CHAPTER ONE

Translations as Versions in Modern Chinese Literature

NICK ADMUSSEN

WHAT ARE WE READING?

What does a reader do, and what do they get, when they pick up a translation of 《駱駝祥子》 by Lao She 老舍 (1899–1966)? They make a choice, informed or not, between several possible translations, all of which have arguments in their favor: for example, there is Howard Goldblatt's readable, widely distributed 2010 translation *Rickshaw Boy*; Jean M. James's more scholarly 1979 translation *Rickshaw*; Shi Xiaoqing's 1981 translation *Camel Xiangzi*, featuring an introduction by Lao She's spouse and an afterword by him; or Evan King's 1945 translation *Rickshaw Boy*, which was a bestseller in the United States and a selection of the very influential Book of the Month Club.[1] Whether they know it or not, their choice takes a side in an interpretive and political dispute: after the formation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, Lao She chose (perhaps under duress) to revise the novel, excising some political references, sexual scenes, and the tragic final chapters.[2] Rather than embracing nihilism and hedonism as the 1939 story does, in versions after 1955 the novel's main character Xiangzi asks a question in the novel's final lines—why should a working person have hope?—that the communist revolution could answer. Goldblatt and James translate the text as it was before state communism; Shi translates the more recent edition and adds Lao She's apologia as an afterword, in which the writer says "I expressed my sympathy for the labouring people ... but I gave them no future, no way out ... This was because, at the time I could only see the misery of society and not the hope of revolution, I did not know any revolutionary truths" (Lao 1981, 230). Choosing a translation, then, might also include deciding whether or not political pressure forced Lao She to change his novel, deciding whether the rules of art in the early People's Republic improved or detracted from artistic works, or alternatively choosing which readers of the Chinese one prefers to draw near to—a fifty-year-old Chinese person would be familiar with the shorter and later book, but a twenty-year-old Chinese person may have seen the longer and bleaker one, which was legal to publish again in the 1980s and is the text that is usually posted at free literature websites. All this is in addition to more familiar ways of judging a translation, like

[1]Goldblatt's 2010 version was published in trade paperback by Harper Perennial and has gone through many printings. James's 1979 version was on a small university press with comparatively limited circulation.

[2]This shortened text is available in English in Shi's 1981 version; that translation was later extended in Lao (2005), a reprint of Shi's version from the Chinese University Press that restores the lost chapters.

assessing its fidelity or style. Many of the decisions that used to be made at the editorial level—which edition to mark as authoritative and make available to readers—are now, because of new structures in the sale, circulation, and digitization of books, partially in the hands of readers as well.

What is it, though, that ends up in those readers' hands after their decision-making is done? If we call all these books *translations*, we run into a problem with the 1945 bestseller, translated by a pseudonymous translator reputed to have been a prisoner of war in Japanese-occupied Manchuria during the Second World War (Lao 2010, xii). It invents characters, changes plot points, and creates a totally new ending, one in which Xiangzi scoops his love interest up in his arms and runs off into the forest. It ends, "He was alive. They were free" (Lao 1945, 384). This is so substantially different from the book in Chinese, and was so intensely loathed by Lao She, that calling it a *translation* seems like praise.[3] Even among the more faithful versions, however, exclusively assessing their quality as translations can downplay or overlook the role of their paratextual material, which often extends or explains what is in the translated sections themselves. A copy of the post-1955 *Camel Xiangzi* with Lao She's explanation about why he revised the final chapters is very different from a copy that never mentions the missing sections. Goldblatt's version gives in its introduction a very general sense of what is missing from the Shi translation—the last "chapter and a half" of the novel (Lao 2010, xiv)—but not quite enough for a reader to reconstruct the shape of Lao She's revision. Because Lao She revised mostly by deletion, it would have been possible with more careful annotation to create a book that you could read either way: both as a translation of the text as it was in 1939 *and* as it was after 1955. That book might be the same *translation*—the way that Chinese was represented by English would be the same—but a different experience than Goldblatt offered. There are other concepts hiding behind or inside the word "translation," concepts *Rickshaw Boy* and *Camel Xiangzi* help bring into the light.

Translation as a category has soft boundaries and gradations. Translations have margins, marginalia, paratexts and contexts, and these all have the ability to determine not only how we read translated texts but also whether they count as translations or not. Today, Evan King's translation of Lao She feels easy to reject and replace, but other parts of the margins around translation are too important to ignore. The work of the poet Li Jinfa 李金髮 (1900–1976), especially as it is read transnationally, insists that its readers come to terms with the uncomfortable spaces around translation. Born in 1900, Li Jinfa (the pen name of Li Shuliang 李淑良) wrote his deeply influential poetry on the basis of his experience studying abroad in Paris in 1922–1923, when he adopted his pen name (literally, "Li of the Golden Hair" or "Blond Li") and became enamored with French symbolists, especially Baudelaire and Verlaine. This intensity led to imitative and transformative participation in symbolist poetics. A good survey of the situation is provided by the poet Bian Zhilin 卞之琳 (1910–2000), writing in 1982: "It was indeed Li Jinfa who first introduced French symbolist poetry into China ... The fact is that his far from adequate knowledge of French and his no less inadequate mastery of his mother tongue, both in *baihua* (the vernacular) and *wenyan* (the literary language), did gross injustice to the French Symbolists" (quoted in Bien 2013, 132). The untrustworthiness and incomprehensibility of Li's renditions from the French, though, did not hamper the impact he had on readers (indeed, the incomprehensibility may have added to

[3]For a sense of the intensity of his feeling—which George Kao says became generalized to an antipathy toward American culture in general—see Iwasaki (2015, 126–28).

his impact). Bian admits that he "somehow caught the aroma of the Symbolist poetry of the late Nineteenth Century" (quoted in Bien 2013, 132). Bian Zhilin does not explicitly object to Li's free mixing of translation with imitation and invention, but contemporary scholar Jin Siyan summarizes the generic disorientation his work creates: "Is it borrowing, echoing, synaesthesia, modeling, or accidental similarity? Perhaps it's all these things" 是借用,共鸣,联觉,模仿,还是偶然相似?或许都有 (Jin 1994, 261). This type of imitative, citational creation was not offensive to the mores of the early twentieth century in China, when Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936) found fame for《狂人日記》(Diary of a Madman), the title supplied by a story of Gogol's, and when many poets, particularly Bian Zhilin himself, drew their poetry from complex negotiations between nativization and foreignization.[4]

What this means in terms of individual poems is that Li Jinfa's work feels vastly different to different audiences. To readers of his day, who, as Bian points out, had no prior encounter with French symbolism, Li's poetry would have felt exotic, even foreign in its diction and style—as Klein points out in his chapter in this volume, he can seem to write "from translation" rather than from an identifiably Chinese tradition. His frequent citations and appreciations of the symbolists would read as claims to affiliation with a community that, because the texts from which he drew inspiration were absent and unknown to his readership in the 1920s, could not gauge his particular balance between imitation and originality. To a more initiated transcultural reader, though, including contemporary scholars, the works are hard to read outside their relationship to specific French texts. In the poem《夜之歌》(Nocturne) (Li 1987, 37), written in 1922, Li adopts the central image of Baudelaire's "A Carcass" (Une Charogne; Baudelaire 2008, 59–62), in which an amorous couple encounters a dead woman's corpse during a summer's walk together. As he proceeds through the poem, Li also reproduces a moment from Baudelaire's poem "Voyaging" (Le voyage) in which the speaker, bored and disgusted with the life they see, insists that an anchor be raised and a journey begun (Baudelaire 2008, 292). The effect, to the reader of Baudelaire, is what Paul Manfredi calls an array of "the ruptured elements of the phenomenal and textual world" (2014, 26). As Manfredi points out, the poem is not reducible to transcription or translation: its juxtapositions, its classical roots, and the way it shifts Baudelaire's tone and ideology are all novel in the poem. But the uncited, reperformed elements from the *textual* world give one, in the words of Feng Naichao 馮乃超 (1901–1983), "the impression that they are reading a translation" (Manfredi 2014, 9). The poem feels like not-quite-translation, not-quite-original. At the same time, the presence of such problems might have little or no impact on those who enjoy Li Jinfa's poetry as the decadent, associative, earthy verse that it also is.

The ruptures of Li Jinfa's work are extreme cases of a phenomenon endemic in the world of translation. When poets are translated, their work is often selected and reordered in a way that tells a new story for a new context, whether that be the fracturing and authorizing effect of an anthology, an introductory, historical overview of a poet's most famous (or most translatable) work, or just a market-oriented, editorial decision that some poems are more worth translating than others.[5] Fiction is, of course, not immune to similar types of excision and reorganization: Howard

[4]Kowallis (2002) gives a point-by-point comparison between Gogol's "Diary of a Madman" and Lu Xun's. Klein (2018, 25–67) describes Bian's intercultural and interlingual practices.

[5]Just as an example, the past three contemporary Chinese poetry volumes to win the Lucien Stryk Prize for Translation from the American Literary Translators Association—Xi 2016, Wang 2014, and Xi 2012—were all made up of selections from several Chinese-language collections, spanning decades.

Goldblatt's celebrated translations of Mo Yan 莫言 (1955–) make editorial cuts that consistently excise mentions of the Chinese Communist Party or contemporary Chinese politics (Du and Zhang 2015, 4–5; Klein 2016, 188), and his translation of the《天堂蒜薹之歌》(Garlic Ballads) excises chapter 21 (Du and Zhang 2015, 5). Ken Liu's pathbreaking translation of Liu Cixin 刘慈欣's (1963–)《三体》(The Three-Body Problem) takes its structure from the novel as it was serialized in the magazine《科幻世界》(*Science Fiction World*) in 2006, rather than the stand-alone novel that was much more widely circulated after its publication in 2008. Cao Xuenan describes the publication history of the novel as itself having three "bodies" with distinct relationships to transnational Orientalism and self-orientalization, state politics, and the history of global science fiction. She writes, "It is crucial to note that what is often presumed to be one novel, *The Three-Body Problem*, is actually only one of multiple versions," and rather than imagining a binary pair in which a singular novel is translated once, she conceptualizes the two Chinese versions and the English version as three distinct and separable experiences (Cao 2019, 184), related by subtle but legible forces. She compares the problem of the relationship between versions to the three-body problem in physics that gives Liu's novel its title (184–85): it is conceptually difficult but quite powerful to understand the forces that operate between multiple moving bodies.

Cao's method—to see a translation as a version and to attend to its genetic relationships with (potentially multiple) previous versions—feels increasingly necessary when encountering the ruptures, gray areas, and most of all the *choices* that translated Chinese literature provokes. The relationship between the six versions of Lao She's novel discussed at the start of the chapter are a meaningful part of the artwork—in some cases they play a determining role in the work's reception—and yet that relationship exists in no single book. The versions of literature are archives from which we can draw an understanding of literature's movements in life. Knowing about versions tells us a lot about what readers saw in Li Jinfa: by seeing his poems as *versions* of Baudelaire rather than either failed translations or failed original poems, we can learn something useful about the difference between an aesthetics that is cited or translated, on one hand, and one that is inhabited by a poet, on the other. We can see people reacting to Li as an inhabitant, rather than a translator, of decadence. The three-body problem is a convenient metaphor that provides a starting point for a study of versions: this chapter will attempt to go further, trying to create a workable theory of the version that identifies the active role that readers must play in versioning translated literature.

A THEORY OF THE VERSION

Christopher Plaisance defines the version as follows: "a particular immaterial textual accident of a universal immaterial textual substance, which is materially caused by the text of its instantiating class of documents, formally caused by the contextual author function, efficiently caused by its author or authorial network, and finally caused by the author's intention" (2019, 14). Some back translation from his Aristotelian terminology will be useful to open this concept into the demands of modern Chinese literature.[6] The version is an *accident*: it is an attribute of a text "which may

[6]As well as comparison to his definition of the text: "an artifactual pattern of letters, punctuation marks, and spaces, which is materially caused by the physical document(s) instantiating it, formally caused by the contextual author function, efficiently caused by its author, and finally caused by the author's intention" (Plaisance 2019, 10).

or may not characterise the being at a given point in time" (7). It is *immaterial* because like texts, it does not necessarily have a given physical shape: the Goldblatt version of *Rickshaw Boy* exists across many different physical books that have minor differences, none of which has priority over another. Their identity as "the Goldblatt version" is a result of an idea we hold. Versions have a set of *documents as their material cause*: this means that they draw their raw materials from other writings. The material cause—the type of raw materials used as a source—is the signal difference between the text and the version. Plaisance says that the material cause of a text, the ingredients from which a text is constructed, is its instantiating documents, the books or pamphlets or pages that give us an idea of a text. The book or PDF you are reading right now is the raw material from which you will draw your idea of this chapter. In the case of the version, though, it becomes itself on the basis of some *other* class of documents, things that are not present. The *Three-Body Problem* in Ken Liu's translation is made from an absent set of documents called 《三体》. It is a version, and as such quite different from 《三体》 itself, which is a textual idea materially caused by books and other documents titled 《三体》.

The absent documents that provoke the version and the potential absence of the author of those documents lead Plaisance to emphasize that the version can be created through an *authorial network*. This is important but not quite sufficient for readers in translation: it opens a space to think through the connected difference between authors and translators, who have shifting textual, social, legal, linguistic, and aesthetic relationships. But it does not quite describe the way in which their functions overlap, with translators acting as authors in some cases (making decisions about, for example, which poem should go first in a collection), authors acting as editors (pushing back against translators' decisions), and editors acting as authors and translators (deciding how long a work should be, deciding how it should sound or feel). We may instead think of the version, whether it is a translation or not, as the product of an *authorial group* that shares, doubles, or struggles over authorial functions, and which may have little overt connection or collaboration past their individual labor in the same textual tradition.[7]

Plaisance finishes his definition by writing that both the text and the version have their final cause (their goal, their underlying reason to exist) in an author's intent. But this assertion needs to be specified: if the definition is to make sense in context, a distinction must be drawn between the author (or the authorial network) of the text and the author of the version. Richard Jean So writes that Evan King's version of *Rickshaw Boy* "transforms from a Dickensian exposé of the evils of capitalism to a celebration of individualism and personal freedom" (2016, 186). He further points out that King also monopolized the economic and social profit from the translation, so if Lao She intended to enrich himself by writing, this version failed him on that level, as well (186–87). This is not an uncommon feature of versions: they may be pirated, twisted, or contested. The author or authors of a version often do their work from a separate or even contradictory intent to the original, and translation is no exception. When seeing a translation as a version, it is easier to see the translator (and their editor, their publisher, their censor, and everyone else who shapes the translation) not as a subsidiary or invisible worker laboring to fulfill the intent of the source author, but as an independent author who naturally has independent intent. This is even true when a single

[7]For a longer discussion of the metaphor of the network, its cultural underpinnings, and its cross-cultural limitations, see Admussen (2019).

author creates multiple versions, or self-translates: Lao She wanted one set of things from and for his novel in the 1930s and a very different set of things in 1955. The importance Plaisance gives to authorial intent as the motive force of creation reinforces the fact that many readers read to hear and understand a human voice: we compare translations, we distinguish versions, and we create concepts of author and translator not exclusively because of perceived hierarchies of value, but because we want to know who we are hearing.

In a 2011 essay, Lawrence Venuti describes the "poet's version," a twentieth-century European tradition of monolingual artists producing adaptive imitations of foreign works that he calls "an amalgam of what we understand today as translation and adaptation, close rendering and free rewriting" (234). In many ways, he too attempts to knit translation to the more interpretive "poet's version," pointing out that "The translation or adaptation inscribes its interpretation at every stage in the writing process, starting from the very choice of the source text and including every verbal choice" (234). But as befits a scholar-translator working in translation studies, rather than a person who is reading through translation toward some other goal, he concludes by calling for a focus on the "interpretants" of discourses and conventions in the receiving culture, arguing that a translator has an ethical call to extend and open those conventions through the creation of translation (246). That makes sense as a task for the translator: figure out, react to, and perhaps transform the way that people in a particular locality read texts. But what should a reader do, a reader less interested in whether "interpretants" in local culture have been destabilized by a given translation and more interested in reading a book, hearing a voice, even perhaps learning something about life in China or elsewhere?

Reading translations as a type of version drawn from a preexisting set of documents does concrete work in helping us revise old senses of the intention of authors as singular, internal acts of will. Thinking through the version conceptually justifies the endless fascination that readers have with the documents from which the version is drawn (the "original" of the translation), even though those documents are not themselves the translation: to see how the translation was drawn from its raw materials is to interpret an author as an actor in a context, whether that author be the translator, the translator and the original artist together, or the institutions and pressures that affect authorial function. When readers assemble and interpret a version history for translations—building a sort of software-style version tree, with roots, forks, and branches—they can see authors react to transnational givens. They can watch Lao She work as he contests and is contested by Chinese communism and Euro-American anti-communism: what will Lao She, whose novel is about the injustice of working life, do when a capitalist attempts to steal his labor? What will he do when a socialist government dictates revisions? Similarly, readers can see the way in which Li Jinfa chooses participation in French symbolism over citation or mastery of it, a symbolist bleeding of boundaries between image and feeling transposed onto the edges between translation and creation. The ideas of a text come into a generative and concrete relationship to decisions made around the creation of versions; the authorial voice, rightly seen as voices in chorus, becomes bigger and richer than the words on the page.

Version histories and version trees historicize and situate literature; additionally, though, the concept of the version produces futures. Because a version is immaterial—an idea of a work—and *based* on documents rather than *contained* in them, we can think about versions that are not, or are not yet, represented by their own documents. This feels quite common in reviews of translated literature when reviewers, as they compare versions, produce a third, often preferable version that

they describe but do not present. This chapter did something similar when it thought through a version of Goldblatt's *Rickshaw Boy* that contained the information necessary to reconstruct Lao She's story in its post-1955 shape. That is a future version, as yet unmade, that appeared as a direct result of thinking through iteration. It is less an assessment of lack in Goldblatt's version as it is an understanding that version trees act like living organisms; it is readerly, but also participatory.[8] The futurity accessible via participatory reading through the version creates complex and exciting opportunities and responsibilities for readers: it is to the specificities of that expanded role that we will now turn.

VERSIONERS

Visualizing a translation as a text encourages thoughts of its reception; visualizing it as a version, with an open and extensible authorial group, sharpens attention to its further iteration. A translator creates a version through translation, selection, ordering, and the composition of paratext. A teacher creates a new version by adding to the paratext through lecture and discussion, by assigning multiple documents, and through the framing that both course and classroom provide. The reader creates their own version by skipping around in a book, by reading multiple versions, by having an independent interpretation of the relationship between any given version and its author. There are two common discourses around these acts of versioning—one that centers on authority, objectivity, and continuity, and one that centers on authoring, subjectivity, and contextuality—but at heart, both discourses are arguments that a new entry in a version history is necessary and useful, and the choice of discourse has no predictable impact on the conservative or transformative effect of a given version.

In his 2019 essay "The Babel Fallacy," Joseph Allen observes that different literary traditions have different mythic assumptions around translation. In the West there is the story of Babel, in which humanity is cursed with mutually unintelligible languages and forced into the labor of translation as punishment. Ancient China, meanwhile, has the myth of Cang Jie 倉頡, who creates writing by reproducing the tracks and marks of animals.[9] Writing here is transcribed and transmediated instead of created and passed down in a continuous lineage that unifies not only human beings with nature but also humans with one another and the present with the past. Myths can never be determinants, and in any event a tropic description of a translatorial process need have no fixed relationship to how a translation is made or what it does: we can describe translations one way and make them in another. But it is useful to imagine how much fits into the gap between Babel and Cang Jie. The transformative, transgressive concept of translational versioning, in which translators are traitors to God's insistence that languages must be distinct, is quite distant from a

[8]Szymanska (2019) talks about translation multiples—volumes in which many different translations of the same piece are collected together—in terms of "journey," "path," and "promenade," works that replace a concrete product with a process open to extension and continuation (147–48), concluding that they offer "artistic intuitions" (151) that are fundamentally creative and future-oriented.

[9]Klein (2021) contains a thorough discussion about whether the Cang Jie myth and the Babel myth can or should be used to represent Chinese and Western cultures, respectively: being here focused on twentieth-century translation, I find them useful as tropes to represent models of translation extant in both cultures and am trying to draw out the way they overlap and interpenetrate.

model in which the translator or transcriber reliably refreshes a text into a new script, language, or idiom while retaining its nature and full authority. Between the extremes of these two models sit innumerable options for translators and their readers.

In the authoritative construct, a versioner discovers a knowable and pre-extant version, superior to all others, which he or she can lift to the status of the text. This is the task to which the scholars of imperial China often bent themselves: cultural heroes such as Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145?–86? BCE) or Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) created versions of preexisting works that suppressed what Plaisance calls the *accidental* nature of versions—the way in which versions are not representative of the documents from which they are drawn. These versions were designed to be authoritatively contiguous with previous work, the very image of Cang Jie's natural signs being drawn up into a portable, contemporary literary mark.[10] It is easy to identify this discourse as a way for a versioner to colonize texts and occupy history, and this does in fact take place repeatedly—《史記》(Records of the Grand Historian) assembling, for example, a partisan version of historical materials that reflects the beliefs of the Han dynasty (Pines 2006). This discourse of versioning, however, is highly sensitive to changes in textual evidence—changes in the availability, verifiability, and interpretation of documents—in a way that can uniquely destabilize and open textual traditions. In his book *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts*, Edward Shaughnessy outlines the process through which new archaeological discoveries provoke rethinkings and rewritings of the canon—and demonstrates that this process of unearthing and version adaptation has gone on at least since 279 CE, when long-forgotten texts were found in the tomb of the King of Wei (Shaughnessy 2006, 5), sparking a substantive, transformative debate over the nature of the classics. The fact that this debate proceeded under tropes of objectivity, authority, and correctness made it no less dynamic.[11]

Allen argues that much of classical scholarship, and especially the kind that this chapter describes as ancient Chinese versioning, stands in the place of what we would today call translation《說文解字》(Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters) was not just a dictionary, he argues, but the "world's first intra-lingual dictionary," created in part to make ancient small-seal writing legible to later readers (Allen 2019, 125). Its gloss for *yi* 譯, a character now used for translation, was *chuan* 傳, to transmit. The authoritative versioner is comfortable—has always been comfortable—with altering, recontextualizing, and questioning texts, because the implicit, mythic goal of preserving the flux of nature is clearly impossible. Cang Jie drew the Chinese characters up from the tracks of animals, but those characters have changed drastically in the years since, even under the aegis of so many stories of their ultimate continuity. To put this in terms of Lao She, even the versioner who wants to create the most authoritative translation of《駱駝祥子》will not re-serialize it in a literary magazine, or use vintage paper from 1939. It is understood that time has moved on, and in the definition of what accuracy and authority can possibly mean there lies a naturalized embrace of transformation and change.

The second broad discourse around the versioner is that of the transformative, subjective, "unfaithful," contextual creator of versions—Li Jinfa, Ezra Pound, Lin Shu 林紓 (1852–1942). This

[10] As Stillinger (1994, 132) points out, this kind of seizure of authority is rampant in nineteenth- and twentieth-century work on English literature, in which scholars vie for the power associated with authorized editions.

[11] Pines (2006), as well, uses excavated manuscripts and new evidence to assess the accuracy of the Qin history that is reproduced in *The Records of the Grand Historian*, simultaneously finding the Han text lacking and seizing a new level of authority on behalf of the excavated materials he is reading.

rationale for the production of versions focuses on the need to create, with creations ranging from new audiences and communities in the receiving culture to new cultural fusions between translated and translating cultures to a change, as Venuti proposes, in the "interpretants" of the receiving culture. One of the richest examples of this kind of versioning is the practice that gives this section of the chapter its name—the film versioners of Thailand, who gave live vernacular performances of imported foreign films between the late 1940s and the 1970s. As May Adadol Ingawanij describes the practice, versioners traveled to towns and villages with and without theatres, projected films outdoors, and transformed the film dialogue by performing in verse (2012, 108), using direct address (101), and improvising (112–13), as well as through the creation of new occasions for film viewing that ranged from the funeral of a senior monk (2018, 13) to anti-communist propaganda (16). The transformations and transmediations of these foreign films were so many and so deep that comparisons between text and version seem quite beside the point: besides, each act of versioning was immanent, momentary, and unrepeatable, something Ingawanij has reconstructed through painstaking attention to film journalism and memoir. At the same time, though, an "original" celluloid print of a film, a procession of images in a fixed and repeatable pattern, was present at every act of versioning. The performance entailed acts of profanation—"acts that return to common usage what had been set apart through consecration" (Ingawanij 2018, 21)—but it also spread the experience of cinema far wider than more precisely repeated performances of texts ever could.

The role of the film versioner helps us explain and understand Li Jinfa's practice, and much of the gray zone between translation and creation, where standards of equivalence and faithfulness are fluid and the receiving culture's context is foregrounded at all times. Li Jinfa, though he does not always demonstrably say what Baudelaire or Verlaine says, often *performs the actions* in poems that French symbolists do: he breaks an aesthetic and moral boundary by discussing a corpse with his lover or encounters the world with an air of bored disaffection. As close as an authoritative translator might get to crafting sentences equivalent between two languages, the core performer of their version is someone else, usually the "original" author. The film versioner, by contrast, stands in front of the screen and thereby assumes a specific kind of aesthetic and moral responsibility for what results: this counterintuitively has the power to *transmit* important elements of an original text. Li Jinfa, renaming himself after golden hair, throwing himself into his role as a symbolist, himself performs decadence and dissipation in a way that a translator rarely would. This process does not require, or necessarily involve, the transmission of textual patterns: rather, as Bian Zhilin pointed out, it is the "aroma" of symbolism, the sense of it, something more elemental than its language, pattern, or ideology. This sense is transmitted through kinds of learning and experience that avoid or profane authoritative structures of training and reproduction: film versioners in Thailand, especially women, were able to learn the craft and the films without engaging either in the patrilineal master/student relationships of Thai traditional art or in transnational film communities (Ingawanij 2018, 29–34), but were still able to remain adjacent to both. Rather than learning symbolism through diligent language study and textual mastery, one can simply get a sense for the context, identify some of the feelings at play, and take what one wants from symbolist texts. In both cases, these kinds of versioners opened new spaces for imitators and inheritors, deeply influencing both the Thai film industry to come and the future of contemporary Chinese poetry.

When versioners identify their project as authoritative and objective, they make drastic changes to their documents. When versioners identify their project as inventive and profaning, they transmit

important senses of a work to their audience. In neither case can the rhetoric attached to versioning be matched in a trustworthy way to the nature of the version's relationship to its documents. Accepting this helps, perhaps, in abandoning consideration of the *amount* of retention between versions in favor of questions about what a version does, and how it fits into its own history. Versions, after all, should be seen as *additive*, not hierarchical: a problem or lacuna in one version, or a problem a version presents in a particular context, is best addressed not by critique, but by an additional version.[12] In encounters with translated literature, whether in the classroom or out of it, comparing versions always makes sense; it is well worth extending, varying, and iterating them, as well. Which versions seem better than others, and why? How would you retranslate the versions you encounter? How would you improve them? What would you explain or situate to make the experience of a new version even more faithful and legible than the old? If you were adapting a text for your people, your social context, what would you change, what would you leave out? How would you imitate a text, how might you write in a way that makes its gesture, performs its act?

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[12]In this I echo Bruno, who writes that "translations of a text exist laterally, not vertically. A translation and the source text are not linked to each other by a hierarchical relationship, but are isomorphic" (2012, 14). I extend this idea to include competing original versions as well as versions of translations. Rather, though, than focusing on the shape of the text and a formal correspondence between versions—two versions can be different in form and shape, as in the case of *Rickshaw Boy*—I see the nonhierarchical relationship between one version and another version to be historical, social, and variable in type.

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