

Orientalism in Literary Translation and Cultural Globalization

Jin-Sheng Huang^{*}

Abstract

This article offers a discursive analysis of Orientalism in translation activities of literary production and consumption in order to examine the issues of identity and representation related to the relationships between literature and nationality in today's globalizing world. The article concerns certain significant questions: what is Orientalism nowadays? How should we approach a so-called Orientalist text/product? Where does the conception that Edward W. Said advocated for our attention register in our understanding of culture in globalization? If a text/product does involve in the shaping of Orientalism, why does the Orientalized want to have translated versions of that text/product? How does the translated text/product preserve and pass down the traits of Orientalism in the local culture? To answer these questions, this article puts the interactions between Orientalism and nationalist thinking under scrutiny. Attention is paid to the intercultural encounters in translation activities in contexts marked by new forms of power relation and domination. In a postcolonial fashion, taking Pearl S. Buck as the case of study, the concept of Orientalism guides the exploration of the author's work and life, covering issues of cultural representation and translation in literature of the diaspora, the cosmopolitanism and world literature, and the historical Other in domestic and international politics. To do so, translation activities should not be simply regarded as a necessary interface but instead as a significant part in tightly woven webs of economic, political and cultural powers. It is in this way that this article argues that we then are able to understand how translation reveals the societal relations as the responses to the interplay of domestic and international affairs and as the consequences of the East-West

^{*} Jin-Sheng Huang , Ph.D., The New School for Social Research.

encounters. It is also suggests that such a reading of translation could expose the lingering effect of Orientalism that may have led to some sort of reification of difference in the still unevenly developed cultural fields in the global cultural spectrum.

Keywords: Orientalism, Cultural Hegemony, World Literature, Identity politics, Globalization

文學翻譯與文化全球化中的東方主義

黃金盛*

摘 要

本文以全球化視野對文學翻譯活動中的東方主義進行了論述分析，旨在釐清攸關文學與國家關係的「認同」和「再現」議題的當代義涵。東方主義的今日內涵為何？這個概念是否仍有助於理解當今文化問題？我們該如何面對東方主義作品呢？何以如此的作品依舊會被翻譯？而翻譯作品存留的東方主義又是如何沉積在當地文化呢？基於對這些問題的關懷，藉由審思東方主義與國族主義的互動關係，本文探討了全球權力統治裡的翻譯活動的跨文化邂逅。以環繞在 **Peal S. Buck** 的作品和生平的東方主義論述的歷史闡釋為例，文中說明了翻譯不應僅被視為中間介面，而是實則在權力網絡中扮演著重要角色，唯有在如此的認知下，我們方能窺見東方主義在翻譯活動的殘留身影所顯露的社會性關係，不僅回應著國內外事務的變化，更是東西方交會的歷史產物。

關鍵詞：東方主義、文化霸權、世界文學、認同政治、全球化

* 黃金盛，美國紐約社會研究新校社會學博士。

In the recent development of translation studies, influenced by poststructuralism and postcolonialism, the rethinking of translation's relations with both "nation" and "language" has directed our attention to the cultural values, the economic and political inequalities, the individual choices, and the Otherness in its linguistic and cultural forms involved in border crossings (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, 1998; Bassnett and Trivedi 1999; Niranjana 1992; Robinson 1997; Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002).¹ Different from the early focus on the problem of linguistic equivalence, this paradigm of the discipline has paid more attention to the cultural assemblages of source language and target language and the power relations between the two. With the shift from text to context, by breaking a new ground of literary studies and rescuing translators from ill-deserved negligence, translation scholars have raised an awareness of the asymmetries that have structured international affairs for centuries in our understanding of the global trafficking of literary production and consumption.

The shifted attitude toward translation activities has been particularly inspired by Edward Said's ideas elaborated in his *Orientalism* (1979), in which the very concept has become well known as a critique to the Western

¹ The major changes of translation studies as an academic discipline have started with the analytic frameworks of poststructuralism and postcolonialism employed by scholars in the 1990s. In the 1990 collection of *Translation, History and Culture*, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, two distinguished translation studies scholars, stated that "neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes the operational 'unit' of translation" (8). And there was more than evident that the articles of that collection shared the same analytic and theoretical inquiries adapted by poststructuralist and postcolonial critics and scholars. In his forward to Bassnett's and Lefevere's *Constructing Cultures* (1998), Edwin Gentzler hailed the 1990 collection as the "real breakthrough for the field of translation studies" (xi). Since then, the "cultural turn" began to have huge impacts on the development of translation studies that the paradigm of the discipline has paid much more attention to the intercultural encounters in contexts of unequal power relations as well as the process and status of globalization and national identities in a multilingual setting. For a description of the rise of the "cultural turn," Bassnett recalled the struggles fellow scholars had with and the inspirations they came from in her article, "Translation Studies at a Cross-roads." To have a comprehensive understanding of postcolonial approaches to translation studies, please see Wang 200-204.

cultural hegemony. The celebrated work has shed light on analyzing the politics of all sorts of texts and discourses centered on the colonizer-colonized relation as both a historical process and an accrual in the contemporary world. The relational domination has expressed in the continuities registered across the historical phases of colonization and de- or post-colonization that postcolonial theorists have tried to examine and oppose the inequalities of various sorts. "Postcolonialism," Robert Young states, "focuses on forces of oppression and coercive domination that operate in the contemporary world [. . .] to develop new forms of engaged theoretical work that contributes to the development of dynamic ideological and social transformation" (11). Together with works by scholars such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, identity politics has been incorporated into postcolonialism in the 1980s and 1990s that has opposed to view the colonial experience as a stable reality but emphasized hybrids produced in the cross-cultural encounters and mixtures in the processes (Bhabha 1990, 1994; Spivak 1993, 1999).

In order to contest the monolingual focus of nation-based analyses of the relation between literary translation and nationality in today's globalizing world, contemporary translation studies has taken its cue from postcolonialism and much weight is put on local appropriation and adaption of translated ideas and texts in a multilingual setting. By emphasizing local sensitivity and empowerment in the global flux of literary texts, according to translation scholars, translation opens up new worlds, sustained by a kind of textual afterlife so influentially articulated by Walter Benjamin (1969), that translated texts are no longer overshadowed by source materials but rather have taken a life of their own. In other words, translation is taken in an anti-hegemonic direction in which the colonial-postcolonial situation uses translation to release hybrid energies, transgress hegemonic values, redirect indigenous traditions and refashion identities. This openness to language outside of the establishment has benefited many fields of literature, especially those of cultural studies, looking at the alternatives engaging with past histories and challenging the mimetic burden that ties cross-cultural

experiences of writing and reading to the discourse of modernity.²

However, the generous attitude toward translation-as-original does not change the fact of the dominance of nationalistic thinking resulting from the modern experiences and modernization process. In the praise of textual afterlife, it seems to suggest that one can find no fault in the translator. And, when translation is considered *rewriting*, the issue is focused on how the unevenness of literary texts and ideas collides and converges with local agendas and reshapes the localities in order to emphasize the characteristics of cultural localization, in particular its uniqueness brought out from the process of cultural exchange. What are often left without questioning are the local agendas themselves, given as the pretext of the cross cultural experience. With such an omission, the existing local discourse bolstered by national language and nationalism, I am afraid, has never been actually challenged but rather reinforced in translation activities. The alternative

² It should be noted here that due to the practice of inter-disciplinarity, translation studies, cultural studies and postcolonial studies in literature have influenced one and the other. But there is one crucial difference of translation studies from the other two disciplines that translation studies scholars must at least deal with more than one language. In addition, because Pearl S. Buck is the case of study in this article and “China” plays a significant role in her work and life, here I only name a few studies done by Chinese scholars from cultural studies and postcolonial studies in literature. One is Lydia Liu’s *Translingual Practice* (1995), in which the author argues that in the emergence of Chinese modernity, the circulation and popularity of Western ideas and texts are testified to the awakening of a passionate gaze through which cross-cultural exchanges are never unilinear and so are the patterns of domination and resistance under the circumstances of imperialism. Xiaomei Chen’s *Occidentalism* (2002) is another good example. Needless to say, Chen’s book is a response to Said’s *Orientalism* (1979). Said’s study of the relations between Western and non-Western cultures sheds light on our understanding of the social and cultural differences of the non-West, which is regarded as a constructed discourse manifested in the institutions of the humanities and social sciences in the West and is served as the mirror image for the purpose of domination. Occidentalism is proposed by Chen as “a discursive practice that, by constructing its Western Other, has allowed the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self-appropriation, even after being appropriated and constructed by Western Others” (2). Although Occidentalism in China is akin to Orientalism in the West, the former should not be posited as the reversal of the later, which has the economic and political agendas of subjugation.

histories may well point out that there is no single mode of modernity, which is adopted willy-nilly by different nation-states. But, the focus on the inventive appropriation in actuality is unable to deny that each country or community *translates* elements of Western modernity into local circumstances.

In order to truly comprehend the functionalities of cultural hegemony and nationalism hidden behind the intensified globalizing process in the mappings of the world republic of letters,³ we should take a close look at today's cultural productions and practices and reexamine the old cultural paradigms and assumed divides. Instead of merely focusing on subjects such as the Western impact on non-Western cultures in relation to the rise of modern nation states and the non-Western appropriation of modern cultural form and style from the West, what should be further investigated is the dynamic of locality and globality under the influences of new technologies and population mobilizations and the new forms of power relation and

³ The conception of "the world republic of letters" is proposed by Pascale Casanova in *La republique mondiale des lettres* (*The World Republic of Letters*), in which the author attempts to capture the complexities as historical contingencies of the constructions of a global literary space. According to Casanova, a global system of literature has been in place, complete with its own order of literariness (*litterarité*), tempo, canon, internationalism, and market values. In this synoptic book, fashioned over the past 150 years, Casanova analyzes "the hierarchical structure of the literary world and the constraints that operate within it. The inequality of the transactions that take place in this world goes unperceived, or is otherwise denied or euphemistically referred to, because the ecumenical picture it presents itself as a peaceful world, untouched by rivalry or struggle, strengthens received beliefs and assures the continued existence of a quite different reality that is never admitted" (42). But, to understand "how this literary world operates lies in recognizing that its boundaries, its capitals, its highways, and its forms of communication," as I agree, we should realize that, with respect to economic and political space, the relative independence of global literary space should not be spatialized as to "completely coincide with those of the political and economic world" (11). Such an understanding leads Casanova to insist on the difference between the concepts of world literature and of the world republic of letters because the concept of world literature has always tangled with national literatures, the cultural constitutes of nation states. The publication of this book has caused heated debates on the question of literature in globalization that can be found in Christopher Prendergast, ed. *Debating World Literature*.

domination in the still unevenly developed cultural fields in the global cultural spectrum, in particular the lingering effect of Orientalist tendency preserved and passed down through translation activities.

The exchanges and communications between cultures by means of translation were not, and will never be, a one-way street; language is never neutral nor is the translator and the translated text. And it is insufficient to see language struggles by the reiterated roles of the weak vs. the strong in the translation process. Rather, as we can see in the case of Pearl S. Buck to be presented in this paper, it is the complicated interactions between Orientalism and nationalist thinking in the source culture and the target culture that have contributed to the asymmetric power relations of translation activities in the global flux of literary production and consumption. Only if we do scrutinize the problems of cultural representation and translation in literature of the diaspora, the cosmopolitanism and world literature, and the historical Other in the process of modernization, we are able to unveil the truth hidden in the circulation of literary works by an writer such as Pearl S. Buck, to whom translation signifies the societal relations as the responses to the interplay of domestic affairs and international politics and as the consequences of the East-West encounters.

The “China” Express: An American-Made Orientalist

In the history of world literature, if publication, sales and a Nobel Prize were put into consideration, the foremost writer who had contributed to the recognition of modern literature written about and came from China would be Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973). An American grew up living alongside Chinese culture, Buck had devoted her life and writing to navigating a gulf between two fundamentally different cultures in order to advocate social progress and cultural understanding of China during the time when the misconceptions about this very war-torn country had prevailed within the American imagination. But, despite her efforts to debunk myths about China and to offer a fair representation of Chinese culture, while many critics and scholars of her contemporaries challenged Buck’s ability and her position to

write and talk about Chinese subjects, more recent studies focus on how Buck and her works intertwined with American domestic affairs and its international relationship with China. Both negative and positive interpretations could be found in the intellectual circles of the United States and mainland China. However, no matter how the focus of research on Buck's works has changed, it is the Orientalist characteristics of her works (understood in the sense of Edward Said's authoritative study of Orientalism) that have always been at the heart of discussion.

Born to an American family, both her parents were missionaries assigned duties in China, except the three years of college education in the United States, Buck spent about 40 years living in China where she eye-witnessed the struggles of this fragile old country in crisis, from the collapse of the Qing dynasty, the chaotic establishment of the Republic government, and the emergence of Communism, before she permanently left there back to the United States in 1934. Grown up in a bilingual environment and influenced by her religious belief, Buck developed a hearty kinship and identification with the Chinese people and a self-imposed sense of remorse and guilt for the treatment of Chinese and other Asians by the people of her race. The cultural identification and sympathy were carried through her writings that most of them described lives of the peasants and the Chinese underclass in a style combined narrative techniques of classical Chinese literature and forms of American literary tradition. Through her novels and non-literary works, Buck reconstructed the image of China, depicting the human condition of the Chinese people of 1920s and 1930s, and became the expert and spokesman of China in the United States, affecting the Sino-American relationships during and after the Second World War.

All discussions concerning Buck and her works were, and have continued to be, political. She launched her literary career with the publication of *The Good Earth* (1931),⁴ the most famous and wide-circulated—millions copies of the novel were sold and it was translated into several languages; it was also turned into a Hollywood blockbuster and a

⁴ *The Good Earth* (1931) is the first book in a trilogy which also includes *Sons* (1933) and *A House Divided* (1935).

Pulitzer Prize winner. It was a runaway success that many of her works followed and eventually earned her the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1938. Even though, in the lens of historian James Thomson, Buck was “the most influential Westerner to write about China since thirteenth-century Marco Polo,”⁵ many of her works are considered popular fiction rather than serious literature regardless of their wide readerships and influences;⁶ some scholars also argue that Buck’s works have far more social, historical, and cultural values than literary merits despite her progressive liberal thinking, humanitarianism and multiculturalism, that have changed China’s image in American eyes (Liao 1997). Such as the timing of her Nobel Prize—in the midst of the bloody Sino-Japanese war—has always been seen as the result of international recognition and encouragement for the national struggle for survival in which China was engaged at the time. Hence, as Buck rose to fame and became a lifelong renowned China expert, her literary works were, and still are, examined with political speculations that would have overshadowed the interpretation and reception of her literary career.

But Buck’s own writing style and theme, a mixture of Chinese and American literary traditions, also make her works hard to escape from the tie with the social and cultural dynamics of mainland China and the United States. In particular, it is the Orientalist reading, limited by the insufficiency of cultural and historical knowledge of Chinese literature, which has significantly affected how the American critics and scholars have perceived Buck’s literary works. In her attempt to portray Chinese people in a far more realistic fashion without exaggerated exoticism, Buck’s works were ethnographically examined as the documentation of objective truths at her time, grounded on ethnic and nationalist claims of knowing or not-knowing;

⁵ James Thomson made this comment in his 1992 article, “Why Doesn’t Pearl Buck Get Respect?”

⁶ This is pointed out by Peter Conn in his biography of Pearl S. Buck (1998) in which he provides biographical and literary details of Buck’s contribution to the long history of cultural interaction between China and the United States. Due to the wide readership and influence of Buck’s works, Conn pleads for a fresh appraisal and a more active place of her works in American cultural history.

with her first-hand experiences in China, she became an unchallengeable authority in China-related subjects but the literary merits of her own works were underestimated. Besides, due to a good-will determination to raise attention to the greatness of classical Chinese novels, Buck drew some narrative devices and conventions from that Chinese literary tradition in her writing. For instance, her English writing echoed the descriptive terseness and sparseness in classical Chinese novels such as Luo Guanzhong's (羅貫中 1330-1400) *The Three Kingdoms* and *The Water Margin*, which might be too simplistic to satisfy the American taste. Also her use of *zhanghui* (章回; "Episodic and independent scenes contributing to the larger plot structure") was a technique done by classical Chinese writers, very different from the rigid literary establishment at the time when the Western literary tradition had already dominated the international sphere of modern literature.

And ironically, it is exactly the Chinese writing style and technique that Buck incorporated into English writing that, in more recent studies influenced by postcolonialism, some scholars have investigated the Orientalist characteristics of her works, in particular the connection of her works with American Orientalism. By exploring the contribution of her literary works to an existing body of American Orientalist writings, Buck's upper-class American background and her status as a foreigner in rural China have been brought to the core of scholarly analyses.⁷ Despite the

⁷ Three books done by American scholars are particularly worth of mentioning here. Buck was exemplified in Mari Yoshihara's *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (2003), in which the scholar examines women's engagement with the construction of American Orientalism between the 1870s and 1940s that resulted in, and was influenced by, changes within American domestic gender politics. American women such as Buck, Yoshihara observes, had enacted as the sympathizer of, as well as the superior to, Oriental men and women by "embracing the east" that had enabled them to participate in social realms, gaining social and economic autonomy and at the same time helping to shape American imperialism in Asia. Also in Karen J. Leong's *The China Mystique* (2005), Buck is put at the spotlight of America's interaction with China between the 1930s and 1940s when a new form of American Orientalism emerged to serve the need of the American public, negotiating the U.S.'s changing identity from an isolationist to a powerful player in world politics. During this period, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor led to the rise of strong

acknowledgment of her works reflecting a unique perspective between two distinctive cultures, Buck's ambiguous role as a conduit in the imbalanced power relation between the West (the United States) and the East has still being bandied about as grounds for recrimination and exploitation. For example, drawn from narrative aspects of *The Good Earth*, Mari Yoshihara stresses that Buck's use of terse Chinese literary style creates child-like characters that reinforce Buck's own superiority over them. "Such a style," Yoshihara asserts, "functions to construct . . . Chinese characters as childlike figures who do not think beyond the simple matters of life" (Yoshihara 155). This criticism seems to imply the gendered discourse of American Orientalism that Buck had incarnated, expressing the feminized sentimentalism in which the Americans saw themselves as the parents to war-ridden Asia. Truly, Buck's works on China should not be dismissed as entirely exploitative, but they do consist of some Orientalist characteristics to be identified.

Therefore, while we appreciate Buck's well intent to promote Chinese literary merits and to humanize a previously exoticized people, it is hard to ignore the effects of her works that, unintentionally, may be harmful to the people whom she sympathized. Due to its terse and highly contextual nature, a simple and straightforward narrative with direct translations of terms and things from Chinese into English might be mistaken as childish by those unfamiliar with the contextual complexities of the language. It is also true that Buck wrote the sufferings and pains the Chinese people experienced

nationalism in the U.S. that was in need of China as a friendly Oriental ally. With her best-selling novels and experiences in China, it allowed Buck to have greater visibility that helped to connect the American with the Chinese people whom were also suffered from the Japanese invasion but at the same time China's sufferings and pains also became the China mystique in the new form of American Orientalism. The China mystique to some extent continues to be explored in Christina Klein's *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1941-1961*, which brilliantly links the middle-brow American discourse to efforts to promote cold-war internationalism. Klein makes a convincing case of how Buck's works, as well as her other social activities and organizations, had been incorporated into the Orientalist conceptions of mainland China during the period.

through foregrounding relatable emotional reactions to common life events. But we could not deny the possible connection of her works with, for instance, the American taste for stories about suffering in Communist China that has been developing since the Cold-War and onwards.⁸ It is in this way that Buck's works have been intersected with American Orientalism, a result of the constant interaction between American domestic affairs and international politics.

A Chinese Homecoming: Migration of Modern “Chinese” Literature

When Buck rose to prominence as America's popular expert on China, her fame also extended to China. Known to Chinese readers by her Chinese name Sai Zhenzhu (賽珍珠), Buck's works had been translated into Chinese: *The Good Earth* was published under the title of *Dadi* (大地 “The great earth”) in 1932 and her other China-related books followed to be published in the 1930s and 1940s, several in multiple versions. *Dadi* alone had eight different translations by eight different publishers, one of which even put out twelve different editions from 1933 to 1949 (Lovell 89). By the time when Buck's translated works were popular on the Chinese soil, their receptions

⁸ Over a few decades, the American reading public has developed a taste for the stories about suffering in Communist China. Many American publishers have released stories and memoirs that chronicle family tragedies, personal damage, political victimization, and sexual oppression by the Chinese regime, to tackle on the individual struggle over the political authoritarianism. Works like Nien Cheng's *Life and Death in Shanghai* (1986), Jung Chang's *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (1992), Rae Yang's *Spider Eaters* (1997), and Anchee Min's *Red Azalea* (1994) and *Becoming Madam Mao* (2000), to name just a few, are all autobiographies, biographies or memoirs about the life experiences under Red China. Besides very few exceptions, these texts belong to non-fiction genres that intend to provide the American readers the “inside perspective” of China, especially women's perspective, even though not all of them are written by writers born or grew up in mainland China. Moreover, these works have been perceived, more or less, as living social history, ethnographical document or literature of witness and trauma; they have revealed some of the complexities and subtleties of a world substantially different from that of the West, a negation in terms of the cultural and political systems by comparison.

were intertwined with the local literary concerns—“representation of the masses, the correct literary stance towards revolution, cosmopolitanism, and the quest for international recognition”⁹—that had reflected the divergent views of the Chinese writers and intellectuals in relation to their political stands on the nation, which were intensively collided since the rise of Communism in China.

If Buck's works were examined through a Orientalist gaze in the United States, the issues of cultural identification and inauthenticity were the focus of Chinese critics and intellectuals; it was about a Westerner's relation with Chinese people and culture and of her attained cultural capital in the West through the works on China that had raised awareness about her Orientalist presence and put her works into question in 1930s and 1940s China. After being translated into Chinese, Buck's fusion of classic Chinese and American literary traditions was not the primary concern to Chinese critics and writers. Most of the translators of her works wrote critical pieces to tackle the related issues, which had focused on textual analysis, giving close examination to minute details and providing contextual understandings; enclosed commentary almost solely centered on reviewing her masterpiece *Dadi*, either praising or condemning it. Most importantly, while many gave her credit of raising China's visibility in the international spheres by providing a deeper and alternative portray of China from past stereotypical representations done by Western missionaries, travelers and diplomats, both negative and positive criticisms about Buck's works had shared a persistent interest in the question of the accuracy of her depiction of China.

While positive criticism focused more on her literary achievement and praised her efforts to bridge the differences between cultures and languages, negative criticism highlighted Buck's bilingual cultural background to critique her Orientalist position. In the negative pieces, Chinese critics suggested that a white Westerner was only able to contact with certain people and access to partial aspects of Chinese culture that led her descriptions of

⁹ Julia Lovell provides her analysis of Chinese intellectuals' debate about Buck and her works (88-94).

Chinese lives superficial and untrue, failing to reveal the real struggles that Chinese peasants and underclass had experienced at her time. For her protagonists such as those in *Dadi*, rather than the exploitive relationship in a feudal society, Buck saw the biggest challenge to them was the Mother Nature. In fact, Buck never used the term “peasant” in the novel but instead described her protagonists as “farmers” which contradicted the literary discourse of the 1920s and 1930s when the “peasant masses had become an abstract political category, . . . defined as possessing specific (anti-imperialist, anti-feudalist, revolutionary) forms of consciousness” (Lovell 93). The lack of revolutionary consciousness in Buck’s books, no wonder, had attracted the harshest criticism from the left-wing writers and critics, such as Hu Feng, who were disappointed with her insufficient understanding of the economic structure of Chinese rural life (91-100); even though it was her class, race and nationality that were under attack because those were the most potent and impossible to deny, the key problem was her stance on the human condition of the Chinese people, which was in the discordant direction, if not oppositional to, that the left-wing writers and intellectuals had envisioned for the country’s future at the time.

Indeed, with the resurgence of nationalism and Communism in China in the 1930s and onwards, Buck paid dearly for her China-related works and the significant role she played in the interplay of cultures and politics in the Sino-American relationship. When the CCP took over the Chinese mainland from the Nationalist government in 1949, she was condemned as the “vanguard of American cultural imperialism” (Xu 134-43) in the country; the receptions of the publications of her translated works were also divided by the Cold War ideologies that, while her writings had continuously been promoted by the Nationalist government in Taiwan and its American ally, they were all banned in mainland China until the end of the Cultural Revolution. For Buck herself, the price paid was close to heart because she would have never been able to return to China, a country that she had also considered home at the other shore of the Pacific. When the former American President Richard Nixon was planning a trip to China to reengineer a new bilateral relation in 1972, Buck worked hard to get access to the country as a

member of the visiting group but her effort was denied. Next year, she passed away.

But after the country's reentry to the international societies since 1980s, there has been a revival of interest in Buck's works and her contributions to modern Chinese literature in mainland China where her works have been resurged in translation, favorable studies have been written, and conferences were held in honor of her. Like their American counterparts, influenced by postcolonialism, Orientalism has also become the hard core of contemporary Chinese mainland scholars' analyses but the persona of Buck has been interpreted as an ally to the task of empowerment of local culture up against the cultural invasion of the West, the United States in particular. Different from American scholars' search for the connection between Buck's works and the discourse of American Orientalism, contemporary Chinese scholars have given the posthuman Buck a complete makeover: Now the once-considered vanguard of American imperialist cultural aggression has been transformed into the pioneer of "anti-imperialism" and "anti-Orientalism"; no longer an Orientalist, a "postcolonialist" (Guo 246-52).

Such a changed attitude in post-Mao era has reflected the socioeconomic transformations of mainland China since its launch of open-door policy and market economy, which has been in need of a new outlook of the country's culture and literature as well. This time, Buck's appropriation and appreciation of classical Chinese literature have been emphasized; the difference of her works from past and modern Orientalist texts in the West has been singled out; the misconceptions of her translation of *The Water Margin* have been corrected.¹⁰ In the country's search for the international respect of its cultural accomplishments that has been overshadowed by its economic prowess, like the quest for a Nobel prize, a foreigner's endorsement would boost national confidence and Buck is definitely the best choice. Hence, the reversal of Buck's perpetual association with China has indicated that Orientalism is never been the real concern; the

¹⁰ Articles reflected these changes can be found in Guo Yingjian, ed. For a postcolonial study on Buck's translation of *The Water Margin*, see Tang Yanfang.

crucial issue is not about the effect of a literary text with Orientalist characteristics on the local culture but rather how that text can contribute to the need for the local agenda, for the culture in construction. Now, the works written by foreigners such as Buck are more than welcomed by the Chinese government because they help to paint the multicultural façade of the literary field, giving the local culture a transnational touch that reinvigorates the national pride in our postmodern era.

Conclusion: Phantasmagoria of Orientalism

What is Orientalism nowadays anyway? How should we approach a so-called Orientalist text? Where does this conception that Said advocated for our attention register in our understanding of culture in globalization? As I do agree, it is not fair to view Buck's works as Orientalist products but they do involve in the shaping of American Orientalism. But if we do charge the Orientalist characteristics of her works as recent American scholars have done, the *real* question raised by the global circulation of her works in translation is: Why do the Orientalized ones want to have translated versions of her works? More curiously, where have the traits of Orientalism been carried by the translated texts in the local culture because in the case of Buck's translated works in China, they seem to simply have disappeared from any discussion regarding the transnational cultural exchange?

Buck's is not the sole case. The disappearing act of Orientalism in translation activities can be found in other literary works, accused of Orientalization and written by Chinese immigrants or their decedents targeted for non-Chinese speaking readerships in the West. For instance, in his study of the "Chinese" translations of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*, Kwai-Cheung Lo explores how the translated texts have been incorporated into the divergent constructions of Chinese cultural unity in Taiwan and mainland China in the 1980s. It is that, in order to sustain the myth of an unchanging Chinese cultural identity across different continents, the translations do not hesitate to re-sinicize and even modify Kingston's works. For Lo, such an emphasis on cultural affinity

between Chinese American and Chinese in Mainland or in Taiwan simply reinforces the hegemony of traditional patriarchal order, which has suppressed the feminist insights in the original texts. Lo is right to point out the erasure of the women's stance in the Chinese patriarchy in Kingston's translated texts. However, in his article, Lo does not elaborate the Orientalist characteristics of the English originals, which Kingston has been criticized in the United States. Of which has shown how seamlessly an Orientalism made in the United States has been slipped into the making of national cohesiveness through translation.

Both cases of Buck's and Kingston's works in the global flux of literary productions make it clear to us why Said's critical study of Orientalism is still relevant today, which has pointed out the harmful effects of Orientalist thoughts and doings on the mutual understanding between Us and the Other. As cultural contacts and exchanges are intensified and elevated by the advanced means of technology and transportation, it is more than necessary to know the Other and to understand the Self through the Other. But, although the selectiveness of translation activities works at best to bridge mutual understandings, the process of exclusion and inclusion will always end up with an imbalanced result. For a few, they are the makers of the Other and the Otherness in question that they are not desperate enough to know themselves through the Other; to the rest, they have to know the Other and how themselves have been constructed, of which have been made long time ago. Translation in literary production is paradoxically a means through which difference is perceived and inscribed but that difference is often carried with the cultural bias and stereotypes unaware to those at the receiving end of the whole process, which operates on the asymmetric and hierarchical world republic of letters. Orientalism has never disappeared but hidden in a more sophisticated fashion in the translingual, transcultural and transnational activities of translation that needs a more critical attention.

Hence, while investigating the issues of migration and translation regarding the transformative relationship between literature and nationality in modern and contemporary "Chinese" literature, Rey Chow's understanding of the relation between writers and the nation should be kept in mind:

Indeed, ever since ancient times, Chinese writing has served as the divide between those who are educated (that is, literate) and those who are at writing's mercy because they cannot read. But it is over Chinese writing understood in a broad sense as both the instrument and record of Chinese history, and therefore as a contested terrain of political power—what is to be done (written), who is to do (write), how to do (write), for who, and so forth—that conflicts between the state and civilians, mediated by intellectuals, continue to this day. The fight for human rights and for democracy by Chinese dissidents . . . may thus be seen in terms of an ongoing struggle with Chinese writing as *realpolitik*, a struggle in which those who hold state power still have the authority to restrain and suppress—to mark, to write off—whoever dares challenges them. (67-68)

We can find some examples of writers and intellectuals of Chinese exile literature, or a literature of the PRC diaspora, such as Gao Xingjian (高行健 b. 1940) and Liao Yiwu (廖亦武 b. 1958), which can verify Chow's observation at the point about the continuation of the stressful relation between writers and their nation in the history of Chinese literature. But, in fact, the "ongoing struggle with Chinese writing as *realpolitik*" has never been limited to the Chinese writers only but all the writers written about that country and that culture. Moreover, when dealing with "China," not only the Chinese government but all political agencies, that Orientalism which Western and non-Western critics and scholars have tried their best to make us realize is pretty much at work. All writers written about and came from mainland China are welcome to the country as long as they are on the right side of *realpolitik*; otherwise, they need to seek a shelter somewhere else, where they are destined to be judged by their stance on the "China" problem to their host country. But, though being appropriated as a tool of asserting national cohesiveness, translation has always been a means of channeling the cultural differences on the larger scale of global literary circulation. The *realpolitik* at work is more than a means of local sanction but the

consequences of the interplay of domestic affairs and international politics.

While literary works are subjected for (im)proper appropriation, the literary works in turn uncannily unveil the end game of cultural politics in the world republic of letters. A literary work such as Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* brings the differences between the East and the West, between China and the United States in her case, with a tactic of cultural translation to the readers across the globe. If there exists an Orientalist tendency in her work, that shows the bias and predicaments toward a cross-cultural literary writer who wrote and wished to convey universal humanity but simply was caught up with the cultural distinctiveness(es) insisted by the elitist voices from both sides. For an author writes stories about and around a foreign culture, especially when the works become popular, it is hard not to ignite a variety of reactions from the people of that foreign land through translation. Over the past decades of the modern Chinese literary history, the bittersweet attitude of Chinese writers toward Pearl S. Buck proves the love-hate relationships between the natives and the foreigners. But only attention paid to the cultural translation within the texts and the circulation and evaluation of the translated texts would expose the phantasmagoria of Orientalism in the whole process and then we realize the literary field with which and against which one has been formed. There is no denying that the hegemonic forces are still at work in the global culture industry. Though, when we look closer at translation practices and productions on a global scale, we then understand how the fields, the hierarchical structure of world literature, are constantly reshaping and reorganizing while the involved agencies confront the position-takings and act upon the dispositions that the fields have imposed on them. It is through such a realization of the lingering effects of Orientalism that we then are possible to evoke a space of the possible, to question the nationalistic ideologies and to challenge the hegemonic powers.

Works Cited

- Bassnett, Susan and André Lefevere, eds. *Translation, History and Culture*. London and New York: Pinter. 1990. Print.
- Bassnett, Susan and André Lefevere. Bassnett. *Constructing Cultures Essays on Literary Translation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998. Print.
- Bassnett, Susan and Harish Trivedi, eds. *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge. 1999.
- Bassnett, Susan. "Translation Studies at a Cross-roads." *Target* 24.1 (2012): 15-25. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Task of the Translator." Hannah Arendt ed. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. New York: Schocken, 1969. 69-82.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Introduction: Narrating the Nation." Homi Bhabha K. ed. *Nation and Narration*. London & New York: Routledge. 1990. 1-7.
- . *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge. 1994.
- Buck, Pearl S. "Pearl Buck—Nobel Lecture: The Chinese Novel." *Nobelprize.org*. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 28 Jan. 2013.
<http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1938/buck-lecture.html>
- . *The Good Earth*. New York: Washington Square Press. 2004 [1931].
- . *Sons*. New York: Moyer Bell .2005 [1933].
- . *A House Divided*. New York: Moyer Bell. 2006 [1935].
- Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 2004 [1999]. Print.
- Chen, Xiaomei. *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.
- Chow, Rey. *The Protestant Ethnic & the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Columbia UP. 2002.
- Conn, Peter. *Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1998.
- Guo, Yingjian 郭英劍, ed. *Sai Zhenzhu pinglun ji 賽珍珠評論集* (Collected Criticism on Pearl S. Buck). Guangxi: Lijing Publishing

- Ltd. 1999.
- . "Sai Zhenzhu: houzhiminzhuyiwenxue de xianquzhe" 賽珍珠：後殖民主義文學的先驅者 (Pearl S. Buck: A Forerunner of Postcolonialism). Guo Yingjian, ed. *Sai Zhenzhu pinglun ji* 賽珍珠評論集 (Collected Criticism on Pearl S. Buck). Guangxi: Lijing Publishing Ltd. 1999. 246-52.
- Hu, Feng, 胡風. "Dadi li de Zhongguo" 《大地》裡的中國 (China in *The Good Earth*). Guo Yingjian, ed. *Sai Zhenzhu pinglun ji* 賽珍珠評論集 (Collected Criticism on Pearl S. Buck). Guangxi: Lijing Publishing Ltd. 1999. 91-100.
- Klein, Christina. *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961*. Berkeley: U of California P. 2003.
- Leong, Karen J. *The China Mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong, and the Transformation of American Orientalism*. Berkeley: U of California P. 2005.
- Liao, Kang. *Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Bridge across the Pacific*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 1997.
- Liu, Lydia H. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900-1937*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995. Print.
- Lo, Kwai-cheung. "Reaffirming 'Chineseness' in the Translation in the Translations of Asian American Literature: Maxine Hong Kingston's Fictions in Taiwan and Mainland China." *Translation Quarterly* 18 & 19 (2001): 74-98.
- Lovell, Julia. *The Politics of Cultural Capital: China's Quest for a Nobel Prize in Literature*. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P. 2006.
- Niranjana, Tejaswini. *Siting Translation: History, Post-structuralism, and the Colonial Context*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1992. Print.
- Prendergast, Christopher, ed. *Debating World Literature*. London: Verso, 2004. Print.
- Robinson, Douglas. *Translation and Empire: Postcolonial Theories Explained*. Manchester, UK: St. Jerome, 1997. Print.

- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979. Print.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "The Politics of Translation." *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. London: Routledge. 1993. 179-200.
- . *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge: Harvard UP. 1999.
- Swedish Academy. "The Nobel Prize in Literature 1938." *Nobelprize.org*. 28 Jan 2013.
<http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1938/>
- Tang, Yanfang 唐艷芳. *Sai Zhenzhu shuihuzhuan fanyiyanjui—houzhiminlilun de shijiao* 賽珍珠《水滸傳》翻譯研究——後殖民理論的視角 (On Pearl S. Buck's Translation of *The Water Margin*: A Postcolonial Perspective). Shanghai: Fudan UP. 2010.
- Thomson, James. "Why Doesn't Pearl Buck Get Respect?" *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 24 July 1992. Web. 30 Aug. 2012.
<http://articles.philly.com/1992-07-24/news/26026432_1_pearl-buck-literary-prize-fighting-angel>.
- Tymoczko, Maria, and Edwin Gentzler, eds. *Translation and Power*. Amherst & Boston: U of Massachusetts P, 2002. Print.
- Wang, Hui. "Postcolonial Approaches." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. 2nd ed. London & New York: Routledge, 2009. 200-204. Print.
- Xu, Yuxin, 徐育新. "Sai Zhenzhu—Meidiguozhuyi wenhuaqinleu de jixianfeng" 賽珍珠——美帝國主義文化侵略的急先鋒 (Pearl S. Buck—Vanguard of American Cultural Imperialism). Guo Yingjian, ed. *Sai Zhenzhu pinglun ji* 賽珍珠評論集 (Collected Criticism on Pearl S. Buck). Guangxi: Lijing Publishing Ltd. 1999. 134-43.
- Yoshihara, Mari. *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism*. New York: Oxford UP. 2003.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 2001.