

REFLECTIONS

Translation's Pale, Life-Giving Fire: Observations on Navigating the Complexities of Literary Translation

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Andre Louw (樓安杰)

National Taiwan Normal University 國立台灣師範大學

Email: pellesage@gmail.com

This reflective essay aims to explore the intricacies, pitfalls and limitations of literary translation, specifically concerning the rendering of great English works of literature into Mandarin Chinese. For this purpose, extracts from Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Shakespeare's *Love's Labor's Lost* and *Hamlet*, as well as Joyce's *Ulysses*, will be compared alongside their respective published Mandarin translations, to demonstrate just what an unforgiving task fictional rendering can be. The aim of such an exercise is, of course, by no means to critically pounce on any shortcomings or misinterpretations on the part of the translator(s). Rather, it is to pay tribute to their commendable efforts by fueling further debate with regard to the challenges inherent in conveying wordplay, symbolism, metaphor, and other stylistic literary elements in translation, and thereby to investigate the very nature of the translated work itself in relation to the original.

It is hoped that such musings are indeed worth our time since the gains to be derived from the translation of literature are numerous and, rather fittingly, well-documented. Any painstaking multilingual endeavour to transcribe a written work of art into another tongue, is, as Jakob Grimm might have put it, a precious vessel that "safely carries"¹ rich legible merchandise to *novel*, uncharted readerships and audiences, and extends the cartography of scholarly appraisal, commentary, and study. This, moreover, not only allows for the bounteous transfer of "cultural, esthetic, or intellectual values"², but also transports the fortunate reader to exotic lands and narratives and provides a refreshingly "alien reading experience"³, one that could prove influential, instructive, and even enlightening. Were it not for literary translation, in fact, we might, to paraphrase Moth in *Love's Labour's Lost*, have found ourselves at a great feast of languages, and yet forced to have merely stolen the scraps⁴.

In addition, such cross-lingual expansion has the added benefit of being able to invigorate alien breath into literary lungs so that fictional creations and their characters can – we must here revitalize

¹ Quoted in Katharina Reiss: Type, Kind and Individuality of Text: Decision Making in Translation, *The Translation Studies Reader* Second Edition, edited by Lawrence Venuti, Routledge 2004, p.176

² Sapiro, Gisèle. "The Sociology of Translation: A New Research Domain". *A Companion to Translation Studies, First Edition*. Bermann & Porter (eds.). John Wiley & Sons. 2014. p.87

³ Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London & New York: Routledge. 2008

⁴ Shakespeare, William. *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act V, Scene i: MOTH: *They have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps.*



the phrase in fresh foreign terms – 在另一語文中獲得新生⁵. Texts revived in this fashion, it could be argued, stand to gain in various other ways. “The work translated [, for one,] is enhanced [...since...] the process of translation, like all modes of focused understanding, will detail, illumine, and generally body forth its object”⁶ [...and since the...] “motion of transfer and paraphrase [furthermore] enlarges the stature of the original.”⁷

Finally, for now at any event, and perhaps most importantly, translation, and literary translation in particular, is itself “an intellectual practice with epistemological benefits which needs to be kept alive in order to prevent the routinization or the standardization of critical thought”⁸. Performing this labour of linguistic love⁹, in other (target-language) words, is an invaluable exercise in cultural and linguistic comparison that keeps us on our artistic, intellectual, and academic toes, and holds a revealing mirror to our own domestic efforts to put language, literary or otherwise, to good (if not its best) use.

This is not to say, however, to once more take up the nautical theme courtesy of Grimm, that literary translation is at all plain sailing, especially for “an elegant translator who [brings] something to [her or] his work besides mere dictionary knowledge”¹⁰. Translated fiction, after all, is oft required to “land at a shore with different soil under a different air”¹¹, and with little or no opportunity to acclimatize. Attempting to reproduce an identical effect in terms of readership and reception might thus quite possibly end up in written wreck, or at the very least lead to the newly revived translation clumsily running aground with a literary thud. It is at times like this that, if we’re not careful, love’s labours are indeed lost, for literary translation, I venture to warn, can prove so challenging that it has the potential to make a translout¹² of even the most accomplished and dedicated 譯者 (*yìzhě*, ‘translator’).

A few examples might serve to illustrate this humbling statement and, to start, we remain maritime for the moment with an extract from Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*. The following lines are taken from the second canto of fictional poet John Shade’s eponymous poem; for enlightening comparison, 廖月娟 (*Liào Yuè Juān*)’s Mandarin translation¹³ is given on the right:

437 That first long ramble, the relentless light,	初次漫步，陽光燦爛
438 The flock of sails (one blue among the white	刺眼，風帆成群（白中有一點藍
439 Clashed queerly with the sea, and two were red),	與海不搭調的藍，還有兩個
紅點)	
440 The man in the old blazer, crumbling bread,	一身舊衫的男子剝撕麵包
441 The crowding gulls insufferably loud,	喧噪無比的鷗擁擠而來

⁵ *zài lìng yī yǔwén zhōng huòdé xīnshēng* ‘in another language gain new life’. This is 單德興’s translation of Walter Benjamin’s immortal words on the ‘afterlife’ that translation bestows on the original, as contained in: 冷戰時代的美國文學中譯。彭小妍《文化翻譯與文本脈絡：晚明以降的中國、日本與西方》第 178 頁

⁶ Steiner, George. *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*. Oxford University Press. 1975. p.317

⁷ *Ibid.* p.316

⁸ Sapiro, Gisèle. *Op. Cit.* p.90

⁹ As Jacques Derrida suggests: “instead of rendering itself similar to the meaning of the original, the translation should rather, in a movement of love and in full detail, pass into its own language the mode of intention of the original” (“Des Tours de Babel”). Translated by Joseph Graham. Cornell University Press. 1985. p.188)

¹⁰ Dickens, Charles. *A Tale of Two Cities*. Chapter X: Two Promises <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/98/98-h/98-h.htm>

¹¹ Katharina Reiss, *Op. Cit.* p.176

¹² Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*, Book II, Chapter 2, p.281, Footnote 2

¹³ 《幽冥的火》，佛拉基米爾·納博科夫著，廖月娟譯。大塊文化出版。2006年10月。第71頁，第437~442行



442 And one dark pigeon waddling in the crowd.¹⁴ 一隻黑鴿搖搖擺擺

Juxtaposing the two versions, the line in 廖月娟's rendering that is perhaps even more 「刺眼」 (*cìyǎn*, 'dazzling' but also 'glaring') than the "relentless light" of the original, is Line 439: 「與海不搭調的藍，還有兩個紅點¹⁵」, for it is this translated line, that effectively sinks the rhyme. Poetic works, of course, notoriously pose "the serious difficulty of the inseparable combination of sense and sonority"¹⁶ and successfully navigating a course between the two is a delicate balancing act. 廖 herself likens the process to a constant chess-like battle to find a middle ground between sound and sense, but does add that it can also be such a stimulating interpretive exercise that one never tires of it, and even becomes somewhat engrossed in this taxing but rewarding trial of linguistic wits¹⁷.

Though the translator does therefore go to great lengths and largely succeeds in ferrying across Nabokov's masterly poetic effects (note, for instance, the ample assonance in 漫-陽-光-燦-爛-帆-藍 (*màn-yáng-guāng-càn-làn-fān-lán*) to compensate for the alliteration in long-ramble-relentless-light) and original rhyming scheme elsewhere in the four-canto poem, we are hard-pressed on this occasion to account for the 「兩個紅點¹⁸」 that ends Line 439 (and "clashes so" queerly" with the next). Especially if one considers that these four Chinese characters might be misinterpreted as implying that the solitary blue sail among the white, displayed two red dots or spots. The original, conversely, rather seems to suggest that two of the sails were completely red in colour, with no spots or dots, red or otherwise, to speak of. Of course, I can make no claim being a Bretwit¹⁹ myself, but 廖 might perhaps have ended the line with 搭調²⁰ instead: 還有兩個紅，與海不搭調²¹, thereby ensuring a more harmonious homophonic echo in the 麵包²² of the next line (since both would then end in an *ao* or 幺 sound), and also avoiding the rather bumpy repetition of 藍 (*lán*, 'blue').

Poetic puzzles aside, there are, just to add to the translator's woes, certain other literary devices inherent in the language of Nabokov's original that are equally challenging, if not impossible, to emulate. The 'blaze' in 'blazer' (Line 440), for instance, reflects the "relentless" glare of two lines earlier, a mirroring which sadly fails to shine through in translation. One arguably pictures more of a 賽艇外套 (*sàitǐng wàitào*, 'yachting jacket') here than a 衫 (*shān*, 'sailing shirt') as well but, either

¹⁴ Nabokov, Vladimir. *Pale Fire*. A Poem in Four Cantos, Canto II, Lines 437~442

¹⁵ *yǔ hǎi bù dā diào de lán, hái yǒu liǎng gè hóng diǎn*, 'blue not suited to the sea, and two red spots besides'

¹⁶ Ricoeur, Paul. "On Translation". trans. Eileen Brennan, intr. Richard Kearney (London: Routledge, 2006), p.6

¹⁷ Judging by her 譯後記, it also requires, at the very least, two people to succeed: 「記得二〇〇〇年，為了長詩中譯是否要押韻，我和第二任編輯尉遲秀討論好幾個月，最後認為為兼顧韻腳頗有下棋的樂趣，不一定會「以韻害義」。我們把每個字搬來搬去，像在挪動棋子的位置，一方面尋找最好的韻腳，一方面注意詩句譯成中文之後，意象是否一樣清晰，意義是否依然完整，就這樣你來我往，逐字退稿，樂此不疲，甚至漸漸入迷。」《幽冥的火》，佛拉基米爾·納博科夫 Vladimir Nabokov 著，廖月娟譯。大塊文化出版。2006年10月。一場最漫長的棋局：納博科夫《幽冥的火》譯後記。第360頁

¹⁸ *liǎng gè hóng diǎn*, 'two red spots'

¹⁹ See *Pale Fire*, Commentary on Line 275: "Bretwit (the name means Chess Intelligence)" and 廖's translation: 「布瑞威特（這個姓氏意為西洋棋功力）」《幽冥的火》，佛拉基米爾·納博科夫 Vladimir Nabokov 著，廖月娟譯。大塊文化出版。2006年10月。一場最漫長的棋局：納博科夫《幽冥的火》275行：我倆結縭四十年。第224頁

²⁰ *dā diào*, 'suited' or 'matched'

²¹ *hái yǒu liǎng gè hóng, yǔ hǎi bù dā diào*, 'and two red, to the sea not suited'

²² *miànbāo*, 'bread'



way, the literary echo is lost. So too, most regrettably, is the “one dark” winged creature²³ that Nabokov has so (“insufferably”) subtly submerged in the original, for, upon closer inspection we find, do we not, a conspicuously camouflaged crow lurking “in the crowd”. In 廖’s defence, it is perhaps only a *rara avis* like the (insufferably?) gifted Nabokov who could crow about including such wordplay and, if nothing else, we at least have the consolation that the “failings of the translator [...] localize, they project as on to a screen, the resistant vitalities, the opaque centers of specific genius in the original.”²⁴ And yet, another literary loss has flown the coop.

Finally, just to return to ‘crowds’, the ‘flock of sails’ too, it could be argued, is, in the original English, more in keeping with the avian motif that takes wing in Lines 441 and 442, than is the 群 (*qún*) that is used in translation. The latter can indeed mean a ‘flock’ or ‘group’ but is not, as in English, usually reserved for members of the animal kingdom. (一群人 or 人群²⁵, for example, is frequently employed to denote a human crowd, i.e. a group of people). In addition, the visual echo in 群, due to the embedded 羊部 (*yáng bù*, ‘sheep/goat radical’), unfortunately, unlike the ‘crow’ in ‘crowd’, seems more to suggest four-legged fauna.

Specimens of this latter nature, incidentally, have also been known, on occasion, to lie hidden in literary wit. If we now all flock back to the first scene of Act V of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, we shall, courtesy once more of arguably the play’s wittiest winged creature, see how:

MOTH The third of the five vowels, if you repeat them; or the fifth, if I.
HOLOFERNES I will repeat them,—a,e,i—
MOTH The sheep; the other two concludes it,—o,u

Which 梁實秋 (Liáng Shí Qiū) translates²⁶ as follows:

毛 如果由你來說，便是母音中的第三個；如果由我來說便是母音中的第五個。²⁷
郝 我來說一遍²⁸，——a, e, i, ——
毛 就是那隻羊；還有兩個母音²⁹，——o, u。

Holofernes here starts to recite the five vowels and progresses as far as ‘i’. “Apun which”³⁰, Moth is heard to “respond”³¹ with: “The sheep; the other two concludes it,—o,u.” This apparently incongruous 羊 (*yáng*, ‘sheep’) allusion seems somewhat mystifying at first until we realize that, to an English ear at least, the two aforesaid letters are actually vowels in sheep’s clothing, echoing as they do, phoneme for phoneme: ‘Oh, ewe!’

²³ As far as I know, Nabokov did not originally use the archaic spelling of ‘pigeon’, namely ‘pidgeon’ with a ‘d’, that appears in 廖’s 中英對照 version of the poem but, in any event, the translator would, I suspect, also find it extremely difficult to convey the humorous element in such a feathered archaism/anachronism.

²⁴ Steiner, George. Op. Cit. p.317

²⁵ *yīqún rén* or *rénqún*

²⁶ 《空愛一場》梁實秋譯。遠東圖書公司。台北市。1999年。第139,141頁

²⁷ *Rúguǒ yóu nǐ lái shuō, biàn shì mǔyīn zhōng de dì sān gè; rúguǒ yóu wǒ lái shuō biàn shì mǔyīn zhōng de dì wǔ gè.* ‘If it were up to you, then it would be the third of the vowels; if up to me, the fifth.’

²⁸ *Wǒ lái shuō yībiàn,* ‘I’ll say them once’

²⁹ *Jiùshì nà zhī yáng; hái yǒu liǎng gè mǔyīn,* ‘it is that very sheep; there are two more vowels’

³⁰ Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*, Book II, Chapter 1, p.224, Line 36

³¹ Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*, Book I, Chapter 8, p.214, Line 8



Chinese readers of 梁’s version, however, it could be suggested, might well fail to see any connection between these syllabic speech sounds and their ovine phonetic counterparts. This is especially true since the translator, by no means averse to utilizing footnotes – “those rogue’s galleries of words”³² – at other points in the play to highlight and elucidate instances of wordplay in the original, makes no use, in this instance, of any annotated explanation to account for the fleecy addition to Moth’s retort.

Though, it must be said and has³³, there is also much merit in efforts to preserve the artistic nature of the work and not to allow an excess of explanatory notes to detract from the delight that is to be derived from reading a fictional creation, we must also bear in mind that “A jest’s prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears it, never in the tongue of him that makes it.”³⁴ In trying to cope with that “insurmountable limit”³⁵ that translators often face when “words occur[ing] in one or the same acoustic or graphic form”³⁶ bring about, with frustrating and flabbergasting Shakespearean flair, flares of “homophonic or homonymic effect[s]”³⁷, the reader’s ear should always be taken into consideration.

Those poor souls “respuncable”³⁸ for interpreting or reproducing the wordplay in the “borrow’d robes”³⁹ of the translation – those “called to make our language put on the stranger’s clothes at the same time as we invite the stranger to step into the fabric of our own speech”⁴⁰, in other words, must seek to either elegantly steer the target-language reader in the right paronomasiac direction, or, as uninvasively as possible, spell out, using vowels or 羊 or 羊部 or whatever they might have at their disposal, wherein the original “jest’s prosperity lies”⁴¹. Unfortunately, neither of these options is without its considerable challenges. Is it a satisfying exercise to successfully dress literary humour in foreign vestments? Undoubtedly 衣⁴². But, it would—o,u—be pulling the wool over non-ovine eyes to suggest that translational tailors are not “U. p: up”⁴³ against it.

This brings us to another polysemic ‘u’⁴⁴ cut from an altogether different cloth, but which is arguably equally famous in literary circles. The first time we encounter it is in Episode 8 of James Joyce’s

³² Nabokov, Vladimir. *Pale Fire*, Commentary, Line 803: A misprint: “...it cannot be rendered in French or German, or Russian, or Zemblan; so the translator will have to put it into one of those footnotes that are the rogue’s galleries of words.”

³³ 金隄, the first translator of Joyce’s *Ulysses* into Mandarin, for instance, put it this way: 「加注不僅未必解決問題，還有可能大大損害小說的藝術性和趣味性。」尤利西斯／詹姆斯·喬伊斯著；金隄譯。九歌出版社，台北市：民 105.06（2016 年 6 月）《尤里西斯譯後記》三加注的原則十六章，第 1325 頁

³⁴ Shakespeare, William. *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Act V, Scene ii: ROSALINE

³⁵ Derrida, Jacques. “Two Words for Joyce” *Poststructuralist Joyce: Essays from the French*, Attridge & Ferrer (eds). Cambridge University Press. 1984. p.429: “...whenever several words occur in one or the same acoustic or graphic form, whenever a homophonic or homonymic effect occurs, translation in the strict, traditional and dominant sense of the term encounters an insurmountable limit – and the beginning of its end, the figure of its ruin.”

³⁶ *Ibid.* p.429

³⁷ *Ibid.* p.429

³⁸ Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*, Book I, Chapter 1, p.29 Line 35

³⁹ Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*, Act I, Scene iii: MACBETH: *The thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me In borrow’d robes?*

⁴⁰ Kearney, Richard. Introduction to Ricoeur, Paul. “On Translation”. London: Routledge, 2006. p.xvi

⁴¹ Shakespeare, William. *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Act V, Scene ii: ROSALINE

⁴² yī, ‘clothes’

⁴³ Joyce, James. *Ulysses*, Episodes 8, 11, 12, 13, and 15

⁴⁴ There is, of course, also an ‘AEIOU’ sequence, often interpreted as meaning ‘AE, I owe you’, in Joyce’s *Ulysses: A child Conmee saved from pandies. I, I and I. I. A.E.I.O.U.* (from Episode 9), which 金隄 renders: 「一個康眉從戒尺下救出來的孩子。我，我和我。我。A·E·我欠你」（《尤利西斯》金隄譯【上】第 428 頁）and which 蕭 and 文（《尤利西斯》【上】。蕭乾、文潔若譯。第 404，416 頁）translate and annotate as follows: 「康米從體罰中拯救過的孩子。我，我和我，我。」



Ulysses, when Mrs Breen first tells of some unknown postal heckler's efforts to remove "a rise" from her husband's greatly offended person:

—Read that, she said. He got it this morning.
—What is it? Mr Bloom asked, taking the card. U. P.?
—U. p: up, she said. Someone taking a rise out of him.

Which 金隄 (Jīn Dī) translates⁴⁵ as follows:

你看一看，她說。他今天上午收到的。
什麼呀？布盧姆先生接過明信片說。卜一？
卜一：上，她說。有人在捉弄他。

And which 蕭乾 (*Xiāo Qián*) and 文潔若 (*Wén Jié Ruò*) render⁴⁶:

「念念看，」她說，他今天早晨接到的」。
「這是什麼？」布盧姆先生邊接過明信片，邊說，「萬事休矣。」
「萬事休矣：完蛋，」她說，有人在捉弄他。

Commencing with 蕭 and 文's translation, we find that the original cryptic correspondence's vowel/consonant combination has been replaced with a dooming 萬事休矣 (*wànshì xiū yǐ*), which we might, in retranslation, phrase as 'you're done for' or, in even closer proximity to the original, 'it's all up with you'. To this is appended (in a footnote immediately below), Joyce's original alphabetical riddle, along with the admission that multiple theories still abound as to its exact meaning and implications. In order to justify a translation which seems to beg "the eternal question as to whether we should translate the meaning or translate the words"⁴⁷, the reader is then referred to the twenty-fourth chapter of *Oliver Twist*, in which the phrase "it's all U.P." is used to describe a fatally ill old lady's decidedly unpromising prospects of recovery.⁴⁸

From then on, it is all up with the original lettering found in Joyce's *Ulysses*, since the translators systematically abandon all subsequent instances⁴⁹ of "U. p: up", and replace them with the far less cryptic 萬事休矣. It is not until Episode 15 of the novel, however, that the game is up for it is at this point that, having seemingly successfully dealt with this tricky translational teaser and all its ensuing "awkward corners"⁵⁰, the suggestive lettering crops U. p: up once more to U. p: upset proceedings. This is in the haunting form, of course, of Dubliner Paddy Dignam's final resting place:

A.E.I.O.U] (p. 404) A.E.I.O.U. 是英文中五個元音字母。英人打借條常用 IOU 即 I owe you. 這裡，就含有「A.E. 我欠你」之意。). Though these two disparate translations would also make for an interesting comparison, I would still rather prefer to investigate the 'u' in 'U.P. up'.

⁴⁵ 《尤利西斯》【上】。詹姆斯·喬伊斯著；金隄譯。九歌出版社，台北市：民 105.06（2016 年 6 月）第八章，第 363 頁）

⁴⁶ 《尤利西斯》【上】。詹姆斯·喬伊斯著；蕭乾、文潔若譯。貓頭鷹出版社，台北市：民 1999 年 11 月。第十二章，第 343，344 頁

⁴⁷ Ricoeur, Paul. Op. Cit. p.27

⁴⁸ The relevant quote, not provided by the translators, runs as follows: "Oh!" said the young man, turning his face towards the bed, as if he had previously quite forgotten the patient, "it's all U.P. there, Mrs. Corney." "It is, is it, sir?" asked the matron. "If she lasts a couple of hours, I shall be surprised..." (Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Chapter 24)

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Episode 12: 有人給他寄來了一張寫著「萬事休矣」明信片。於是他就在都柏林走街串巷，一門心思去起.....《尤利西斯》【上】。詹姆斯·喬伊斯著；蕭乾、文潔若譯。貓頭鷹出版社，台北市：民 1999 年 11 月。第十二章，第 618 頁

⁵⁰ Steiner, George. Op. Cit. p.317: "The translator has taken too much—he has padded, embroidered, 'read into'—or too little—he has skimmed, elided, cut out "awkward corners."



JOHN O'CONNELL: (*Foghorns stormily through his megaphone.*) Dignam, Patrick T, deceased.

PADDY DIGNAM: (*With pricked up ears, winces.*) Overtones. (*He wriggles forward and places an ear to the ground.*) My master's voice!

JOHN O'CONNELL: Burial docket letter number U. P. eighty five thousand. Field seventeen. House of Keys. Plot, one hundred and one.

蕭 and 文's U.P.-less rendering of which, reads as follows:⁵¹

約翰·奧康內爾（用喇叭筒像吹霧中警報般大聲喊叫）已故迪格納姆·帕特里克·T。

帕狄·迪格納姆（尖起耳朵·畏畏縮縮地）陪音。（掙扎著向前移動·將一隻耳朵貼在地面上）是我主人的聲音！

約翰·奧康內爾 埋藏許可證死亡第八萬五千號。第十七墓區。鑰匙議院。第一〇一號地域。

Having ultimately forsaken this final “U. p: up”, a crucial allusion in the novel – literary translation can be so cruel – is thus ultimately also lost, this *grave* omission once more pointing to that enervating interpretational “impossibility [...] of serving two masters: the author and the reader”⁵². Which “master's voice!”⁵³, Paddy, which 「主人的聲音！⁵⁴」, is it to be?

Unfortunately, 金隄's wholly divergent strategy, though a highly inventive rendering, a very “creative betrayal of the original”⁵⁵, also fails to adequately settle the question. On the plus side, his 卜 — : 上 very satisfyingly mimics the phonetic effect of the original to some extent (*bǔyī* or *pūyī*, is not altogether removed from ‘u-p’). Secondly, while it is unfortunate that the 丶 in 卜 is not pointing up or due east, the process of visual assembly found in the original (u+p=up), does indeed, provided the — provides the base for the 上, hold in translation (卜+—=上).

This in itself is no mean feat of inter-lingual transcription but is further semantically bolstered by the fact that 卜 happens to carry predictive connotations, thereby rather serendipitously echoing the ill foreboding of the original. The “U. p: up” forecasting Breen's demise, assuming for the moment that this is what's implied in the enigmatic encoding, is, after all, however facetious it might be, an act of divination. Finally, in 金隄's version⁵⁶, the 卜— thread running all the way through to the site of Paddy Dignam's grave, is indeed preserved:

約翰·奧康內爾（用喇叭筒揚聲大喊）狄格南，派特里克·T,已故。

派迪·狄格南（豎起耳朵，畏縮）泛音。（他蠕動向前，將一隻耳朵貼在地上）我主人的聲音！

約翰·奧康內爾 入土單據卜一字八萬五千號。墓區十七。鑰匙府。墓地一百零一號。

⁵¹ 《尤利西斯》【下】。詹姆斯·喬伊斯著；蕭乾、文潔若譯。貓頭鷹出版社，台北市：民1999年11月。第十二章，第891頁

⁵² Ricoeur, Paul. Op. Cit. p.8

⁵³ See excerpt above.

⁵⁴ *zhūrén de shēngyīn*. See excerpt above. 《尤利西斯》【下】。詹姆斯·喬伊斯著；蕭乾、文潔若譯。貓頭鷹出版社，台北市：民1999年11月。第十二章，第891頁

⁵⁵ Ricoeur, Paul. Op. Cit. p.37.

⁵⁶ 《尤利西斯》【下】。詹姆斯·喬伊斯著；金隄譯。九歌出版社，台北市：民105.06（2016年6月）第一章，第859頁）



In light of these considerations, and in exchange for these laudable efforts alone, we would not deny the translator some much deserved poetic licence in departing altogether from the Romanized original. Nor would we begrudge him the benefit of the doubt in suggesting that this rather exotic numerology⁵⁷ to a Chinese reader, furthermore seeks to simulate the equally cryptic nature of Joyce's original, U.tterly P.erplexing postcard.

For all that, however, and in spite of the translator's heroics, there is the (not so?) small matter of the 'rise' in the original, very craftily echoing the "U. p: up". Neither of the translated versions, both of which, interestingly, offer 捉弄 (*zhuōnòng*) for 'take a rise out of', is able to incorporate this artistic reverberation, reminding us that, just to complicate the literary translator's gruelling task even further, "the turns of phrase do not serve as a vehicle for the same [wordplay, let alone the same] cultural legacies"⁵⁸. To get anywhere near the original, to *rise* to the occasion as it were, we might, just to take the rise out of both translator AND reader, have to start tampering with the target language itself and replace the 升 (*gōng*, 'hands joined') in 弄 with a 升 (*shēng*, 'rise') instead, but surely this is requiring the translator to *rise* well above and beyond the call of duty?

Finally, turning our attention to the call of nature instead, one is, moreover, at a bit of a (labour) loss to see, as is the case with 蕭 and 文's 萬事休矣, any connection that readers of 金隄's Chinese version might draw between this mysterious missive received by Breen, and the act of micturition it implies. The English 'p' in 'u-p', after all, in all likelihood points to 'urinating' ('pee~ing') and is arguably the chief reason why the anonymous and potentially libellous – if the reports of Breen's eagerness to sue in Episode 12⁵⁹ are to be believed – correspondence is so scandalously effective at *relieving* him of said 'rise'. What exactly the unknown party is insinuating in (presumably) accusing another of passing water in a rising or skywards fashion is, from what I understand, also the subject of much debate, but the point is that, for all 金隄's commendable creative efforts, his Mandarin "U. p: up" (卜一 : 上), cruelly, in the end, in either sense, sound, or sight, 「沒有化成尿⁶⁰」.

By now the literary translator is, no doubt, in view of all these translational impediments and intricacies, throwing up her or his arms and most likely considering a change of profession. If so, a different U.P.-less literary cemetery, in Denmark this time, might offer some alternative occupational options (卜業?). From Act V, Scene I, of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*:

First Clown: There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers:
they hold up Adam's profession.

Second Clown: Was he a gentleman?

⁵⁷ 「卜一」 would mostly likely suggest some type of order or sequence to first-time Mandarin readers, perhaps related to a transliterated entry or note. It might perhaps also suggest an enumerated option of some kind (卜 can also mean to 'choose' or 'select', as in 卜宅: 'select a home') but it is not a standard phrase that is easy to 卜一 pin down.

⁵⁸ Ricoeur, Paul. Op. Cit. p.6

⁵⁹ (as translated in Footnote 39 above) *He's traipsing all round Dublin with a postcard someone sent him with U. p: up on it to take a li... And he doubled up. —Take a what? says I. —Libel action, says he, for ten thousand pounds.*

⁶⁰ *méiyǒu huàchéng niào*, 'was not transformed into urine'. This is from 金隄's own translation (《尤利西斯》【上】。金隄譯，第80頁) of one of Buck Mulligan's blithely blasphemous verses in Episode I of *Ulysses*: —*If anyone thinks that I amn't divine He'll get no free drinks when I'm making the wine But have to drink water and wish it were plain That I make when the wine becomes water again. 誰要是認為我不是真神，我變得葡萄酒就沒有他的分 只有等那酒再次變成水，還得要小心它沒有化成尿 (sui)。*



First Clown: He was the first that ever bore arms.

Second Clown: Why, he had none.

First Clown: What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says 'Adam digged': could he dig without arms?

And 梁實秋's Mandarin rendering⁶¹:

鄉甲：除了園丁，挖溝的，掘墳的之外，就沒有什麼古老的紳士人家；他們繼續幹著亞當的職業。

鄉乙：他是一位紳士嗎？

鄉甲：他是第一個佩帶紋章的⊕。

鄉乙：甚麼，他哪裡有過紋章？

鄉甲：怎麼，你莫非是異教徒麼？你莫非連聖經都不明白？聖經上說「亞當掘地」；他能掘地而不用工具嗎？

Along with the corresponding endnote⁶² he provides after the conclusion of the play:

註釋

⊕ Arms 是雙關語，（一）紳士佩帶之勳章，（二）掘地用之鏟等工具。⁶³

Primed as we now are to pounce on lost translational labours, we note that the play on “arms” of the original, tragically lies buried under a fairly straightforward rendering. Apart from mourning this literary interment, what should really have purists and “the rare Anglo-Saxon competent in Chinese”⁶⁴ up in *arms*, however, is the fact that 梁 himself seems furthermore, based on his Mandarin rendering and accompanying explanatory note, to have misconstrued exactly, not to labour the point, wherein the “jest’s prosperity lies”⁶⁵. Apart from substituting 工具 (*gōngjù*, ‘tools’) for 紋章 (*wén zhāng*, ‘heraldic arms’) in the main text, his endnote’s second definition (二) suggests that “arms” refer to “shovels and other grave-digging tools”. Having searched at length and in vain for such a usage, this is an interpretation that we might best keep at arm’s length. Instead, the translator could have proffered the standard, non-punning 手臂 (*shǒubì*, ‘arms’, as in ‘upper limbs’) instead of 工具 as an alternative meaning for ‘arms’, since without said upper limbs, Adam, and this is the jest the First Clown hides up his (own arm’s) sleeve, would not have been able to wield any sepulchral apparatus whatsoever.

The First Clown, incidentally, and this too is not included in 梁’s 註釋, seems to be chancing his arm a bit by digging up scripture on “Adam’s profession”. In all likelihood, it is Cain (Adam’s son) and not Adam who does the digging in Genesis, the former having slain – “Cain’s jaw-bone, that did the first murder!”⁶⁶ 「第一兇犯凱因的顎骨！」⁶⁷ and buried his brother Abel. While “a translation that

⁶¹ 《哈姆雷特》，梁實秋譯，遠東圖書公司，台北，民國56年九月，第五幕第一景，第174,5頁

⁶² 《哈姆雷特》，梁實秋譯，遠東圖書公司，台北，民國56年九月，第五幕第一景，第204頁

⁶³ Arms shì shuāngguānyǔ, (yī) shēnshì pèidài zhī xūnzhāng, (èr) jué dì yòng zhī chǎn dēng gōngjù. ‘Arms’ is a play on (1) the arms borne by a gentleman, (2) spades and other tools for digging’

⁶⁴ Steiner, George. Op. Cit. p.375

⁶⁵ Shakespeare, William. *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Act V, Scene ii: ROSALINE

⁶⁶ Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*, Act V, Scene i. HAMLET: *That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain’s jaw-bone, that did the first murder! It might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now o’er-reaches; one that would circumvent God, might it not?*

⁶⁷ Dì yī xiōngfàn Kǎiyīn de è gǔ! 《哈姆雷特》，梁實秋譯，遠東圖書公司，台北，民國56年九月，第五幕第一景，第177頁



seeks with its annotations and its accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context is eminently worth doing”⁶⁸, therefore, this arguably is only the case if the annotations themselves, in translation or otherwise, succeed in digging up points of interest, adding to rather than detracting from overall clarity, and avoiding *grave* errors.

What this literary Anglo-Sino comparison furthermore illustrates, is that, as if juggling cultural considerations, multi-layered puns and allusions, and multiple textual reverberations, while all the while donning “the corset of meaning”⁶⁹ and the straightjacket of sound, weren’t enough, the literary translator, just like the gravedigger, is limited both in terms of the translational tools he or she can wield, and the linguistic arms she or he can bear/bare. As Nabokov might put it, we are, when translating works of literature and especially great works of literature, “we are most artistically caged”⁷⁰, 「我們的囚牢，如此繁縟」⁷¹.

It’s perhaps only proper for the author of *Pale Fire* to have the last word on this matter, since his title for both poem and novel arguably best captures the original-translation dynamic. A reference⁷² to a line from Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens* (*The moon’s an arrant thief, And her pale fire she snatches from the sun*⁷³ 月亮是一個真正的強盜，她的蒼白的光亮是從太陽那裏搶來的⁷⁴), Nabokov originally arguably employs it to mock the dull light with which the commentary on a poem burns, when compared to the original lustre of the poem itself.

For our purposes, the same analogy might be drawn between an original literary text and its translated version(s), the former being “heaven’s fiery eye”⁷⁵, and the latter the “arrant thieves” that are allowed to bask in its literary luminosity. The downside to these rich reflective rewards, the dark side of the moon if you will, is that, just as we are unable to always look the “fiery eye” in the eye but can quite easily direct our “eye-beams”⁷⁶ at its pale, lunar lustre-larcenist, so too the “relentless light”⁷⁷ of scrutiny and critique, as we have seen above, falls on the translation of a literary work with far greater intensity.

⁶⁸ Kwame Anthony Appiah. “Thick Translation”. *The Translation Studies Reader* Second Edition, edited by Lawrence Venuti, Routledge 2004, p.399

⁶⁹ Derrida, Jacques. “Des Tours de Babel”. Translated by Joseph Graham. Cornell University Press. 1985. p.205

⁷⁰ Nabokov, Vladimir. *Pale Fire*. A Poem in Four Cantos, Canto I. Line 114

⁷¹ *Wōmen de qiū láo, rúicǐ fǎnrù* 《幽冥的火》，佛拉基米爾·納博科夫 Vladimir Nabokov 著，廖月娟譯。大塊文化出版。2006年10月。第43頁，第114行 Compare Michael Cunningham, in his introduction to Heim’s translation of Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*: “A great book is probably, by definition, too complex and layered, too intricately alive, to be translated once and for all.” (“A Hero Found in Translation”, 2004, https://www.google.com.tw/amp/s/www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2004-jun-06-bk-cunningham6-story.html%3f_amp=true)

⁷² Nabokov, Vladimir. *Pale Fire*. A Poem in Four Cantos, Canto IV. Lines 961 & 962: (But this transparent thingum does require Some moondrop title. Help me, Will! *Pale Fire*!)

⁷³ Shakespeare, William. *Timon of Athens*, Act IV, Scene iii

⁷⁴ *Yuèliàng shì yīgè zhēnzhèng de qiángdào, tā de cāngbái de guāngliàng shì cóng tàiyáng nàlǐ qiǎng lái de*, 《雅典的泰蒙》梁實秋譯。遠東圖書公司。台北市。1999年10月。第163頁

⁷⁵ Shakespeare, William. *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Act V, Scene ii: BEROWNE Lines 409 & 410: *When we greet, With eyes’ best seeing, heaven’s fiery eye, By light we lose light.*

⁷⁶ Shakespeare, William. *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Act IV, Scene iii: KING: *So sweet a kiss the golden sun gives not To those fresh morning drops upon the rose, As thy eye-beams, when their fresh rays have smote The night of dew that on my cheeks down flows...*

⁷⁷ Nabokov, Vladimir. *Pale Fire*. A Poem in Four Cantos, Canto II, Line 437



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The author declares there is no conflict of interest.

About the Author:

Originally from Johannesburg, South Africa, and following a brief stint in Ireland, Andre Louw today mostly resides in Taipei, Taiwan, where he works as a freelance editor, writer, and to a lesser extent translator (Mandarin to English), for local publishers of educational materials. He is currently also pursuing a doctorate degree in literary translation, his focus being on two separate Chinese versions of the first two chapters of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.



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