

(Un)translatability and Aesthetic Equivalence:
Translating James Joyce's *A Portrait of
the Artist as a Young Man* into Chinese

Kun-liang Chuang

I

The core of translation theoretically lies in its potential of “translatability,” which renders translation possible as it travels across two cultural and linguistic borders. As Walter Benjamin argues, the translator’s work should “ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages” (72). However, this reciprocal exchange between languages is not simply an exchange of linguistic texts; rather, it may involve a meta-text of complex cultural politics. In other words, the interlingual/intralingual translation is also always already an act of intercultural/intracultural transmission. As cultural factors are involved in translation, untranslatability becomes the key issue in its struggling to find “equivalent” expressions across linguistic borders.

In terms of translation, there are always linguistic and cultural tensions between

the source language and the target language. As (un)translatability is concerned, fidelity and freedom become two major conflicting concepts in translational practices. Approaches toward equivalence are divided. The traditional idea about translation is more on “representing the original,” which regards the source language as the origin of authority. Consequently, faithfulness becomes the sole standard of judgment. The translator has to strive hard to approach the truth of the source language but often in vain. The controlling power of the source language over the target language reveals the imbalanced power relationship between the two.

However, post-structuralism flips the trend of this classical idea of fidelity in translation by exploring the external factors of politics, history, society, religion and culture around the source language. It intends to “de-originate the original” by switching the dominant power of translation from the source language to the target language. This approach deconstructs the authority of the source language and confirms the subjectivity of the target language as it emphasizes difference and creativity of the translated text. For instance, Jacques Derrida coins a new word “différance” to highlight the differing and deferring effects of the word as the signifier can only approach, but never reach, the signified in its floating linguistic movement. That is to say, in the case of translation, the assumed “equivalence” between the source language and the target language is simply illusive and illusionary. The gap or the difference between them is always already there in translation. Michel Foucault also questions the authorship as the source of authority in “What is an Author?” by arguing that the idea of the author is no more than a collection of multiple “egos” (130).

Roland Barthes goes one step further and announces the death of the author. He tries to distinguish “work” from “text” by arguing that “work” is a closed system and “text” an open space where different ideologies interact (146-48). It is suggested that the death of the author is the only way to ensure the birth of the reader. This argument implies that the meaning of the text is not given by the author who presumably has the ultimate power over the text, but rather, by the reader, far from being a passive receiver of meaning, who can actively produce

meaning by collaboratively working with the author through the mutual involvement in the text. In short, these deconstructionist ideas and reader response theories try to destabilize the representation of the original and to highlight the consolidation of subjectivity and creativity in the target language as important stances in translational practices. Can the translator thus turn the table around? Can he make the original anew by translation?

If the answer is “yes,” then we can refer to Walter Benjamin for theoretical support. In “The Task of the Translator,” Benjamin uses three metaphors to elaborate his idea of translation.

Firstly, he claims that the translated text is the “after-life” of the original. As he states,

Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of the two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own. (73)

Taking the translation as a “maturing process” implies the growth of the original in every future translation. The task of the translator is in a way to continue the life of the original. Jacques Derrida regards this task as a “marriage contract” (179). Parents will expect their child to grow up as an independent person, not as a copy of their own. Likewise, this is also true of translation. The translated text will have its own unique characteristics and subjectivity, though originating from the source language. Consequently, the maturing process can be twofold: each translation will make the original anew and each translated text can become a new original in the future maturing development of the target language.

Secondly, Benjamin compares the act of translation to the putting of fragments of a broken vase into a whole one again. After the fall of the Babel, as Benjamin argues, all languages are no longer immediate or transparent since the pure language is lost. In comparison with the wholeness of the pure language, both the translated and the original are deemed fragmentary. That is to say, there is an initial

fragmentation in the original. The translator has to use his imagination to fill in the gap or rupture in order to restore the original. Just like the restored vase, it is already “a repetition with difference” since the translator has in a way recreated the vase and made it uniquely anew. In this sense, the “broken” original, through the artistic treatment of the translator, is creatively reborn in the translated text.

Thirdly, Benjamin uses the mathematic idea of tangent to confirm the independence of the translated text. As he says,

Just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point, with this touch rather than with the point setting the law according to which it is to continue on its straight path to infinity, a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux. (80)

In other words, this tangent analogy confirms the subjectivity of the translation and it also triggers a debate over fidelity and freedom. Edward FitzGerald’s *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* is an interesting case in this respect.¹⁾ The translated text can gain its subjectivity in a different linguistic context and culture. To follow this tangent idea, Benjamin puts more stress on freedom than fidelity:

It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. (80)

Through the power of liberation, the translated text is endorsed with some creative potential to aspire after its aesthetic independence. The translator shuffles between

1) *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* is the title that Edward FitzGerald gave to his 1859 translation of a selection of quatrains (*rubā'iyāt*) attributed to Omar Khayyam (1048 - 1131). The book is canonized in Norton’s *History of English literature*, and considered excellent English literature via translation. It also has a couple of Chinese editions, translated by different translators. Among them, Huang’s edition (黄克蓀) is often mistaken by many to be an original Chinese work for its aesthetic effect.

the source language and the target language, looking for a third language which can appropriately merge the intention of the source language and the literary style of the target language. In a word, translation is closely related to the source language, but once the translation is complete, the target language will build up its own subjectivity and go on its own way free from the dominant power of the source language.

Benjamin's three metaphors of "after-life," "broken vase" and "tangent" open up new perspectives for translation as a way to promote the freedom of the translator and the subjectivity of the translated text. In short, the poststructuralist thinking by Barthes, Derrida and Benjamin challenges the conventional idea of representation and encourages the translator in his creative effort to "de-originate" the original. How can these poststructuralist ideas be realized in the translational practices?

II

According to Lawrence Venuti, there are two basic strategies in translation – domestication and foreignization. When we translate, we always struggle between these two paths. In my case, I will first of all look for the most likely semantic equivalence between the source language and the target language. Then I will take Joyce's writing style and the convention of Chinese expressions into consideration, and try to find or create some sort of aesthetic equivalence between the two. It is neither an approach of complete domestication which tries to dissolve Joyce English into "natural" Chinese in terms of its syntactical performance, nor is it an approach of total foreignization which sticks to Joyce's original writing with strong personalized style. My approach is actually contextual: both approaches of domestication and foreignization are taken according to the nature of the translated text. To guarantee the reading clarity of the translated text, I follow the path of domestication most of the time, but will also keep some degree of foreignness in

some cases in order to show Joycean flavor in his novel. In addition, when confronting with Irish cultural particularity or “untranslatability,” I will adopt Benjamin’s ideas of creative freedom and coin new Chinese expressions if necessary. In this way, echoing Benjamin’s idea of the maturing process, my translation will enrich the development of Chinese language with some tints of James Joyce.

James Joyce is known for the literary and linguistic experiments in his modernist writings. Consequently, his unique writings, such as his play on words, cultural allusions, linguistic ambiguity and stream-of-consciousness writing, pose great challenges to translation. The translator has to consider the meaning within the lines, between the lines, even beyond the lines in order to grasp the gist of Joyce’s intention and expressions. He has to fumble between domestication and foreignization, and manage to adopt an appropriate approach to deal with (un)translatability in the text. Translating James Joyce is basically a mission impossible. As a Chinese translator, I have to struggle between two linguistic /cultural systems and manage to find or create aesthetic equivalence of any kind. For the scope of this paper, I would like to focus on three issues that I have encountered in translating *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, namely, A) The necessary evil of annotation, B) Language games across cultures, and C) Domestication or foreignization.

A. The necessary evil of the annotation

Can we read James Joyce’s works without consulting any annotation? The annotations of *Finnegans Wake* and *Ulysses* are so heavy that they even become independent books themselves. Joyce claims that he will use a way of “scrupulous meanness” to write his Dublin stories. He simply throws some Irish historical happenings or cultural allusions into his stories without any further explanation at all. For those who are not native Irish or familiar with Irish history, it will be very difficult to understand what Joyce intends to preach without the help of annotations.

Likewise, it is also necessary to provide sufficient footnotes and annotations in translating *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* into any other languages, including Chinese.

The translator is often tempted to explain the meaning of the original text or to explain how his translation works in such a way. But to what degree are annotations sufficient enough? It is always a big question for the translator. As Tim Conley teasingly claims, “Typically, a footnote in a translation is understood to be a white flag waved as discretely as possible, sighted where the translator explicitly admits some degree of defeat” (72). A footnote will be a sign of failure of the translated text which is not autonomous enough to explain itself. Annotation thus becomes a necessary evil for translation.

My approach to annotation is dual. I try to distinguish what is historical from what is textual. For historical events, I will provide enough cultural background to help my readers understand the translated text. For the linguistic performance of the text itself, I will only provide the basic annotation and hope the translated text can speak for itself. The first type of annotation is about Irish history, Latin phrases and Catholic teaching. For instance, I have to write Footnote 8 to explain the political and religious debate between Aunt Dante and Mr. Casey at the dinner table for family Christmas gathering. Charles Parnell, the “Uncrowned King” of Ireland, is the focus of the conflict among different family members. That Parnell’s love affairs with Kitty O’Shea out of wedlock is a moral scandal which Aunt Dante cannot tolerate in her loyal belief in Catholicism. In addition to this scandal, other political criticism of Parnell’s leading role in the Home Rule movement is also annotated so that Chinese readers will have some clues to understand why Mr. Casey and Mr. Dedalus will be so sad about the downfall and later the death of Parnell. Only by providing such background information about Parnell and the Irish revolution can my Chinese readers be able to understand why Dante and Mr. Casey are so angry and upset against each other at Christmas dinner party.

Similarly, another Footnote 17 will be given to Hamilton Rowan, who escaped from the British troops and hid himself at Clongowes Wood Castle, and who just

closed the library windows right before the troops opened fire at him. If the translation of this anecdote goes without annotation, readers will most likely feel puzzled and in no way be able to understand why there are “marks of the soldiers’ slugs in the wood of the door” at Clongowes Wood College (10). And Footnote 37 is about Daniel O’Connell, who, notably referred to as the Great Liberator, led the Catholic Emancipation and launched the social movement for the repeal of the Act of Union. Without this historical information, the Chinese readers would be lost in translation.

Bible stories and Latin phrases appear quite often in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Joyce will simply insert Latin phrases into the text and interweaves Biblical quotations and allusions in his writings. For instance, Joyce quotes the Latin phrase, “*Interubera mea commorabitur*,”²⁾ from the Canticle of Canticles (the Song of Solomon), and directly goes on to describe the story of the lions and leopards from the Amana mountains. Growing up in a Catholic family and culture, Joyce is definitely familiar with all these Catholic teaching and preaching. But for most Chinese readers, they are often incompetent to know what Joyce is preaching here without Footnotes 8, 9 and 10 in Chapter Four.

The second type of annotation is related to the linguistic performance and semantic ambiguity of the text which Chinese readers may find it difficult to comprehend. These annotations are used to explain Joyce’s literary style, textual innovation or the significance of some events to the appreciation of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. To prioritize the semantic clearness in translation, the translator has to play an active role to help his readers to enjoy Joyce’s unique world of literariness by providing sufficient analysis and interpretation of the text via annotation. For instance, on Page 89, Stephen went with his father to visit the medical school where his father spent his youth days there. Stephen saw a startling word, “foetus,” carved on the table in a lecture hall. His father was proud of his own ability to socialize with gentlemen in society, but Stephen felt ashamed by his father’s drinking and flirtation with barmaids. The purpose of their trip to Cork was

2) He shall lie betwixt my breasts.

to auction some of their family property. The miserable feelings have overtaken Stephen but not his father, who was eager to recapture his lost youth. Consequently, Stephen felt distanced from and repulsive to his father. For general readers, the “foetus” here may seem incongruous. Therefore, it will be necessary for the translator to annotate its possible meaning in relation to the development of Stephen’s growing pains to become an artist. A “foetus” in this context may imply a new life for Stephen. As he felt wearied and dejected by his father’s voice on the journey, he repeated slowly to himself: “I am Stephen Dedalus” (92). The self-reassuring act of stating his own name corresponds to the significance of “foetus” in the story. We sense that Stephen feels the need to reconfirm his identity and independence since he cannot rely upon his father for anything. The annotation of the foetus can thus help my readers to understand why Stephen later seeks for his new life as a young artist.

Joyce starts his experiment on the writing of stream-of-consciousness in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. This innovative writing may be new to general Chinese readers. We can take Footnote 21 in Chapter One for example. As the novel unfolds, Stephen, the little boy, witnessed the heated political and religious debate over the dinner table. His mind followed the flow of his thoughts and jumped randomly. As it is depicted by Joyce, the little boy remembered how cold he felt when he was pushed into the square ditch, how Dante prepared the afternoon tea, how his feet got warm by the fireplace, and how Dante ached because of heartburn. These thoughts popped up in his mind randomly and scene by scene they were connected to form a stream of consciousness freely flowing without a definite direction. Therefore, this annotation serves as a reminder to the reader how this technique is used in the translated text. Readers can read the text and imagine how the boy’s thoughts wander aimlessly. With this annotation, the general Chinese readers can learn to appreciate Joyce’s writings here and hopefully can enjoy the textuality of the translation itself as well. Though Conley criticizes annotation as a gesture of surrender, I do believe it is still a necessity evil for my Chinese speaking readers. But I am also aware of the hidden danger of doing this.

As Conley warns,

It is worth remarking here how annotation can simultaneously narrow the reader's focus (and thus the meaning of the text) and be itself so ambiguous as to engender new puzzles and doubts. (Conley 83)

To annotate or not to annotate, that is definitely a big question.

B. Language games across cultures

Joyce is famous for his fascinating linguistic experiments in his modernist writings. The beginning pages of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* are known for its imitation of a baby's talk and the mingling of five senses into the description of how a child actually lives in real life. As the story opens, the third person narrator describes how little Stephen grew up from a baby to a little school boy. The degree of linguistic complexity shown in this section reflects how a person's language ability develops at different stages of life. In this novel, Joyce meticulously depicts how the little and sensitive boy responds to the minute changes of the outside world through his five senses. In the opening scene of the novel, the narrator imitates an adult talking and singing to a little baby. Here, by mixing the sounds and words, Joyce starts his language experiment and coins a lot of new words which become a great challenge to the translator. For instance, by combining word and sound, Joyce uses "moocow" to imitate a baby's talk. "Moo" is the sound of the cow. Joyce links the "moo" and the "cow" to create a new word "moocow" to mimic a baby's talk. When translating this "moocow," I have to combine the Chinese sound of "moo" (哞) and cow (牛), and likewise coin a Chinese phrase of "牛哞哞"³⁾ to match English "moocow." This attempt gives me some freedom to create a new Chinese equivalence and turn untranslatability into something that is aesthetically tangible.

3) There is already a Chinese phrase for little sheep, "羊咩咩," used in baby's talk. Likewise, "牛哞哞" will be an appropriate Chinese phrase for the "moocow."

Little Stephen was nicknamed as “Babie tuckoo.” This is another example of dealing with how a baby talks when its ability to pronounce words clearly is still under-developing. In his talking to the baby, little Stephen’s father pronounces “cuckoo” as “tuckoo” (7). This is also a play on the recombination of words and sounds. By switching “c” to “t,” “tuckoo” becomes a coined new word that echoes the relationship between the surrogate father and the alien son in the cuckoo’s family.⁴⁾ As to the translation, I have to come up with something new in Chinese. There is a Chinese phrase for “cuckoo” (咕咕 or 杜鵑鳥), but there is no equivalence for “tuckoo”. Therefore, I use “吐咕,” which has the same Chinese radical “口,” to replace “cuckoo” (咕咕) so the Chinese counterparts will look similar and sound similar. Since it is baby’s talk, I add a Chinese character “小” before “吐咕” according to Chinese practice for baby talks. “Tuckoo” thus has its Chinese equivalent as “小吐咕.”

The “moocow” and “tuckoo” cases exemplify the innovation of Joyce’s language game. The baby’s blurred articulation of words provides ample space for Joyce to play with sounds and words conjointly. The other good example is about “the wild rose blossoms/ On the little green place... O, the green wothe botheth” (7). “Wothe” refers to “rose” and “botheth” a phonetic imitation of “blossoms”. “Rose blossoms” has its Chinese equivalence of “玫瑰花開.” But to imitate the baby’s blurred pronunciation, I use “愧” to replace “瑰” and “該” to replace “開.” This is a Chinese pronunciation game on the difference between “ke” and “ge.” Therefore, Joyce’s sound game has found its aesthetic equivalence in Chinese.

Joyce is so fond of playing with sounds and spelling. The “wothe botheth” game is duplicated in the case of “The Calico Belly” (43). Little Stephen was pretty intrigued and puzzled by the graffiti on the closet door at the square ditch. Someone scribbled on the door: “*Julius Caesar wrote The Calico Belly.*”

4) It is a strange practice of raising babies for cuckoo birds. The mother cuckoo lays eggs in another bird’s nest. The little cuckoo has to grow up in an alien family and struggle to survive in a difficult environment. Much like what happens in the novel, young Stephen has to learn to be independent by leaving his family, country and religion.

Julius Caesar once wrote a famous book, *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (*Commentaries on the Gallic War*), but here Joyce teasingly replaces “*Bello Gallico*” with “*Calico Belly*” and creates a funny semantic twist for the reading effect. “The Gallic War” is profanely transformed into a hilarious and derogatory phrase which is spelled and pronounced almost the same but not quite with the original “*Bello Gallico*.” “*The Calico Belly*,” which literally means “a big tummy covered by a piece of calico cloth,” does not have any Chinese equivalence. The translator can only give a semantic proximity to it as “印花布肚皮.” This language game is totally lost in translation in a Chinese context. To get a basic semantic understanding, the translator has to give an explanatory footnote to it. Otherwise, even the most basic reading comprehension would be blocked for lack of this annotation.

Joyce’s language is seldom transparent; rather he is skilled in exploiting the ambivalence of the English language. Even taking a superficial reading, you will be lured to find his subtle play on irony, ambiguity, pun and many other rhetorical devices. He often says one thing but means another. These linguistic performances in a way put the translator in a difficult situation because he is always trapped between faithfulness or betrayal in translation.

There are many such interesting cases in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. For instance, Joyce plays a game with the place name, Athy, in Chapter One. A boy named Athy told Stephen a riddle and asked him if he knew the answer: “Why is the county Kildare like the leg of a fellow’s breeches?” Stephen had no clue. The joke lies in “Athy is the town in the county Kildare and a thigh is the other thigh” (25). “Athy” and “a thigh” share the same pronunciation. Without a clear context, they become a semantic barrier to the reading of the novel. In such a case, the direct translation will simply confuse its Chinese readers. Tim Conley reminds the translator of the subtle differences between explanation and annotation:

Perhaps the strongest of temptations faced by a translator is the temptation to explain—to explain some quality or meaning of the ‘original’ text, or to explain

the aims, philosophy, or method of his or her translation, though these both ultimately come to the same thing. (Conley 72)

However, under such circumstances, the translator is obliged to explain the “joke” hidden behind the play of words here. Otherwise, the audience would not be able to appreciate the phonetic joke of why “a thigh is the other thigh.”

The other example is about the play of person’s name. Tusker Boyle, a schoolmate, told Stephen that “an elephant had two tuskers instead of two tusks” (42). “Tusker” and “tusk” are pronounced almost the same. Tusker Boyle has a nickname, Lady Boyle, for he has long white hands like Elephant’s tusks. Thus tusk and Tusker are one in Boyle. And this is the key to the pun that Joyce employs in this pronunciation game. The translator has an urge to explain this to his readers, though he is completely aware that “it is worth remarking here how annotation can simultaneously narrow the reader’s focus (and thus the meaning of the text) and be itself so ambiguous as to engender new puzzles and doubts” (Conley 83). However, without sufficient annotation, the reader cannot even understand the semantical significance of the story.

The other linguistic challenge comes from Joyce’s use of technical terminologies in his writings. For instance, “each way” (197) is a technical term for horse race betting, and “five bob each way” means “five shillings to win, five shillings to place and five to show” (Gifford 244). And “rounders and bowling twisters and lobs” (41) comes from the cricket game which is popular among the British. “Rounders” is an English game similar to baseball; “bowling” is similar to pitching in baseball, and a “twister” is a curve ball and a “lob” is a high arched pitch (Gifford 151). And “twice nine” (44) is a kind of punishment, meaning “nice stroke on each hand” (Gifford 152). All these technical terms used by Joyce freely in the novel would become a great hurdle for the translator and for the Chinese speaking readers without sufficient annotation and explanation.

Joyce is also good at integrating his science knowledge into his storytelling. For instance, Stephen merges the electric power and the professor’s lecturing in class:

The droning voice of the professor continued to wind itself slowly round and round the coils it spoke of, doubling, trebling, quadrupling its somnolent energy as the coil multiplied its ohms of resistance. (194)⁵

The translator has to equip himself with enough knowledge about electricity in order to translate this passage correctly.

Last but not least, Joyce is fond of using the rhetorical device of oxymoron to express contradictory feelings in the novel. Examples can be found across the novel such as “queer quiet pleasure” (45), “in timorous silence” (76), “a vague general malignant joy” (79), “the sadly proud gesture of refusal” (99), “tender premonition” (99), “sinful perfume” (155), “vague pomp” (158), “dispassionate certitude” (166), “touched with mortal beauty” (171), “profane joy” (171), “quiet sufferance of his gaze” (171), “in stolid wonder” (178) and “benevolent malice” (210). Basically speaking, there is no equivalent for these phrases in Chinese. And the translator has to improvise and invent some new Chinese expressions to serve as their counterparts with similar aesthetic effect in each linguistic context. For instance, “sinful perfume” is translated into 「非分的遐思」 and “profane joy” is equated to 「褻瀆的喜悅」, both of which thus find their new expressions in Chinese.

C. Domestication or foreignization

When translating the novel, I often have Venuti in my mind and fumble between domestication and foreignization. Should I follow the idea of foreignization and apply the principle of literal translation in order to maintain the linguistic integrity of the source language? Or should I consider the semantic comprehension as the primary goal in translation and thus use the domestication approach? It is a complicated question. Sometimes I have to make a necessary shift between these two approaches while dealing with different phrases in different contexts.

How to deal with proverbs or slangs which are often characterized by their

5) My Chinese translation is: “教授低沉的聲音繼續喻地繞著他提到的線圈，一圈又一圈，當線圈電阻的歐姆數倍增時，他的聲音也兩倍、三倍、四倍地強化了它的催眠的力量。”

unique cultural particularities? In Chapter 5, Stephen is explaining to Lynch his hypothesis of aesthetics by referring to St. Aquinas, who was a chubby friar. Lynch accused Stephen of the discrepancy between his words and actions by saying “Are you laughing in your sleeve?” (209). Here, Lynch is actually quoting from the English proverb, “The friar preached against stealing and had a goose [pudding] in his sleeve,” which means what you preach is not what you behave. When translating “Are you laughing in your sleeve?” into Chinese, a literal translation would only cause more confusion since this idiomatic usage is simply foreign to Chinese readers. Therefore, I have to give up word-to-word translation and apply a free way to paraphrase the sentence and write an annotation to it. In such a case, an annotation will become a necessity for the sake of reading comprehension and communication.

The use of proverbs is not uncommon in Joyce’s novel. In Chapter Two, when Heron criticized Stephen for the subtlety and hypocrisy to hide his real intention behind an innocent look, he shouted to him that “You’d think butter wouldn’t melt in your mouth, said Heron. But I am afraid you’re a sly dog” (76). Joyce is referring to the English proverb again, which means “someone looks so innocent that one cannot believe that he or she is even warm, let alone capable of passion” (Gifford 167). If you give a literal translation here, the readers will definitely suffer from this abrupt and incongruous interruption and fail to understand your translation. My solution is to paraphrase semantically first and then add an annotation to explain the original proverb: “你裝得一臉無辜的樣子，赫倫說。但骨子裡恐怕你是一條狡猾的狗。”

Joyce also likes to play with ambiguity and puns in his writing. When tackling with an ambiguous phrase, the translator has to take both content and context into consideration. In most cases, the context will decide the way the content is expressed semantically and aesthetically. Literal translation will often lead to mindless mistakes in a Chinese context. For instance, the “books” (98) in the novel are not ordinary books but account books; young Stephen’s “breaking voice” (150) refers to the deepening of the voice during puberty, known as the voice change.

It is not about the cracking of sounds; the “trivial air” (160) is not about the evening air, but the music which passes over his mind; and the “pride” (165) has nothing to do with the self-respect or self-esteem. Since Stephen is talking about the feet of harts, the pride here refers to lions appearing in his mind; “nightshade” (178) is about a poisonous plant, not the “shade of the night.” I always put these phrases in context and try to render them more faithfully.

Some of the difficulties of translation come from Stephen’s sensitive and abstract feelings as he grows along to become a meditative young artist. As the story develops, Joyce’s writing style changes according to the mental state of Stephen in different stages. When Stephen becomes interested in Emma, a young childhood friend, his reserved feelings and thoughts also turn into subtlety. As his languages evolve with sophistication, the degree of difficulty in translation also ascends. For instance, in the school drama performance, Stephen imagined that Emma was sitting among the audience waiting for him to appear. He was so obsessed with this puberty love that “he wondered had he been in her thoughts as she had been in his” and some romantic feelings came back to him as he remembered once “he rested the tips of the fingers upon the palm of her hand ... and suddenly the memory of their touch traversed his brain and body like an invisible wave” (82). Such tender feelings flow in his mind and Joyce’s languages also go into the reverie dream of fantasy. Sentences, such as “Another nature seemed to have been lent him: the infection of the excitement and youth about him entered into and transformed his moody mistrustfulness ... the simple body before which he had acted magically deformed, the void of faces breaking at all points and falling asunder into busy groups” (85), become so abstract that the translator has to manage to create new expressions in the target language. For this case, by building up the semantic equivalence first, the translator also considers the aesthetic effect in the Chinese language. A poetic Chinese sentence of “那虛幻的臉孔向四方碎裂，跌落成忙碌的人流” is created to imitate the similarly poetic phrase of “the void of faces breaking at all points and falling asunder into busy groups” in the original text.

In addition, many of Stephen's thoughts are like interior monologue which is characterized by its meandering structure and abstract expressions. After having a sexual relationship with a prostitute, Stephen suffered from a sense of guilt and earnestly prayed to God for repentance and consolation. His world started to crumble. Joyce gives a vivid but abstract description to depict how Stephen suffers both physically and spiritually:

The letters of the name of Dublin lay heavily upon his mind, pushing one another surlily hither and thither with slow boorish insistence. His soul was fattening and congealing into a gross grease, plunging ever deeper in its dull fear into a sombre threatening dusk, while the body that was his stood, listless and dishonoured, gazing out of darkened eyes, helpless, perturbed and human for a bovine god to stare upon. (111)⁶

This is a pretty dense paragraph which integrates personification, analogy and allusion to describe Stephen's intense changes in his mind. The translator has to re-organize some of the original syntax and word orders, and then turn them into appropriate Chinese expressions in order to match them aesthetically.

The biggest challenge is to translate Stephen's meditation upon aesthetics. His hypothesis of beauty demands some sort of aesthetic sensitivity to do the translation. Joyce states in the novel that "The object of the artist is the creation of the beautiful. What the beautiful is is another question" (185). How to theorize the standard, if there is one, of the beautiful is crucial to Stephen's goal to become an artist. In Chapter Five, Stephen tries to explain the quality of beauty to Lynch by saying:

6) My translation goes like this: “都柏林這個字的拼寫字母，沉重地壓在他心頭上，它們彼此粗魯地互相推擠，動作雖緩慢但卻粗野地堅持到底。他的靈魂變得肥厚，凝固成一團油脂，在隱約的恐懼中，越陷越深，而墜落到陰暗危險的暮色裡。然而他的身體仍然站在那裡，無精打采，飽受羞辱，他目光黯然，往外凝視。在牛神的注視下，他覺得自己只是一個無助、困惑的凡人。”

... though the same object may not seem beautiful to all people, all people who admire a beautiful object find in it certain relations which satisfy and coincide with the stages themselves of all esthetic apprehension. These relations of the sensible, visible to you through one form and to me through another, must be therefore the necessary qualities of beauty. (209)⁷⁾

Stephen states that the esthetic emotion is static, but this idea is pretty abstract. Stephen's explanation is actually pretty vague and Lynch has to keep asking for further clarification. When translating this passage, the translator has to consult St. Thomas Aquinas' aesthetic theories for further understanding.⁸⁾ In such a case, some annotation will help serious readers to catch what Joyce is actually preaching here.

Beauty expressed by the artist cannot awaken in us an emotion which is kinetic or a sensation which is purely physical. It awakens, or ought to awaken, or induces, or ought to induce, an esthetic stasis, an ideal pity or an ideal terror, a stasis called forth, prolonged, and at last dissolved by what I call the rhythm of beauty (206).⁹⁾

Stephen's aesthetic theories deal with the abstract nature of the beautiful, which are mostly clouded with abstract languages. The translator has to decide whether he should remain as vague as Joyce in his unique way of presenting the idea of aesthetics or he should make it as clear as possible in his Chinese rendition. The translator once again faces the dilemma of domestication and foreignization in his translation.

7) My Chinese translation goes like this: “也許同一件物體大家看起來未必有相同的美，但是所有的人都認為是美的物體上，都可以發現某種關係，這種關係滿足並與審美的過程本身契合。這種可感知的關係-- 以一種形式為你所見，以另一種形式為我所見-- 就是美的必要品質。”

8) Aquinas' concept of aesthetics is composed of three criteria: namely, integritas, consonantia and claritas.

9) My translation strives to follow the rhythm of the English sentences: “藝術家表現的美並不會喚起一種動態的情緒，或純粹肉體上的感覺。它喚醒，或應該喚醒，或誘導，或應該誘導，一種美學的靜止狀態，一種理想的憐憫，或一種理想的恐懼，一種被喚醒，被延續，最後被我們稱之為美的節奏所消彌的靜止狀態。”

III

To translate James Joyce into Chinese, the translator often has to tackle “untranslatability” which prevails in Joyce’s experimental writings. The translation cannot go along without annotation. Is it a sign of surrender? Or can we look at it from a cross-cultural perspective? In this paper, I try to illustrate how translation brings James Joyce into the world of Chinese literature and in a way enriches the cultural resources of the Chinese language. Today, many Joycean phrases or expressions are gradually recognized and accepted by the Chinese readers through translation.

As a translator myself, I suffer from huge frustration when dealing with the “untranslatability” in Joyce’s experimental writing of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. However, in the agony of struggling, I have also enjoyed the freedom of creation in translation. That is to say, for the translator, untranslatability is a curse for its impossibility to find an equivalent counterpart in the target language, but at the same time it can be a blessing since the translator is entitled to demonstrate his own imagination and literary creativity to find an aesthetic equivalence between the two languages. Freedom and creativity thus ensure the translator an opportunity to build up his own subjectivity in translation.

This “double” experience reminds me of Salman Rushdie’s “loss and gain” in a translated man:

The word ‘translation’ comes, etymologically, from the Latin for ‘bearing across.’ Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately to the notion that something can also be gained. (17)

Rushdie highlights the hybridization effect on immigrants living in a new, different, and alien environment of the host country. To lose is to gain, and to gain is to lose. In Rushdie’s imaginary homeland in London, an immigrant is not the same person

as before and he will be a new person in the future if he survives. This metaphorical allusion can also be applied to translation. A translator enjoys the suffering of being torn apart between fidelity and freedom. To gain or to lose, the translator is cursed and blessed at the same time. However, I do believe the translation will gain its own new life in the new language.

Finally, I will just conclude this paper with three metaphors: If translation is a bridge, then the translator is the peddler of a boat that crosses the river, bringing the life of the original to the after-life of the translated. If translation is an act of love, then the translator is the matchmaker who brings two languages into a matrimonial bond out of which a new life is born. If translation is a war, then the translator will be the peacemaker who brings the “untranslatability” into creativity and who witnesses the maturing process of the languages. I earnestly hope my translation can fulfill these goals.

(Asia University, Taiwan)

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Abstract

(Un)translatability and Aesthetic Equivalence: Translating James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* into Chinese

Kun-liang Chuang

This paper aims to present how the idea of untranslatability is played upon in my translating *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* into Chinese. Following Lawrence Venuti's translation principles, I try to walk between the two poles of "domestication" and "foreignization," and manage to bridge the lexical gaps between Joyce's original expressions and their possible Chinese counterparts. I also refer to Walter Benjamin's article of "The Task of the Translator," which assumes some "sacred" meaning in the source language is in fact untranslatable, and Jacques Derrida's deconstructive concept of *différance*, which highlights the need and impossibility of translation at the same time. With these theoretical supports, I will address the issues of (un)translatability and aesthetic equivalence in my translating *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* into Chinese.

The issue of (un)translatability is conspicuous in this semi-autobiographical novel. Joyce's literary innovation and linguistic experiments have posed great challenges to the translator. For the scope of this paper, I focus my discussions on the following three points: (1) The necessary evil of annotation, (2) Language games across cultures, and (3) Domestication or foreignization. Examples will be offered to discuss how I manage to create some sort of "aesthetic equivalence" in my Chinese translation. Going beyond the simple dichotomy between betrayal and faithfulness, I emphasize the necessity of cross-cultural creativity in translating *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* into Chinese.

■ **Key words** : domestication, foreignization, untranslatability, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

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