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Chinese Discourses on Translation

Positions and Perspectives

Edited by

Martha P. Y. Cheung

The Translator



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Chinese Discourses on Translation
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Special Issue

Guest Editor

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Positions and Perspectives

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Introduction – Chinese Discourses on Translation

Positions and Perspectives

MARTHA P. Y. CHEUNG

Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

Abstract. *Chinese discourses on translation have always been a site for negotiating cultural politics, and for heated debates about the perennial problem of China's relation with the world. In its most recent form, the debate revolves around whether the import of foreign translation theories and the application of these theories to Chinese materials have resulted in a marginalization of traditional Chinese discourse on translation within the Chinese system of knowledge, and in the muting of Chinese voices to mere echoes of the voice of the West. Also debated vigorously is the related question of the importance of asserting Chineseness in academic discourses on translation. The reasons behind the Chinese preoccupation with issues of national and cultural identity are explored in the broader context of the postcolonial world and the plight of scholars working in non-metropolitan centres. The positions and perspectives of the major participants in this local debate are almost certain to have reverberations not only among the scholars concerned but also among those committed to moving beyond Eurocentric modes of thinking and promoting dialogue between major and non-major translation traditions.*

Keywords. Chineseness, Cluster concept, Cultural politics, Discourse, Eurocentrism, Identity, International translation studies, Post-ism.

Discourse on translation, at once a term referring to any text (works of translation included) that expresses the author's views, ideas and theorizations on translation – on its modes of operation, its dynamics, principles and methods, and/or on the philosophy, epistemology, ontology and hermeneutics of translation – and a term emphasizing the inseparable relation between power and knowledge, is an integral part of all translation traditions. Chinese discourses on translation¹ certainly form a key component of the Chinese translation

¹ The adjective 'Chinese' denotes not so much ethnic origin as linguistic preoccupation, in the sense of discourses on topics pertaining to translating from other languages into Chinese.

tradition. In spite of its long history, in spite of the range and diversity of topics covered, Chinese discourses on translation have so far exerted little influence on other translation traditions. Even amongst translators and those studying translations from foreign languages into Chinese or translations from Chinese into other languages, the influence of Chinese discourses on translation has largely been restricted to the remarks of a mere handful of translators. A further decline in influence set in during the second half of the 20th century, which saw an explosion of linguistic, literary and translation theories in Europe and America and the importation of many of these theories into the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan in the decades that followed the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976. These theories exerted considerable impact, especially on the Chinese mainland, which had remained almost entirely closed to the outside world all through the ten long years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Selected for translation into Chinese by Chinese translation scholars, the imported theories were promoted as a model of how theorization on translation ought to be conducted. Knowledge generated by the application of these theories on Chinese material was considered scientific knowledge. By contrast, traditional Chinese discourse on translation was criticized for being impressionistic, anecdotal, unscientific and unsystematic, and was more or less consigned to oblivion.

1. Cultural politics and Chinese discourses on translation

What happened in the field of translation was symptomatic of what happened in other branches of the humanities on the Chinese mainland. Starting from the mid 1980s, however, we began to witness some instances of critical self-reflection, with strong reaction taking shape against the new hierarchy of knowledge and the new structures of discursive power that were established as a result of the institutionalization of foreign theories in academia on the Chinese mainland. The emergence of these new structures was considered alarming – a manifestation of the impotence to which Chinese culture had been reduced, partly as a result of the ideology of total westernization to which China had willingly submitted herself in the first decades of the 20th century, partly by the damage to the national psyche caused by the Cultural Revolution, and partly because of the lure of Western master narratives such as those of scientific progress and economic development. Alarmed by such impotence, by the loss of ability to tap into the power of discourse and to exercise the right of discourse,² and by the muting of Chinese voices to mere echoes of voices of ‘the West’,³ there has been, since the mid 1980s, a series of movements

² The mainland scholar Cao Shunqing described this loss of ability to tap into the power of discourse as ‘aphasia’ (Cao 2008:4). He was commenting on Chinese literary theorizing. The same symptom is observable in translation studies on the Chinese mainland.

³ I follow Naoki Sakai in treating ‘the West’ as a construct, a “cartographic category” (Sakai 2005:201) that denotes “the geographic areas imagined to constitute the West – mainly

to rediscover the roots of Chinese culture. Calls were made, in translation studies as in other fields, to revitalize/reconstruct a Chinese tradition, to regain a Chinese voice, and to re-establish a Chinese system of learning and forms of knowledge. The calls stirred up a controversy. While there were supporters of such an assertion of Chineseness, the note of stridency which at times rang in the voice of those seeking to convert ethnicity into academic currency and authority was taken as a sign of resurgent nationalism that must be checked.

The debate about Chineseness broke out again in the 1990s, when a prevailing sense of cultural introspection resulted in the admission that China's growing economic prowess was not matched by a similar growth in cultural strength or in 'soft power' – a term used by scholars of international relations.⁴ It was a heated debate, involving intellectuals of different ideological orientations, academic training and background. Voices arguing for Chineseness on the ground that it is the cornerstone of identity did not include just those trained in the classical tradition of Chinese scholarship but also intellectuals responsive to the theories of postcolonialism, poststructuralism, postmodernism – referred to on the Chinese mainland under the umbrella term 'post-ism' (*hou xue* 后学). They also included Chinese scholars who were concerned about the impact of globalization on the Chinese mainland. To them, the development of a distinct sense of cultural identity (if not national identity) was a necessary first step to the promotion of cultural diversity in the world, which was needed to counter the threat of homogeneity posed by the spread of global capitalism.

There were also vehement oppositions to such a position. The 'post' theories were dismissed or treated with suspicion because on the Chinese mainland, the emphasis these theories placed on (national) self-determination and on resistance against Eurocentric thinking and other forms of intellectual hegemony and cultural imperialism could easily be appropriated. National self-determination is an ideological position that suited the conservatives, who would use it to buttress the official line that China should go her own way and reject all attempts to meddle in her internal affairs – the better to suppress voices of dissent and other 'subversive' activities. In the years after the 'Tiananmen Incident' of 1989, one of the measures taken by the authorities

Western Europe in the nineteenth century, with North America being added later in the twentieth century" (*ibid.*:194). Sakai also stresses, and I agree with him, that because of modernity as a historical development and the process of "developmental teleology", the West was supposed "to expand and radiate towards the peripheries of the world", and the representation of the world became hierarchically organized into the West and the Rest, the modern and its others, the white and the colored" (*ibid.*:202)

⁴ Soft power, a term much used in international relations, is a concept developed by Joseph Nye, a professor at Harvard University, in his books *Bound to Lead: the Changing Nature of American Power* (1990) and *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004). It refers to the capability to get what one wants through co-option and attraction instead of coercion and payment.

was the mounting of a nationwide patriotic education campaign to inculcate in the Chinese people a sense of patriotism and national self-determination.⁵ Even amongst the elite who were generally sympathetic to the call to revitalize Chinese culture, a sense of ambivalence prevailed. There was concern that as a result of assertive Chineseness, as seen for example in the enormous popularity of publications such as 中国可以说——冷战后时代的政治与情感抉择 (China Can Say No: Choices in Politics and Sentiments in the Post-cold War Era, Song *et al.* 1996a),⁶ there would be a surge of belligerent and even extreme nationalistic sentiments. This would be dangerous. Cultural confidence, pride and dignity, it was argued, were to be regained, not by exploiting identity politics or the mentality of a cultural ghetto,⁷ but by engaging with the Other, even if that means meeting the Other on his or her own terms and using the Other's language. The emphasis should be on interaction, dialogue, transformation of the Self, and the similarity and commensurability of cultures (Zhang 1993:98).

The new century ushered in a new mood on the Chinese mainland. It was, still is, characterized at once by extraordinary self-confidence (as witnessed in events such as the awe-inspiring opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics) and extraordinary anxiety (perhaps best expressed as 'Whither will China go – after the Olympics?', and/or 'What else can China say apart from No?'). It is hardly surprising that the rise of China as a (super)power is seen by many inside and outside China as an issue that is likely to haunt and daunt the 21st century.

⁵ Zhao Suisheng (1998) has given a detailed analysis of how Chinese nationalism was promoted in the name of patriotism by the Communist regime in the 1990s. Aware of the rapid decay of Communist ideology and confronted with the crisis of legitimacy triggered by the 'Tiananmen Incident' of 1989, the CCP mounted a state-led patriotic education campaign. The campaign, which portrayed China as a country besieged by hostile international forces and needing strong words and firm actions from the Communist leadership, sought to ameliorate general discontent by using patriotism as a rallying call.

⁶ When the book was published in 1996, it became a runaway best-seller. With 200,000 copies printed, the book attracted the attention of the world media. It was seen as a sign of a growing Chinese nationalism. Later that year, a sequel entitled 中国还是能说不——国际关系变数与我们的现实应对 (China Can Still Say No: Variables in International Relations and Our Responses; Song *et al.* 1996b) was published, sold out instantly, and saw a reprint of 400,000 copies (Des Forges and Xu 2001:486-87). See Des Forges and Xu (*ibid.*) and Guan (2009) for more information about these two and other related publications, about the reactions, discussions and debates which ensued, and for an interview with one of the authors, Song Qiang, who talks about the force of feeling that drove him to collaborate with other writers to produce the book.

⁷ See Zhang (1993:79) for a forceful argument against "the ghettoization of culture", one example of which is the preoccupation in the study of Chinese Literature (or of other disciplines in the humanities) with constructing "an isolated Chinese essence" (*ibid.*:95) and the formulation of "the fundamental difference that would distinguish the Orient from the Occident" (*ibid.*:87).

It is in this much larger context of cultural politics at the macro-level that contemporary Chinese discourses on translation, especially on the question of directions for the future development of translation studies on the Chinese mainland, are to be situated and understood. In fact, Chinese discourses on translation have always been a site for negotiating cultural politics. During the period of Buddhist sutra translation, which took place from the mid 1st century CE until the 11th century, discourses on translation showed recurrent traces of the power struggle (over becoming the state religion) between Buddhism and Ruism, between Buddhism and Taoism, or amongst the three. During the period of the late Ming and early Qing dynasty (i.e. late 16th century to the beginning of the 18th century) discussions about translating terminology – not so much scientific terms as philosophical and religious terms – and in particular about whether conceptual terms in one cultural tradition could find their equivalents in the Chinese cultural tradition and be translated adequately, were often conducted with the purpose of advancing or checking the missionary cause in China. From the middle of the 19th century until today, much of the discussions about the function(s) of translation were intended to serve particular cultural, economic, political and ideological agendas – that of modernization, nation-building, and resistance against international aggression, whether aggression was understood as military aggression by foreign powers, economic expansionism, or global capitalism.

Not all translation scholars, however, welcomed the opportunity to engage in cultural politics, especially not after the Cultural Revolution. Many believed that politics had already done too much damage to the Chinese people and should not be allowed to dominate/ruin people's life any longer. Without declaring this as a position, they devoted themselves to clearing a space for translation studies and establishing its disciplinary status. This they did by producing works which focused upon issues addressing, revolving around, or related to the conventionally accepted notion of translation as interlingual transfer of meaning, or, more liberally, on the broader sense of translation as an encounter/contact between cultures. Against this view – that disciplinary knowledge is best depoliticized (i.e. kept free from the ideological control of the state) and best built on the paradigm of disinterestedness – there are yet others who would argue that translation is inextricably linked with politics, with ideology, and hence that it is an activity that (often) takes place in a context of unequal power relations. Translation is not just a zone of contact but also a site of conflict and contest between cultures. This being the case, analysis should be conducted on the operation of ideology, politics and power in actual works of translation, or on how actual works of translation impact on the ideology, politics and power relations of the time.⁸ Some researchers would

⁸ Wang Xiaoyuan's '意识形态与文学的互动关系' (The Interaction between Ideology and Literary Translation, 1999) is one of many articles that have appeared in the last decade on the Chinese mainland and that address the complex relationship between ideology and

also view the space encompassed by discourses on translation as a space for cultural critique – either of the Self or of the Other, or both. In addition, there are scholars who would use discourses on translation as a tool to challenge or destabilize existing structures of power and knowledge – in the discipline of translation studies on the Chinese mainland and across national boundaries.

2. A storm in a teacup or a local debate with wider significance?

A local debate such as the one which recurred in China would have little or no interest for the international community of translation scholars but for the fact that cultural politics too was a central preoccupation of intellectuals in Europe and America in the second half of the 20th century. Decolonization had led to a process of self-introspection. The rise of poststructuralist, postmodernist and postcolonial thinking had resulted in some sharp critiques of Eurocentrism in the discourses of different academic disciplines, translation studies included. Critical studies of the hegemony of master theories and master narratives, and critical interest in the plight of the subaltern, had opened up perspectives with which to examine local concerns and local debates and allow them to take on wider significance. The sense of cultural impotence experienced by the Chinese, for example, assumes significance as an instance of the general sense of vulnerability and defencelessness that is tormenting the (intellectually and culturally) subjugated, whether the subjugation is forced upon them or self-invited. In the discipline of translation studies, efforts of scholars from the metropolitan centre to guard against Eurocentric tendencies have resulted in attempts to borrow and learn from other discourses on translation in order to produce new models or conduct new theoretical explorations.⁹ Initiatives have been taken to introduce peripheral translation traditions to readerships in the metropolitan centres,¹⁰ and calls have been made to develop “a truly ‘international’

literary translation. In his book 重释“信达雅” (Reinterpretation of the Standards of *xin da* and *ya*, 1999), Wong Wang-chi also underlines the importance of such a relationship by analyzing the role played by ideology in translation in the early decades of the 20th century in China. In his article ‘Politics and Poetics in Translation: Accounting for a Chinese Version of “*Yes Prime Minister*”’, Chang Nam Fung describes his translation of *Yes Prime Minister* as “a form of ideological resistance” and expresses the hope that the translation “would become a political satire in the Chinese context, thus making a contribution to the democratic movement” (Chang 1998:255).

⁹ A classic example of such an attempt is *Beyond the Western Tradition* (2000), a collection of essays edited by Marilyn Gaddis Rose. The most recent is Maria Tymoczko’s *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (2007). Lawrence Venuti’s deployment of the concept of minority in research on translation is another important theoretical attempt to broaden the field and make translation studies more receptive to heterogeneous elements. (see Venuti 1998)

¹⁰ Initiatives undertaken by Chinese scholars include two collections, in English translation, of Chinese discourses on translation (Chan 2004, Cheung 2006). Another Chinese scholar, Eva Hung, has edited, in collaboration with Judy Wakabayashi, a collection of essays in

and ‘multilingual’ translation studies” (Susam-Sarajeva 2002:203), one that is non-Eurocentric and shows genuine respect for the Other.

How successful are these initiatives? While it is politically correct – almost an imperative – to talk about promoting a translation studies that is non-Eurocentric, what exactly does this entail? How is it to be achieved in real terms? Will it take the form of a new paradigm, a new mindset, a larger set of conceptual tools and analytical models resulting from a better acquaintance with and a more in-depth understanding of other traditions of discourses on translation? Or will it result in a mere tokenization of the Other? Or lead to the appropriation of Chinese (or other local) discourses on translation by scholars theorizing from the metropolitan centres? And what exactly does overcoming cultural impotence and regaining a Chinese voice mean in the international arena of translation studies? Does that mean highlighting Chineseness? How can such a development be pursued without giving in to the sentiment of academic Sinocentrism and cultural arrogance, and without falling prey to the danger of essentialization? Putting aside the question of the usefulness or otherwise of the notion of ‘Chineseness’, which has been problematized, critiqued and even attacked, at times with venom, by Chinese scholars in the Anglo-American world,¹¹ what in real terms do Chinese discourses on translation have to offer to the development of translation studies in general? What language is the Chinese voice going to use to make itself heard? English? What, for Chinese scholars, are the theoretical, ideological, political and cultural implications of using English as the (primary) working

English on a number of translation traditions in Asia (Hung and Wakabayashi 2005). A more recent initiative is *Translation, Globalisation and Localisation: A Chinese Perspective*, a collection of essays in English, edited by Wang Ning and Sun Yifeng (2008). One should also mention the projects run by the Japanese scholar Naoki Sakai, in particular the publication TRACES, a multilingual series of cultural theory and translation, available now in English, Chinese, Korean and Japanese, to provide an international space of intellectual exchange in a multilingual medium.

¹¹ The notion of ‘Chineseness’ has been subjected to a vituperative attack by Allen Chun (1996) in ‘Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity’. Rey Chow (1998), on the other hand, examines the notion from a theoretical and methodological perspective. Other Chinese scholars in the Anglo-American world have also interrogated the notion from different angles. One widely-read collection of articles is Tu Wei-ming’s *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today* (1994), which explores “the emergence of a cultural space (a symbolic universe) that both encompasses and transcends the ethnic, territorial, linguistic, and religious boundaries that normally define Chineseness” (*ibid.*:v). See also the essays published in *boundary 2*, Fall 1998. In the Anglo-American world at least, and especially in the humanities, it is fairly well established that ‘Chinese’ is not a single monolithic and homogenous notion. This perhaps marks the main difference between Chinese scholars in the Anglo-American world and those on the mainland. To the mainland scholars, ‘Chinese’ is a label they can identify with, and the problem is how Chineseness can be developed without being hijacked by the conservative hardliners, and without being soured by extreme nationalist sentiments.

language in international translation studies? How does that impact on their sense of cultural identity/cultural dignity/cultural sovereignty? Is international translation studies to be equated with translation studies in English – the ‘international’ language? More importantly, shouldn’t the dominance of English be challenged rather than reinforced in order for a non-Eurocentric translation studies to develop?

This Special Issue, *Chinese Discourses on Translation: Positions and Perspectives*, sets out to address the above issues from the perspectives of Chinese and non-Chinese scholars in translation studies. But the questions just raised are equally valid for scholars in translation studies working in places/spaces other than the metropolitan centres.

3. This special issue

This Special Issue was originally entitled ‘Chinese Discourse on Translation and International Translation Studies’, and indeed, this is a recurrent theme of the articles collected here. As the Special Issue took shape, however, it became clear that each of the key terms in the first part of the title – ‘Chinese’, ‘discourse’, ‘translation’ – is fluid and plural in meaning; each invites interpretation, explication and definition. Likewise, the question of what Chinese discourses on translation should encompass – an apparently simple and uncontroversial question – is one which has attracted different statements of position rather than consensus or a uniform perspective. Hence the new title, ‘Chinese Discourses on Translation: Positions and Perspectives’.

Guo Yangsheng’s article, ‘Theorizing the Politics of Translation in a Global Era: A Chinese Perspective’, situates itself in the context of China’s changing and anxiety-ridden relationship with the world. Guo describes this relation as one of tangible and intangible conflicts between a Western vision of globalization – characterized by agendas and projects founded on economic fundamentalism – and a Chinese vision of globalization that is based on Chinese aspirations for modernization and national rejuvenation. Translation is considered an agent of globalization and hence a catalyst for some of the conflicts underlying China’s relationship with the world. While expressing a subdued sense of pride in China’s rise to power, Guo is nevertheless wary of sincocentrism, xenophobia and nationalism. To the question of what else China can say apart from ‘No’, he would certainly say that only one answer is possible: China cannot say ‘No’. China cannot revert to the closed door policy which bitter experiences have proved to be untenable and hurtful to its well being. China cannot say ‘No’ because the world has shrunk into a global village and all peoples now live in a state of interdependence, of inescapable mutual influence. This being the case, China should not say ‘No’ – to translation, to globalization, to integration with the international community. In Guo’s view, “to live now is to translate”. For non-Western peoples, ‘survival’

depends heavily on how well they can translate, literally and metaphorically, their ‘realistically unavoidable Other – the West’. In short, translation is their condition of existence.

For this reason, translation must be studied not simply at the interlingual and intercultural level, but also as an experience, a personal or collective experience. And since, for the Chinese people and for China through the centuries, translation has always been a complex identity project traversed by politics, Chinese discourse on translation should seek to capture that experience and allow it to be relived imaginatively. It should also theorize that experience in order to understand the Self better, and in the process, help the Other to understand one’s Self. Understanding is important because, as Guo explains in his article, on the mainland the term *zhengzhi* (政治, ‘politics’ in English) would almost invariably elicit painful memories and great wariness based on assessment of the political climate at home. Theorizing the politics of translation is a political act. Like all political acts on the Chinese mainland, it entails real political risks and is not, as might be the case in the US and many countries in Western Europe, a politically correct academic venture.¹² In addition, the scholar runs the risk of becoming an intellectual parrot, for the conceptual tools and the language he or she would be using, whether it is English or Chinese, would be largely borrowed from the post-theories in the West, which have institutionalized politics as part of the discourse of the humanities, translation studies included.

Nonetheless, Guo believes that Chinese discourse on translation should seek to theorize the politics of translation, which he defines as “‘patternizing’ political tensions”, both of the past and of the present, “‘from textual, inter-textual and extra-textual perspectives’”. To theorize something in this manner is to distance it, analyze it in cognitive terms, look at it through an epistemological lens, and thus purge it of negative emotions. It helps the Chinese liberate themselves from painful memories, see identity as continuously evolving, and it makes that identity ‘identifiable to the West’. The same study could be conducted in other discourses on translation to enhance mutual understanding. With mutual understanding, Guo believes, ‘intercivilizational dialogues’, which are urgently needed if China is to avoid damaging conflicts with the

¹² As an example of the kind of personal risk Guo had in mind, one could cite the arrest of Liu Xiaobo, a mainland literary critic, by the mainland authorities on 23rd June 2009 for alleged “agitation activities ... aimed at subversion of the state and overthrowing the socialism system in recent years” (Xinhua News Agency, 2009). It was, however, widely reported in the media in Hong Kong and overseas that Liu was arrested because of his involvement in the drafting and the dissemination, via the internet, of Charter 08, a document calling for greater freedom of expression and for free elections on the Chinese mainland. Charter 08 bears an allusion to Charter 77, a document prepared by Czech and Slovak intellectuals in 1977 and calling for respect for human and civil rights in the former Czechoslovakia and throughout the world. An English translation by Perry Link of Charter 08 is available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22210>.

West, would become meaningful.

Mao Sihui's article, 'Translating the Other: Discursive Contradictions and New Orientalism in Contemporary Advertising in China', also examines translation as an agent of globalization, in particular, of global capitalism in the PRC. In Mao Sihui's view, "if 'to be or not to be ... global' is hardly the question for people and nations in the contemporary era, then 'to live or not to live ... in translation' is no longer an option but a reality of our [meaning the Chinese] everyday life." His view sets off reverberations with Guo's observation that "to live now is to translate". Like Guo's article, Mao Sihui's also goes beyond the technicalities of converting one language into another to an analysis of the translation of one culture by another. Focusing on advertisements of real estates in the Guangdong region in the southern part of the PRC, he dissects the way in which stereotypical images, promotional clichés, place names and expressions that are half Chinglish and half translationese work cumulatively to disseminate for consumption by the Chinese market an exotic lifestyle, a fantasy that is "built on a repackaged Western superiority".

Compared to Guo's article, which delineates the plight of a scholar exploring identity as difference and experiencing it as conflicting affiliations and affinities, Mao Sihui's article is remarkably unburdened by such angst. He borrows foreign concepts and theories freely to conduct a scathing critique of the Self (i.e. China in an era of mindless consumerism), exposing at once the self-orientalizing tendencies of the Chinese and the ideological contradictions that are straining the operation of the PRC's socialist economy with Chinese characteristics. He makes no apologies for using English to conduct his critique, or for borrowing from the theoretical language of cultural and literary studies developed in the metropolitan centre. In fact, Mao Sihui deliberately blurs the boundary between the discourses of cultural studies and discourses on translation. He urges Chinese scholars to engage more actively with scholars from other countries "in discussions on the potential gains and problems of the 'colonization' of new territories for translation studies".

While Guo's and Mao's contributions represent the most recent efforts by Chinese scholars to extend the remit of Chinese translation studies, the articles by Tan Zaixi and Chang Nam Fung are more typical of the kind of attempts being made to inject new life into translation studies on the Chinese mainland since the mid 1980s. In 'The "Chineseness" vs. "Non-Chineseness" of Chinese Translation Theory: an Ethnoconvergent Perspective', **Tan Zaixi**, whose promotion of Eugene Nida's translation theory in China and advocacy of the science of translation (Tan 1988, 1997, 2000) rendered his work highly influential on the Chinese mainland, offers an overview of the development of translation studies in the PRC over the past three decades, including an in-depth analysis of the debate which broke out in the mid 1980s over the elaboration of 'translation theories with Chinese characteristics'. Writing as a major player in that debate, he reiterates the position he has held for a number

of years, stressing the importance of importing Western translation theories to help develop a scientific base for translation studies as an academic discipline. Tan moves the debate forward here by affirming the usefulness of the term 'Chineseness', but only as a 'contextualized and relative notion', and outlining what he considers to be the main features of the Chinese tradition of theorizing translation. At the same time, he is critical of Sinocentrism – just as he is of Eurocentrism – and proposes adopting an 'ethnoconvergent' perspective on the growth and development of translation studies worldwide. Such a perspective, Tan believes, would enable scholars to move from an insistence on difference to the prioritizing of similarities and to the elaboration of concepts and theories that have universal relevance.

Another strong advocate of the usefulness of importing Western translation theories into the Chinese mainland is **Chang Nam Fung**. For many years, he has been promoting polysystem theory by applying it to Chinese material, past and present. In 'Repertoire Transfer and Resistance: The Westernization of Translation Studies in China', Chang uses polysystem theory to analyze and explain the Westernization of translation studies in China since the 1980s. While broadly addressing the same issue as Tan, both the language (especially the terminology) and the analytical tools deployed are unmistakably those of a polysystem theorist. Chang is not concerned that his article, which provides further illustration of the general applicability of polysystem theory in the Chinese context, may be criticized from a postcolonial perspective as yet another addition to the imperial archive. Rather than assuming a defensive position, he argues forcefully that in certain dictatorial regimes, postcolonial ideas and arguments can easily be exploited by the authorities for the suppression of dissidents and the repression of their own citizens. By framing his discussion in these terms, he extends the scope of his own discourse on translation beyond the bounds of polysystem theory and turns the final section of his article into a space for critiquing dictatorial regimes.

Lu Fang also borrows Western theories freely, although, unlike Chang Nam Fung, she is not committed to any particular theory. Neither does she frame her discussion within a specific metadiscourse. In 'Translation, Manipulation and the Transfer of Negative Cultural Images: A.C. Safford's *Typical Women of China*', Lu examines the nineteenth-century American missionary Anna Safford's translation *Typical Women of China* (published in Shanghai in 1891), and shows how strategies of translation and forms of textual manipulation were deployed to endorse or reinforce the stereotypical images of Chinese women created by other missionary writers of the time, thus allowing "misperceptions of Chinese women" and "negative beliefs about the morality of Chinese society as a whole" to be carried across the cultural divide and circulate among American and English-speaking readerships. Lu uses postcolonial and feminist theories selectively, mainly to provide her with points of orientation and to strengthen the theoretical base of the findings that emerge from her analysis.

Her methodology and mode of writing, like Chang's, are frequently adopted in what is often referred to as 'Westernized translation studies' on the Chinese mainland. In fact, since the 1980s, 'Westernized translation studies' has gradually and successfully established itself as part of mainstream research – if not at the forefront of such research – in China, but it is deeply resented by the conservatives for its potential threat to erode interest in traditional Chinese discourse on translation.

Zhang Meifang and **Pan Li**'s 'Introducing a Chinese Perspective on Translation Shifts: A Comparative Study of Shift Models by Loh and Vinay & Darbelnet' is an attempt to look outward, to address the international community of translation studies scholars and to provide a starting point for what Guo Yangsheng calls an 'intercivilizational dialogue'. Focusing on the shift approach in translation studies, Zhang and Pan introduce the model proposed by Loh Dian-yang, a Chinese scholar, in his two-volume textbook 《英汉翻译的理论技巧》 / *Translation: Its Principles and Techniques* (Loh 1958a, 1958b). Written in English, this textbook exerted considerable influence on English-language teaching and translator training on the Chinese mainland until the 1980s, but remained totally unknown outside the PRC. Zhang and Pan argue that Loh's model of translation shifts bears useful comparison with the model which they consider to be the best-known and the most representative of the scholarship on translation shifts in the field, namely, the model proposed – coincidentally in the same year – by Vinay and Darbelnet in *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation* (1958/1995). They believe that the two models complement one another and have much to contribute to the development of the shift approach in translation studies, in terms of expanding its analytical framework as well as extending its relevance, given that Chinese and the European languages that feature in Vinay and Darbelnet's work belong to disparate language families and cultural contexts. Comparison of the two models points to a potential that awaits further exploration, for it opens a space where 'ethnoconvergence', to use Tan Zaixi's term, is possible, where scholars can come together to work on a general topic such as translation shifts and produce models, frameworks or methods that are based not on one but a diverse range of linguistic and cultural traditions. The article is at once a plea for and an articulation of a vision of the future.

Seán Golden's article, "'God's Real Name is God": The Matteo Ricci-Niccolo Longobardi Debate on Theological Terminology as a Case Study in Intersemiotic Sophistication', also serves as a concrete example of ethnoconvergence in translation studies. It is an attempt on the part of a European scholar to promote a translation studies that is non-Eurocentric. With the help of a series of evolving figures, Golden shows how, through correlative rather than dichotomous thinking, selected theoretical models from both the European and Chinese cultural traditions can be combined to produce a dynamic model that can be used to analyze and explain the complexities of cross-cultural

transfer. For Golden, as for Mao Sihui, discourse on translation should not be restricted to issues related to the concept of translation in its interlingual sense, but should also encompass the intersemiotic dimension of translating, such as the manipulation of components of the semiotics of Chinese culture (cartography, attire, iconography, and the like) for the purpose of (mis)communication across cultural divides. His article complements Guo Yangsheng's in terms of engaging with the politics of translation. It also argues that discourses on translation should take into account discourses produced by translators for the purpose of endorsing and legitimizing, or challenging and discrediting, particular strategies, modes or paradigms of reading and interpreting the source literature. Golden's claim that the model he produces could help not only translators but a range of cross-cultural mediators, including immigration officials, to negotiate problems of communication more effectively suggests that he sees discourse on translation as a borderless region, one where disciplinary boundaries are fuzzy, perhaps increasingly irrelevant.

Another scholar committed to promoting a mode of translation studies that is non-Eurocentric is **Maria Tymoczko**. The title of her article, 'Why Translators Should Want to Internationalize Translation Studies', is a clear statement of position. The article itself is at once an argument for such a position, and an illustration of how translation studies can be internationalized. It shows that realities of the past, captured in the different terms used in different cultural traditions to denote what in English is called 'translation', and realities of the present, as seen in the emergent modes of translating and the alternative names for the activity of translating that are appearing in different parts of the world, both necessitate a re-thinking of what translation is. Also needed is a re-thinking of how translation is to be done in this day and age, and in the foreseeable future where the pressure of globalization is likely to be even stronger. For Tymoczko, the notion of boundary should be problematized; translation should be redefined in such a way that translators can rely on it to devise ways of meeting the challenges of working in continuously changing environments created by the process of globalization. Drawing not only on Chinese discourses on translation but also discourses on translation elaborated in non-European as well as European traditions, Tymoczko offers a re-definition of translation and, with it, a new paradigm of thinking about translation, and new models of practice. She speaks from a high vantage point and in an authoritative voice. The re-definition of translation she elaborates is definitive and offers the satisfaction of closure, which is one of the constituent features of theory. The same feature characterizes Golden's article.

In contrast, the articles by the Chinese scholars that feature in this Special Issue involve the reader in "a domain to be lived in", which is what Wolfgang Iser highlights as the defining feature of discourse (Iser 2006:172). In Guo's call for inter-civilizational dialogue, in Mao Sihui's scathing critique of the Self, in Tan's somewhat utopian vision of ethnoconvergence in translation

studies in the future, in Chang's forthright rebuttal of anticipated criticism of his promotion of the polysystem theory, in Lu's exposure of the manipulative strategies used in missionary constructions of images of Chinese women in the 19th century, and in Zhang and Pan's attempt to introduce to the English-speaking world a Chinese voice on translation shifts, the reader can feel the living emotions of scholars wrestling with the rules of regulation and exclusion which are the basic principles of discourse. In the way in which Michel Foucault defines it, discourse is "a notion that considers social subjects, social consciousness, to be formed ... through a form of power that circulates in and around the social fabric, framing social subjects through strategies of regulation and exclusion, and constructing forms of 'knowledge' which make possible that which can be said and that which cannot" (in Iser 2006:173).

"That which can be said and that which cannot", or should not, sums up the central argument of many of the major and minor debates that have dominated the field of translation studies and of the humanities in China since the 1980s. Debates about whether foreign translation theories should be excluded from Chinese translation studies, whether politics should be allowed in or kept out, whether Chinese discourses on translation or Chinese theories of translation should seek/press for representation in the international arena, how this might be achieved, and whether identity is constructed or predicated upon ethnicity are all emotionally charged controversies. They not only summon the intellect into action but also impact on the psyche, trigger the operation of memory and imagination, and hence could provoke reactions on the most visceral level (as seen in some of the quotations cited in the articles collected here).

This layer of nuances and this evocation of a domain to be lived in constitute the extra dimension of meaning that the term 'discourse' has carried in the context of contemporary China since the mid 1980s.

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