu argues that only to keep and respect the differences between language and culture would contribute to the fading Chinese culture.

All the intellectuals, including Lu Xun, viewed Chinee culture as an entity in general, under the rule of Chinese linguistic characters and dominant culture of Han people. The

conceptual idea of *nation* was quite recent and new to them that the new Republic of China only established in 1911. Before the establishment of the new republic, idea of nationality is unclear, confusing with the idea of dynasty such as *Qing* and the idea of *Central Kingdom*. The constitution of *nationality*, therefore, adopting from Western political science theory, include every race and people under the Chinese governmental regime. The failure to identify differences within the country itself leads to the failure of Chinese scholars’ problematic understandings to the differences among national, linguistic and cultural entities.

**Difference to Translatability**

Where is difference come from? Where does difference exist? How do we deal with difference? And, finally, can we translate difference? In the previous section of this essay I have talked about how scholars perceive differences, but what is more significant is the question of the origin and presentation of difference.

Difference, as noted before in this essay, associating of foreignness, is something that is not the same from a individual, culture, nation, or anything that could an entity as a whole. But how do we *know* it is a difference, that is, how does difference is appeared and represented? Or, more specifically, *through* what we see the difference?

Difference only appears as difference in its interconnection with the *other*. Through the contact of two entities, difference can thus appear in their mutual judgment with each particular criterion. This contact is realized firstly through translation. Translation, the very act of boundary crossing, reveals differences in language and culture through the translating between two languages and cultures. Before and besides the problem of *how* to translate difference, what deserves more attention is *can* the
difference be translated. It is the problem, therefore, of the translatability of differences. Discourses on translatability correlate mainly with the problem of untranslatable, things that carries its own individuality and singularity that loses its essential meaning in the process of translation and cannot be translated into another system.

A quote from Naoki Sakai, a post-structuralist, could explain this notion in a more understandable fashion: "The translatable and the untranslatable are both posterior to translation as repetition. Untranslatability does not exist before translation: translation is the priori of the untranslatable." Through translation, therefore, both the translatable and untranslatable are repeated and represented in the process of translation itself. The repetition helps to realize the existence of untranslatability. Hence, it is a complex paradox. The untranslatable can only appear itself through translation. This notion is strictly relate with the idea that difference only appear through contact of the other.

Using this post-structuralism view, we can now shed light on the study of modern Chinese translation theory. Qian Zhongshu, in his article "The Translation of Lin Shu (Lin Shu de fan yi 林紓的翻譯, 1963)," discusses problems and issues in translation using Lin Shu as an example. The famous Italian quote Qian has cited in his article, "Traduttore traditore [The translator is a traitor]," implies exactly the notion of difference of untranslatability. Qian notes difference as "misrepresentation" which happens because there is untranslatability in linguistic and cultural differences,

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"[encountering] obstacles in transit and suffer certain losses and damages."\textsuperscript{40}

\textit{Misrepresentation}, here, is a world of a work has been represented, interpreted, and understood wrongly. Misrepresentation would only be, following Sakai’s grain, represented after its own representation. The incorrectness comes from barriers along the process of translation, injuring the origin’s \textit{true} meaning and thus represents it inadequately. With that, Qian continues to say: "[T]ranslation cannot avoid being somewhat unfaithful, violating or not exactly conforming to the original in meaning or tone."\textsuperscript{41} The untruthfulness is when the notion of betrayal joins the scene. It is untruthful; therefore, it betrays the original both in meaning and style. The betrayal and untruthfulness from the origin to the translation have their basis of \textit{difference}. It is the \textit{difference} between two cultures and languages that the untranslatability, the difficulty of translation, has appeared untruthfully.

In Sakai’s theory, he distinguishes between \textit{communication} and \textit{address} in what he calls "homolingual address":

\begin{quote}
[T]hat is, a regime of someone relating herself or himself to others in enunciation whereby the addresser adopts the position representative of a putatively homogeneous language society and relates to the geneal addresses, who are also representative of an equally homogenous language community. Let me note that by the homolingual address I do not imply the social condition of conversation in which both the addresser and the addressee supposedly belong to the same language
\end{quote}


community; they believe themselves to belong to different language yet could still address themselves homolingually. 42(my emphasis)

In short, addresser addressed to the addressee in the belief that they could possibly communicate in homo-language. Address, therefore, is priori of the communication while communication refers to interpretation and translation itself. The addresser and the addressee, although they hold the belief that they could successfully communicate in homo-language, exchange their addresses in one language and translated to another in order to communicate homolingually.

In the light of homolingual address, Qian's idea of untruthfulness takes on a new significance. The process of translation is not only the process of translating from one language to another, but rather, more importantly, a transit of information from an addresser to the addressee when the communication takes over. The communication, however, could be unsuccessful and thus misrepresented. But this misrepresentation, paradoxically, cannon be represented until it is represented. Misrepresentation is the translatability which could only be possible in translation.

To push the idea further, when Sakai speaks about "homolinguual address," Derrida's "monolingulism" shows another possible theoretical analysis. Even though the definition of these two prefixes differs, while "homo-" means "the same," and "mono-" means "singular," both of the terms suggest mutual annotations. As Sakai has defined his own address, the "homolinguual address" is based on the idea that even people in different language community could still

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communicate in a homo-language. "Homolinguual address," therefore, remarks the proposed pre-existing universal language among all the linguistic community. "Monolingulism," on the other hand, suggests that every individual has his or her own linguistic system which belongs to a conventional language community, yet, still, differs from one to one. Of the Derridian idea, translation exist among every individual where even in a daily basis conversation, the speaker is the addresser and the listener is the addressee and they communicate, exchange information and essence in the very process of translation.

Post-structuralism not only helps us today with Qian's concept of misrepresentation, but also shed light on Lu Xun who focuses his approach to the translation in a very different view from Qian Zhongshu. Lu Xun, a modernist, repeatedly emphasized his main argument of importing all the useful linguistic, cultural, and technological elements from the developed West, which, in his view, includes the Japanese adoption of Western modernization that happened early than China. Any difference for Lun Xun is to be distinguished and be valued upon its functional application in Chinese cultural context. Language or culture community, for Lu Xun, draws a simple and clear line. It is either the Chinese or it is the Western other. The differences from Western other, however, are not meant to be fully translated. The Chinese culture and language, he argues, are insufficient at its own and need to be modernized through new agencies which could only be found in the Western other.

The linguistic and cultural differences that only appeared after translation are to be retained and respected. The untranslatable, which Lu Xun favors, is represented in literal translation. Literal translation as opposed to meaning
translation, argues to contend the foreign structures, even the awkwardness in the 
translated language. The awkwardness reveals exactly the untranslatable that only 
appeared through translation. The adoption of the differences and awkwardness 
from the translation is to be generalized and broadcast in common usage. Lu Xun 
in his “A Reply to Qu Qiubai (Gei Qu Qiubai de hui xin, 给瞿秋白的回信, 1931)” 
explains:

What is old and foreign (coming from other provinces, regions and countries) 
can finally be embraced as our own. This is not a figment of the imagination. For 
an example, Europeanized syntax is most common in the writing of the Japanese, 
although they have improved since Liang Qichao43 wrote his Reading Japanese 
for the Chinese. For a more recent example, as you mentioned in your letter, the 
word bagong (go on strike) was invented for the common folk in 1925. Although 
they had never seen the phrase before, they were able to understand it very well.44 
The awkwardness or foreignness in language for Lu Xun is not something that 
cannot be overcome with. It is, in fact, just the habitual acceptance, which, within a 
certain length of time, could be approved, received and finally enters into 
conversational usage on a daily basis. Lu Xun believes that the differences and 
untranslatable are the core of modernization in Chinese language and literature. In 
other words, it is the acceptance of unbiased could only lead a community to 

improve itself and modernize from within.

The Imagined Other

43 Liang Qichao 梁啟超
44 Chan, Tak-hung L. Twentieth-century Chinese Translation Theory: Modes, Issues and Debates. 
Among all the translation theories and translation work in the process of modernization of Chinese literary and culture in the early twentieth century, the problem becomes, after all, what have been translated? Differences and the untranslatable are either eliminated or retained in the translation in theory and in practice, but is the translatable actually translatable, or is it only an imaginary translatability? What is translatable and what is untranslatable? Does there exist a distinguishing boundary between them, or do they both are imaginary category that the question of (un)translatability is a false proposition? In other words, should the whole discourse about translation be revised as nothing is translatable and nothing is untranslatable?

Translation comes with difference. As long as there is difference between two communicational systems, translation is needed in order to eliminate or to retain, in Lu’s case, the differences and communicate between the two systems effectively. Yet, no matter which method the translator chooses to apply on translation, translation presupposes the absolute translatability of both the translatable and the untranslatable. It is clear that without the presupposition, no translation is possible.

In late-Qing to early Republican period China, every intellectuals agrees that there were numerous both Western and Japanese new terms, ideas, and concepts introduced into Chinese language. These terminologies are usually firstly Japanese and later adopted by their Japanese Chinese characters, kanji, in China. The terms are, therefore, travels in three different cultures, embodying individual understanding and definition of each culture. For example, the word library has its long history in European language from its root in Greek liber, book to the adoption in French, Spanish and Italian, from where it means bookseller, or bookstore. When the word library first arrives in Japan, Japanese translated it as toshokan 図書館, meaning a building with
graphs, maps, and books, while Chinese translate *library* as *canshulou* 藏書樓, with a more classical Chinese fashion, meaning a building which stores books. This example of the word *library*, though maybe limited, reveals the very idea of Lu Xun’s cultural theory. With the call for massive modernization, however, the translation of *cangshulou* has gradually be abandoned and replace by the Japanese version with slight different in Chinese character and in pronunciation, *tushuguan* 圖書館. After all, *tushuguan* came to use because it implies a new, public, and modern institution while *cangshulou*, though it has long been used with its similar idea, implies a more private property, and idea of hierarchy.

By this grain, can we still admit the possibility of translatability? Translation, in its process of transmitting and interpretation, I argue, is untranslatable. Every bit the addressee receives is only the imagined otherness. Of course, *tushuguan* means exactly and only *library*, but the origin and the formation of the word differs phonically and philologically and, more importantly, it differs in different cultural context. In short, when one pronounces the word *library*, *toshokan*, and *tushuguan* in Canada, Japan, or China today, each one of the national group arouses different imagined institution, function, and atmosphere. Translation, therefore, translates only the fixed definition which could be explained but not understood. The impossibility of translatability is that a translation can fully be understood in any cultural and linguistic entity.
Conclusion

The main issues discussed in this paper are the problems of methodologies, purpose, and difference in translation, focusing on Lu Xun and Qian Zhongshu as an access to the modernization process of early twentieth-century China. Qian Zhongshu’s theory of “The Realm of Transformation,” purposing the equivalence of meanings in the references to the origin, and Lu Xun’s theory of literal translation has prompted me to ponder the true meaning of translation.

In terms of the purpose of translation, I discovered Lu and Qian shared commonality in their views despite to their very opposite ideas on the methodology of translation. It is to go beyond the boundary, to development in culture, language and mutual understandings with the others. The two great scholars, however, diverged again on their view of differences and translatability.

Lu Xun viewed all the differences that appeared in translation should remain as such that the differences are the meaning of translation. Qian Zhongshu, on the other hand, argued that differences, though unable to avoid, are to be limited as little as possible. In this light, the question of translatability is not a valid hypothesis for Lu Xun. Translation is to reveal the differences and that is the agency of all translations. Yet, translatability remains the core issue for Qian Zhongshu and even theorists today.

Discussing these theories in my final chapter, I argue, that nothing is fully translatable. I agree that translation is possible to certain degrees, yet, as Qian had admitted in his article, that a complete translatability stays impossible. Translation, in the end, is the negotiation of mutual understandings, and the imagination of otherness.
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