Translating China : Henri Borel (1869-1933)

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From *Letters of Frederik van Eeden to Henri Borel* (Brieven van Frederik van Eeden aan Henri Borel) by Frederik van Eeden, 1933.

Introduction

This thesis investigates how Dutch sinologist Henri Jean François Borel (1869-1933) translated China, by examining his renditions of Chinese literature and his writings about China. Borel studied Hokkien Chinese at Leiden University (1888-1892) and in Xiamen (1892-1894) toward a career as Chinese Interpreter for the Dutch colonial government in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) (1894-1916). He was active as a writer and journalist, and his writings in the period from 1893 till 1933 seem to have provided an accessible introduction to China and things Chinese for a general audience, and to have significantly shaped the image of China in the Netherlands,[1] but the academic sinological community at Leiden University did not hold his work in high regard.[2]

As earlier research has shown, Borel was one of the first to publish works on China as well as translations made directly from the Chinese source text, for a broad readership.[3] Before Borel's time, many such works were actually relay translations and some appeared only in publications that were not easily accessible to a general public. Borel's pioneering work and his break with tradition inspired the current study, because his writings raise questions about his motivation, his translation strategies, and the quality of his work. In my analysis, the main focus is on Borel's translation of China, and not on his fictional works, which I only occasionally make brief reference to. These are works that would require a separate in-depth study and a different approach. Instead, I look at the texts relating to China which he produced in the course of his professional career and examine the development of Borel as a writer and translator in the Netherlands, China and the Dutch East Indies. As such, my findings are mostly confined to the tradition of translating Chinese into Dutch, and do not go into the broader context of the translational culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Netherlands.[4]

Although Borel's prose writing in Dutch on Chinese culture is not regarded as translation in the traditional sense, it is just as important as the literary renderings with regard to Borel's translation of China. Such texts constitute a kind of travel writing because

[1] Pos 2008, p. 179.
[2] Idema 2003, p. 231.
[3] Heijns 2003, p. 248.
[4] For an overview, I refer to 'Dutch tradition' by Theo Hermans, in Part II: History and Traditions, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 2009, pp. 390-397.

they reflect the experiences of Borel in a foreign country, and as Douglas Kerr and Julia Kuehn argue, travel accounts 'often adopt an extreme method of translation.'[5] Both the literary translations and the prose writing were well received in his lifetime and in obituaries Borel was described as a China expert. How then did Borel translate China?

'Translation' here is used in the sense of cultural translation, or translating between cultures. In this sense translation is not merely a lingual rendering of a text from one language into another, but a representation of a foreign culture with 'language' as its vehicle. As Kate Sturge writes:

> [Cultural translation] is used in many different contexts and sense. In some of these it is a metaphor that radically questions translation's traditional [linguistic-literary] parameters, but a somewhat narrower use of the term refers to those practices of literary translation that mediate cultural difference, or try to convey extensive cultural background, or set out to represent another culture via translation.[6]

More important for the current study, Sturge further notes that 'More elaborated uses of the term "cultural translation" have been developed in the discipline of cultural anthropology, which is faced with questions of translation on a variety of levels.'[7] This concerns not only extensive interlingual translation during fieldwork: 'when the fieldworker's multidimensional, oral mediated experiences are reworked into linear written text, this is not simply a matter of interlingual, or even intersemiotic translation, but also a translation between cultural contexts.'[8]

Borel's works encompassed both literary, lingual translations of texts that mediate cultural difference, and his own writings about China that convey aspects of Chinese culture. As Michaela Wolf explains, translators can be called interpreters of the 'culture' in question, and: 'the cultural Other is not verbalized directly but only indirectly, and filtered and arranged through the ethnographer's or the translator's consciousness.'[9] In all of the publications on or from China, Borel mediates Chinese cultural aspects, which can be understood in terms of 'cultural translation', as explained in relevant places in the thesis.

Given his engagement with culture and language, Borel is very much present in his works, he is a highly visible translator. This is the result of his translation strategy: staying

[5] Kerr and Kuehn 2007, p. 7.
[6] Sturge 2009, p. 67.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Wolf 2002, p. 181.

close to the source text, introducing Chinese concepts in romanization and adding paratextual elements. It is also a result of his (self-pro-claimed) identity as a poet. European romantic poetry influenced his depiction of China, and he found elements in Chinese and Buddhist poetics to define poethood. Poetics helped him to justify his role of the poet as someone who is able to understand implicit meanings – in this case, in a foreign culture. Borel's positioning as Chinese Interpreter in the colonial administration caused tension in his identification with the Chinese (as in 'being partly Chinese,' and occasionally 'taking their side') on the one hand, and a sense of not belonging in Chinese communities, or not having the right to belong there, on the other.

The thesis is chronologically and thematically divided into three parts. The first part, 'Discovering China', concerns the period that Borel studied Chinese in Leiden and Xiamen. It discusses in two chapters how Borel forms an image of China. Chapter 1, 'Preconceptions' probes into the period before Borel went to China, exploring aspects which helped Borel form an idea of China. Borel shows no strong motivation to study Chinese, and it is not until his third year that he starts to become interested in Chinese texts. For Borel, the image of China is preconceived through his teacher and (text) books. Chapter 2, 'Romanticism' sets out how Borel's Romantic streak gives him a different perception of China. This is reflected in Borel's essays on China: there is evidence of intercultural interaction between Chinese and Dutch cultures. Here, I will go into agencies that are active behind this interaction.

In part II, 'In Search of the Real China', I discuss the changes that Borel goes through when he is interpreter in the Dutch East Indies, where he is disappointed with the Chinese and expatriate communities. His attitude toward and perception of China and the Chinese start to show an Orientalist tendency. To a certain extent, these can be explained with notions from Edward Said's *Orientalism* who argues that cultural representations of 'The East' are perceptions of the West. Chapter 3, 'Orientalism' looks into how Borel explores the identity of the Chinese people in the Dutch East Indies, who according to him are 'a degeneration of the Chinese' in China. His claim of looking at things 'from Chinese perspectives' results in an orientalizing translation style. At the same time, it seems to have made Borel more aware of his position which led to conflicts. Eventually, his attempt to seek justice for the Chinese and his identification with the Chinese cause tension, as discussed in chapter 4 'Torn between East and West'. Still, Borel is searching for 'the real China' and starts learning Mandarin Chinese, which takes him on a study trip to Beijing. In chapter 5, 'A

Poetic Vision' I discuss how this trip to the capital results in the publication of a book about his travel experience there and suggestions for mutual understanding between China and the West. Judging from the contents of the book, it appears that Borel is confident and even pedantic about his knowledge of China. Here, I explore Borel's methods or devices to interpret culture, and how he defends himself for his poetic vision. In doing so, he poses as the China expert. Yet, his attitude as self-assigned expert leads to the end of his career in the Dutch East Indies, while his articles on Dutch Sinology reduce his chances of a career in academia. Here I explore how Borel represents cultural Otherness, with a tendency toward viewing China from 'Chinese perspectives'.

In part III, 'Reevaluating China', I look into Borel's writings after his return to the Netherlands in 1913. There is sentimentality and nostalgia, as he dwells on places in China he visited on his last trip there, and begins rereading and translating texts he was first introduced to at Leiden University in the early 1890s. There is an increasing longing to be 'more Chinese', yet his work reveals the limits of his knowledge of the language. In chapter 6, 'A Chinese Spirit', I discuss Borel's *The Spirit of China*, which emphasizes intuition and spiritual insight. In *The Beautiful Island*, he idealizes China; this is a book that he published after his return from his final trip to Asia in 1920. His idea of becoming 'more Chinese,' grows stronger with the years, as Borel claims that he is looking at life from a 'Chinese point of view'. As shown in chapter 7, 'Sinicizing Chinese Literature', in his literary translations too, his interventions show that Borel is play-acting the Chinese author. Borel tries to make the text 'more Chinese' by adding Chinese words and phrases which are not in the source text. In other words, he is sinicizing Chinese literature, while some of his other articles on China show his pro-Chinese views. In terms of cultural translation, there are clear indications of internalization of Chinese culture (rewritten) in the Dutch culture.

In this thesis, I trace Borel's development throughout the forty years that he actively published on China. By giving examples from his writing and translations, I show how his view of China changes from preconceptions, to Romantic and Orientalist portrayal and finally idealizing China and sinicizing Chinese literature. Essential in this development is his identity, both the way he saw himself and the way others saw him. In the end this determined the way he translated China and contributed to shaping the image of China of that era.

Biographical Note

Henri Borel (1869-1933), born in Dordrecht, the Netherlands, was a writer, sinologist, translator and poet. He studied Hokkien Chinese at Leiden University, the Netherlands, and in Xiamen, China (1888-1894). Thereupon he was appointed Chinese Interpreter (later: Advisor for Chinese Affairs) in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) (1894-1916). His career was one of ups and downs: in his quest for justice, Borel exposed scandals which led to transfers and (sick) leaves. Eventually, Borel returned to the Netherlands early 1913, and received honorable discharge on grounds of physical disability in 1916. That same year, Borel took up the appointment of Editor of the Drama and Literature section of *The Fatherland* (Het Vaderland). In 1920, Borel made his last trip to the East, during which he wrote weekly travel letters for publication in *The Fatherland*. Borel wrote prolifically throughout the forty years that he was active. He became known for his critical articles in newspapers and magazines, and novels such as *The Young Boy* (Het Jongetje) and *A Dream* (Een droom). Yet, he was most appreciated for his work on China and his translations of Chinese literature, in particular *Wisdom and Beauty from China* (Wijsheid en schoonheid uit China), *Chinese Philosophy Annotated for Non-sinologists* (Chinese filosofie, toegelicht voor niet-sinologen), *Daybreak in the East* (Het daghet in den Oosten) and *The Spirit of China* (De geest van China). Borel was almost 64, when he died in The Hague in 1933.

Biographical Timeline

1869	Born in Dordrecht, the Netherlands, on 23 November
1888	Studied Hokkien Chinese in Leiden, the Netherlands, for four years
1892	Studied Hokkien Chinese in Xiamen, China, for two years
1894	Appointed as Chinese Interpreter in Riau, Dutch East Indies
1895	Published *Wisdom and Beauty from China*
1896	Transferred to Makassar, Dutch East Indies. Published volume I *Confucius* in the series *Chinese Philosophy Annotated for Non-Sinologists*
1897	Published volume II *Laozi* in the series *Chinese Philosophy Annotated for Non-Sinologists,* and *Guanyin: A Book of the Gods and the Hell*.
1898	Transferred to Surabaya, Dutch East Indies.
1899	Went on sick leave and returned to the Netherlands.
1900	Published *The Chinese in the Dutch East Indies*
1903	Reappointed in Riau, Dutch East Indies
1904	Went on sick leave and returned to the Netherlands
1905	Appointed Official for Chinese Affairs in Semarang, Dutch East Indies. Published *Wisdom and Beauty from the Indies*
1908	Transferred to Pontianak, Dutch East Indies
1909	Transferred to Surabaya, Dutch East Indies. Studied Mandarin Chinese in Beijing, China, in September 1909 for four months
1910	Published *Daybreak in the East*
1912	Transferred to Makassar, Dutch East Indies
1913	Went on leave to the Netherlands
1916	Received honorable discharge due to physical disability. Appointed Editor of the Drama and Literature section of *The Fatherland.* Published *The Spirit of China*
1920	Traveled to Asia (Dutch East Indies and China)
1922	Published *The Beautiful Island, a Second Book of Wisdom and Beauty from China*
1925(6?)	Published *Of Life and Death*
1931	Published volume III *Mencius, People's Tribune of China* in the series *Chinese Philosophy Annotated for Non-Sinologists*
1933	Died in The Hague, the Netherlands on 31 August

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Chapter 2: 'Moving beyond: The Translator as Poet', at the *Fifth International Conference on Translation and Cross-Culture*, Taipei (15 November 2014), and published in *Cross-cultural Studies* (2:1), 2015. 'On the Translation and Transfer of Culture—a case study of Henri Borel's *Wisdom and Beauty from China'*, at *Found in Translation: the International Conference on Translation and Multiculturalism*, Kuala Lumpur (23-25 July 2010). 'A Probe into the Process of Converting the Orient: Translating Chinese Hell', at the *8th Annual Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Hong Kong* (ASAHK), Hong Kong (8-9 March 2013). 'Henri Borel (1869-1933). 'Translations from Chinese into Dutch', at the *First Young Researchers' Conference on Chinese Translation Studies: a New Look at Historical and Cultural Contexts*, Hong Kong (23-25 June 2004).

Chapter 5: 'The Translation of Culture in Travel Writing—a case study of Henri Borel's *The New China'*, at the *FIT Sixth Asian Forum: Translation and Intercultural Communication: Past Present and Future*, Macao (6-8 November 2010).

Chapter 7: 'The Translator as Actor: Performing Chinese Stories on a Dutch Stage', at the *Colloquium Performativity and Translation*, Hong Kong (9-10 January 2014). 'Western Perception of Chinese Culture: A Case Study of Chinese-Dutch Translation, at the *1st East & West Conference on Translation Studies—Translation History Matters*, Zhuhai (26-27 September 2013). 'Henri Borel's Dutch Translation of the *Mencius'*, at the *XVIII FIT World Congress: Translation and Cultural Diversity*, Shanghai (4-7 August 2008).
Section 7.1, '*Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*' was adapted in Dutch as 'Wonderlijke Chinese Verhalen, indirect vertaald' (Relay Translations of Strange Chinese Stories) and published in *Filter* (22:4), 2015.

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Audrey Heijns
Hong Kong, 2016.

Conventions

This thesis draws on materials in Dutch, Chinese, French and German. Since it is written in English, there are many instances of translation. These are mine unless otherwise indicated. Translations of quotes to support an argument will appear in English without the source text. For examples of sentences in translation by Henri Borel and other translators, the source text and target text(s), with English rendering in brackets are provided where the target text is in another language. For titles of books, articles, newspapers, journals and magazines in other languages than English, the English translation is used, with the original title in brackets at first mention. Titles of the relevant newspapers and magazines can be found in the list of works cited.

For readability I have modified the romanization of Chinese concepts into Hanyu Pinyin. In the late nineteenth century, there was not yet a unified system of alphabetizing Chinese. In the beginning, Borel used the Dutch romanization based on Hokkien pronunciation. Later Borel studied Mandarin and started using romanization based on the Northern pronunciation, and sometimes he would provide both romanizations.

The authors of many early reviews and articles from Dutch newspapers and magazines cited in this thesis are unidentified. They are listed as 'anonymous' in chronological order of appearance of the article in works cited. Many of them are available in the online resources of DBNL (www.dbnl.org) and Delpher (www.delpher.nl). DBNL, short for Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren, is the Digital Library for Dutch Literature. This website lists Dutch authors with short biographies and bibliographies, whose works are mostly directly accessible. Delpher is the online resource provided by the Royal Library (Koninklijke Bibliotheek) and contains scans of newspapers and magazines, which are fully searchable.

The material from the Borel Archives of the Literary Museum, the National Archives in The Hague and the Special Collection of the University of Amsterdam are referred to in the footnotes. The footnote includes the location of the source in English: LM (Literary Museum), NA (National Archives) and UVA (Special Collection of University of Amsterdam), and the relevant citation in Dutch.

For place names in Indonesia, I use the current English spelling.

Borel in China dressed as a Mandarin.
Courtesy of the Literary Museum, The Hague, the Netherlands.

Borel with his children in Pontianak, Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), 1908.
Courtesy of the Literary Museum, The Hague, the Netherlands.

Henri Borel, Frederik van Eeden and Lodewijk van Deyssel.
'Frederik van Eeden seventieth birthday' (Frederik van Eeden zeventigste verjaardag) in the *Leeuwarder Newspaper* (Leeuwarder Courant). Leeuwarden, 05-04-1930. Accessed on Delpher on 02-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010604882:mpeg21:a0169.

'The Passing of Henri Borel' (Henri Borel Overleden) by W. H. Ten Hoet Parson in *The Chronicle* (De Kroniek) (19:9). 1933, p. 133. Accessed on Delpher on 02-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=dts:2504009:mpeg21.

PART I: DISCOVERING CHINA (1888–1894)

Chapter 1: Preconceptions

This chapter looks into Borel's early development and his study period at Leiden University in 1888-1892. What Borel learned about China at this stage was from his teacher, classroom material and any (other) books that were available. Hence the image that he formed was through the eyes of other writers, who in their own way translated China. This was, as Borel discovered later, when he arrived in China in 1892, different from his. As he wrote in his review of the book *Alone in China* by American journalist Julian Ralph (1853-1903):

> When I went to China, I did not have high expectations of what I was about to see, based on the various books about the country and its people that I had read.[1]

Hence, it is important to know what Borel read and learned about China before he went to China. It is unlikely that Borel started reading books about China before he commenced his studies of Chinese at Leiden University in 1888. So this preconception of China must have been built on the ideas, which he formed during his study period of four years at Leiden University from 1888-1892. The first section 1.1, 'Before Going to Leiden' will probe into possible reasons why Borel took the entrance examination to study Chinese at Leiden University. Subsequently, 1.2, 'From Dislike to Fascination' investigates how he initially dislikes the program and how it is not until his third year that he finally gets interested in Chinese. Borel develops an interest and starts translating Chinese poetry for himself, as is shown in 1.3, 'Prelude to Publications.' Finally, the last section goes in more detail as to how Borel formed a view of China in 1.4, 'Perceptions of China.'

1.1 Before Leiden

There is no indication that Borel was motivated early on to study Chinese, neither for the entrance examination nor at the actual start of his studies. In 1888, Borel was in his final year of the HBS (Hogere Burgerschool) secondary school in Roermond, after he had been expelled in the second year of the HBS in The Hague before.[2] Borel blames an inexperienced young teacher for instigating rebellious behavior among the boys, of which Borel is eventually the victim.[3] As a result, his father arranges for him to go to his relatives in Goes

[1] Borel 1898c, p. 249.

[2] This school type was specifically designed to educate children for a commercial career.

[3] See Borel's article 'Memories of the HBS in The Hague' of 7 February 1925 in *The Women Chronicle of The Hague* (De Haagsche Vrouwenkroniek). As his novel *The Young Boy* (Het jongetje) is said to be autobiographical, the description there can be considered for what happened. The sensitive 14-year old protagonist, who is in love with a girl from the neighborhood, is neglecting his schoolwork and being rebellious at school. One day he and three others are punished for causing uproar in class, they have to return to school on Saturday to write lines as punishment. During detention they sneak out the classroom and lock up the teacher. The principal demands a confession from the culprit who locked the door and when no one comes forward, decides to expel one of the four rebels as a deterrent to others. The protagonist feels wrongly accused but does not want to betray his fellow student.

and attend secondary school there. After one year, he is allowed to return home, which in the meantime had moved to Roermond, because his father is now stationed there.

While Borel was still attending the HBS, he read an announcement in the *Daily Newspaper of the State* (Nederlandsche Staatscourant) of 21 January 1888 in which the government was recruiting three candidates to be trained as Chinese interpreters for the colonial government in the Dutch East Indies. They were looking for people under the age of twenty and preferably graduated from the HBS. On offer were four years training in the Chinese language, a monthly stipend of fifty guilders and study in China for one year. The condition was that they had to take an exam, and if successful they had to sign a contract to serve in the Dutch East Indies for minimally five years upon completion of their training.

At the time that Borel read about the examination in 1888, he had not yet graduated from the HBS. The reason that he decided to take the examination, as he explained in his article 'Memories of the HBS in The Hague' was:

> I just wanted to spend a few days in The Hague, no other reason! I had no idea that I was going to pass the examination, the thought never entered my mind because there were about sixty candidates—there was even a preference for those who had already graduated from the HBS!—and only three places.[4]

Although it does sound reasonable that Borel just 'wanted to spend a few days in The Hague,' after all he had spent his childhood there, it does also seem possible that Borel was inspired by his father George Frederik Willem Borel (1837–1907), who was sent to the Dutch East Indies twice as part of military expeditions. There is a mixture of adventure, success, and controversy that can be detected in the experiences of George Borel. For his role in what is known as the 'Banjarmasin War', which was successful for the Dutch, Borel's father was awarded the 'cross of honor for his courage, good sense and loyalty'. After joining the Dutch army in 1852, George Borel went on his first trip to Banjarmasin in 1859 to help restore control over Tabalong and Balangan. The war was the result of years of internal disputes about the succession of the old Sultan. This caused tensions in the region and in April 1859 a rebellion broke out. The Dutch called in military reinforcements, and eventually after months of fighting, by the end of 1859, the Dutch declared direct colonial rule. Hostilities continued for some time but decreased by 1863.[5] George Borel was allowed to return to the Netherlands on 30 April 1863 at his own request.

The experience of George Borel's second trip to the East Indies in late 1873 instilled pride in Henri Borel. In an article called 'Henri Borel at Sixty' (Henri Borel zestig jaar) published in 1929, in which he looks back on his career, Borel wrote:

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[4] Borel 7 February 1925.
[5] Ricklefs 2001, p. 180.

> One more thing I wanted to say is that I believe that I must have inherited my critical mind from my late father, General G. W. F. Borel. At a time when he was still only captain of the artillery, in 1877,[6] he wrote the critical work *Our Settlement in Aceh* (Onze vestiging in Atjeh), in which he sharply condemned the policy and tactics of General van Swieten, which at that time caused quite a stir in military and colonial circles. It was a daring deed unheard of back then that a captain had the nerve to criticize so sharply but so straightforwardly the general whom he had served in Aceh. As a result, he suffered a lot but also made many friends. Therefore I would like to conclude in memory of the courageous critic my father was, from whom I also inherited my love and my talent for music.[7]

The reason why George Borel wrote *Our Settlement in Aceh* is that he disagreed with the way his superior General Jan van Swieten (1807–1888) led the second expedition. According to George Borel, van Swieten declared the war won in 1874, when the Sultan's palace was claimed captured. The Acehnese, however, had never surrendered and therefore armed resistance and skirmishes continued in the region for years. Not until 1913 did their resistance finally fade out and was the war declared over, but the murder of Europeans still occasionally occurred until the end of Dutch colonial rule.[8] Of course, the Dutch had also committed war crimes in that final war in which many civilians were murdered.[9]

Although *Our Settlement in Aceh* was written in 1874, the book was not published until 1878, because George Borel was hoping that in the meantime the situation in Aceh would have improved. In *The Guide* (De Gids) of February 1879, military expert P. G. Booms (1822–1897) published a long book review with extensive comments on the contents of *Our Settlement in Aceh*. Although he finds fault with George Borel's summary of the first expedition, Booms does praise his clear, straightforward and well written report of the second expedition, which was after all the main focus. Booms admires George Borel for his courage and his contribution to history:

> He has not spared General Van Swieten. That required major moral courage, because captain Borel stood up against a general of great reputation. It must have been painful because the General was also his superior, whose commands he had followed in Aceh. To fulfil such a painful task he must have found strength in his conviction of the justification of his views and the keen awareness of the positive impact this would bring about. His book clearly conveys his conviction; whether we share his views is clear from the above; but to serve a direct purpose it is somewhat late. Meanwhile it is an important contribution to the history of our war on the northern coast of Sumatra.[10]

Booms to a great extent agrees with Borel about what went wrong in Aceh, but in his view it

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[6] Borel must have made a mistake, according to the library catalogue *Our Settlement in Aceh* was first published in 1878.

[7] Borel 24 November 1929.

[8] Bakker 1993, pp. 53-82.

[9] As the biography of the late Prime Minister Hendrikus Colijn (1869-1944) reveals, Colijn himself participated in and was co-responsible for killings. See article 'War about Colijn' (Oorlog om Colijn) by Jan Blokker in the *People's Daily* (Volkskrant) of 1 May 1998. There was an estimated loss of 100,000 lives (including troops, civilians and slaves).

[10] Booms 1879.

was not only van Swieten who should bear the blame, but ultimately the government that had appointed van Swieten in the first place and agreed to the retreat of van Swieten. In response van Swieten wrote *The Truth about our Settlement in Aceh* (De Waarheid over onze vestiging in Atjeh) to lash out at Borel and others involved, which prompted George Borel to defend himself in *Fallacies are not the Truth* (Drogredenen zijn geen waarheid) (1880). Others who were implicated also engaged in the polemics.[11]

Henri Borel was only four years old when his father went to fight in the Aceh war and six when he came back. By the time the books were published and his father engaged in the polemics, Borel turned eleven. It seems likely that Henri Borel was conscious of the experience of his father, in terms of the causes and consequences of criticizing others and engaging in polemics. In a later article about his father, Borel writes about his awe and fear of his father when he was a young boy. He recalls that he too had the ambition to join the military forces, but is glad in retrospect he could not because of myopia.[12] From the stories that his father brought home from the Dutch East Indies, Henri Borel must have formed some idea of the complex colonial society. And from the critical stand his father took, Borel must have learned not to fear confronting superiors. It seems fair to say that all of it influenced Borel and his decision to take the examination and study Chinese with the prospect of being appointed in the Dutch East Indies.

Borel had not expected to pass the examination, given the fact that many of those on the examination board turned out to be his former teachers at the HBS in The Hague, from which he had been expelled. Borel claims it was luck, linguistic skills and his knowledge of the Dutch literary scene which he shared with examiner Jan ten Brink (1834–1901), a Dutch writer and professor in Dutch literature at Leiden University, that led to his success.[13] The three other candidates, who passed the examination, included J. Lodewijk J. F. Ezerman (1869-1949), Bertus A. J. van Wettum (1870-1914), and Ed. R. Goteling Vinnis (1868-1894), who apparently withdrew from training early in the course.[14]

Without finishing the HBS, in 1888 Borel started Chinese studies with Gustaaf Schlegel (1840-1903), Professor of Chinese at Leiden. According to Joosten, on 28 August 1888 'Borel had his name removed from the municipal register at Roermond to become registered at Leiden.'[15] Although his diaries indicate that Borel was more preoccupied with literature, music and the fine arts, there are also entries about his studies.

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[11] See for instance 'The literary war on Aceh' (De boekenstrijd over Atjeh) in the *General Commerce Paper* of 11 December 1880. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010104617:mpeg21:a0001

[12] LM. Borel, 'Parade', *The Women Chronicle of The Hague*. Date unknown.

[13] Borel 7 February 1925.

[14] Joosten 1980, p. 11.

[15] Joosten 1980, p. 10.

1.2 From Dislike to Fascination

Motivation to study Chinese is still lacking in Borel's first two years at Leiden University. This is not only the result of his other activities, but also of the pressure of his teacher. When Borel started studying Chinese at Leiden University in 1888, it was about a decade after Schlegel held his inaugural lecture 'On the importance of the study of the Chinese language' (Over het belang der Chineesche der Chineesche taalstudie). In this lecture, Schlegel particularly stresses how knowledge of the language helps to understand the people:

> It is not without reason that it is said: 'Language represents the whole nation.' Those who learn the language of the people, will have learned their religious and social customs and prejudices, their character, development and inclinations. For a country like the Netherlands with a few hundred thousand of industrious Chinese nationals in its overseas territories, knowledge of the Chinese language is indispensable. Many difficulties, uprisings and indeed wars could have been avoided if only the colonial administration in the Dutch Indies had received insights from Dutch people who knew the Chinese.[16]

The reason for Schlegel to emphasize this was that the Dutch expansion of the Outer Provinces (Buitengewesten) was considered to require stricter government over the Chinese, who played an important role in the colonial economy.[17] At the time Dutch colonial government in the Dutch East Indies was headed by a Governor-General (Gouverneur-Generaal) who worked jointly with an advisory board called the Indies Council (Raad van Indië) and four departments: Home Affairs (Binnenlands Bestuur), Education, Religion and Industry (Onderwijs, Eredienst en Nijverheid), Public Works and Finance (Burgerlijke Openwerken en Financiën), and Justice (Justitie), while the Ministry of Colonies in The Hague was responsible for the overall colonial policy and strategy. The Dutch East Indies comprising of Java and Outlying Islands was divided into residencies each of which was headed by a Resident (Resident), Assistant Resident (Assistent Resident) and District Officer (Controleur). Colonial government was dualist, meaning that European officials worked together with local people. Officially three groups of people were identified: Europeans (Europeanen), Locals (inlanders), and Foreign Orientals (Vreemde Oosterlingen).[18] Within a residency all European, local officials and chiefs of Foreign Orientals, including those of the Chinese, Arab and other ethnic groups, if any, were subordinate to the Resident.[19] The Chief of the Kong Koan (*gongguan* 公館), or the Chinese Council had the quasi-military title of Captain (Kapitein) dating back to 1619, when the first Chinese Captain of Batavia was appointed.[20]

The Chinese, who had settled in the Dutch East Indies before the Dutch arrived, handled many matters through the Chinese Council for about two hundred years. Officers of the Chinese Council carried out various administrative tasks including the maintenance of

[16] Schlegel 1877b, p. 21.
[17] Blussé 2008, pp. 146-150.
[18] Anrooij 2009, p. 157.
[19] Ibid, p. 18.
[20] Lohanda 2002, p. 31.

bridges and roads, temples and graveyards, judicial assistance in family and financial disputes, registration of marriages and divorces.[21] Towards the end of the 1840s, however, the Dutch started to increasingly become involved in the social and economic life of their colonial subjects, as the increasing number of fraud cases and bankruptcies among the Chinese made the Dutch authorities suspicious of the Chinese Officers, and so the duties of the latter were reduced to minor tasks such as the registration of marriages and divorces and minor financial disputes.[22] At the same time, however, the Dutch realized that they did not have the expertise to deal with the Chinese. They needed experts who could communicate in Chinese, offer advice about the Chinese communities in North-Java, the Riau-archipelago, Banka and Billiton, North Sumatra and West-Borneo, and who could at the same time help spread word of the implementation of any new regulations. The Dutch had relied on help from British missionary Walter Henry Medhurst (1796-1857), who in 1816 had joined the London Missionary's station in Malacca, present-day Malaysia, which was under British rule at the time. In 1821 he went to Batavia to run the Java mission, which included distributing tracts (some of which he translated into Chinese) and preaching sermons (some of which he held in Malay).[23] He worked there until 1842 when he left for Shanghai.

The newspaper *General Commerce Paper* (Algemeen Handelsblad) of 7 December 1854, under 'National News, House of Representatives, States-General of the Netherlands' (Binnenland. Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal.), notes the need for Dutch experts in Chinese and Japanese.

> There is no other nation that has as many Chinese subjects as ours, and yet there is not a single Dutch person who knows Chinese. We also maintain relations with Japan and yet no one knows Japanese. In Paris, St. Petersburg etc, Chinese and Japanese are taught but not in Leiden. Yet it would be possible to fill such a Chair, because Mr. Hoffmann [see below] is fluent in both and his erudition matches his modesty. The undersigned urgently requests the establishment of a Chair for Chinese and Japanese at Leiden.[24]

This shows that there was awareness among the Dutch of the need for the study of Chinese and Japanese and also an awareness that some other countries in Europe had already set up their programs. In France, as Schlegel explains, Jean-Pierre Abel Rémusat (1788-1832) was appointed professor of Chinese Language at the Collège de France in 1814, while he says that in Berlin Dr. Wilhelm Schott (1802-1889) has occupied the Chair of Chinese since 1838.[25]

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[21] Chen 2004, p. 61.
[22] Chen 2004, pp. 71-72.
[23] More on this in the 'Missionary Chronicle for July 1826', see pp. 309-310 of *The Evangelical Magazine and the Missionary Chronicle*, accessed on 03-11-2015, http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.ah6lsf;view=1up;seq=331
[24] Anonymous 7 December 1854.
[25] Schlegel 1877b, pp. 7-8.

As early as 1855, the colonial administration had sent two young men to Canton to be trained as Chinese interpreters. The problem was that what they learned was '*guanhua*' (官話), the language spoken at the Chinese court and in North China, which was very different from the dialect spoken among the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies. To be able to work with the latter, the students had to learn Hokkien, the language of the Southern region of Fujian.[26] Since many of the overseas Chinese came from that region, Hokkien was one of the most common Chinese languages spoken among Chinese migrants. This is also explained by Schlegel in the introduction to his bulky *Dutch-Chinese Dictionary with the Transcription of Chinese Characters in the Tsiang-Tsiu Dialect* (Nederlandsch-Chineesch Woordenboek met de Transcriptie der Chineesche Karakters in the Tsiang-Tsiu Dialekt), which was used in class at Leiden University.

Tuition in Japanese and Chinese in the Netherlands was officially started under J. J. Hoffmann (1805-1878) in the 1850s,[27] although Schlegel had already started his studies in November 1849, at his personal request, because he knew Hoffmann as a friend of his father's.[28] Upon receiving the title of Professor of Japanese and Chinese at Leiden University on 21 March 1855, Hoffmann decided to recruit new students from secondary schools. Later, because of his network and reputation, some would come to Hoffmann directly. Most of the students studied three to four years before Hoffmann declared them ready to go to China, which effectively meant that they would receive an appointment of Chinese interpreter in the Dutch East Indies. However, prior to reporting for duty, the students would spend one year (or more) in China to continue the study Hokkien and/or learn Cantonese or Hakka for operating in certain areas in the Dutch Indies.

Although studying Chinese was primarily to fulfill the need for Chinese interpreters in the Dutch East Indies, many also made important contributions to Dutch sinology, mainly in French or English. For example: Schlegel wrote on Chinese games, prostitution, astronomy and comparative linguistics, J. J. C. Francken (1838-1864) and de Grijs compiled the Chinese-Dutch Dictionary of the Emoi Dialect which was published in Batavia in 1882, while J. J. M. de Groot (1854-1921), who succeeded Schlegel in 1903, published his magnum opus *The Religious System of China* in six volumes (1892–1910). The majority of the students were appointed in the Dutch East Indies and although some of them later on pursued different careers,[29] many wrote on aspects of Chinese culture and published essays in periodicals

[26] As John DeFrancis points out: 'To call Chinese a single language composed of dialects with varying degrees of difference is to mislead by minimizing disparities that according to Chao are as great as those between English and Dutch. To call Chinese a family of languages is to suggest extralinguistic differences that in fact do not exist and to overlook the unique linguistic situation that exists in China.' DeFrancis 1984, p. 56.

[27] A detailed study on the training of Chinese interpreters, see Kuiper 2016.

[28] Even his parents were not informed. See Schlegel 1877b, p. 12.

[29] In 'Letters to the Editor' (Ingezonden stukken) the *Java Post* of 23 November 1882, interpreter J. J. Roelofs (1851?-1885) points out in his letter to the editor, that the crucial difference between a Resident and a Chinese interpreter is that the latter is more educated and learned. As proof he refers to three sinologists who became professor, secretary and president. Roelofs does not mention names in his letter, but they are most likely:

printed in the East Indies.[30]

By the time that Borel started studying Chinese, Schlegel would recruit new students from secondary school. From his diary and the letters, it appears that Borel traveled back and forth between The Hague and Leiden, between his friends, studies, music and the fine arts. Besides his fellow students Ezerman and van Wettum, his close friends included the artist and designer Johan Thorn Prikker (1868-1932), writer and psychiatrist Frederik van Eeden (1860-1932) and teacher and musician B. J. F. Varenhorst (1858-1930).[31]

Not until the third year into his studies, does Borel make mention of Chinese in his diary. During the first two years, there is merely frequent reference/indication of his suffering during his studies of Chinese under Schlegel. This is also reflected in the study results, which according to Schlegel were poor in the first year.[32] Borel's state of mind can for instance be seen from a letter dated 20 May 1889, written by van Eeden, who shows understanding for Borel about his depression and advises him not to be influenced by the people around him.[33] He in particularly warns against Schlegel.

> I think I know in what state of mind, what 'Sturm und Drang' you find yourself in, at the moment. I remember going through something similar, even though that happened to me more than ten years ago. It is the so-called Byron period, the Weltschmerz, the Werther period, the black period, as Beets described it. It is no wonder that you are deep into it because of how much pain you have been suffering and the rather unfortunate influence of the cynical and weak figures such as Schlegel and E.[34] But thank God you are stronger than those two and your healthy will of life will rise above all.
>
> Therefore I must stress explicitly: Do not fall for all that pseudo and sinister [behavior], do not let the cynicism of your stupid professor lead you off track. Such 'verneinende Geister' [German for 'negative minds'] we all come across, but only if you fear them will they pose a risk. You must not think that just because you cannot corner the Devil it means he is right. There are a lot of things you are unable to reason your way toward now, but which you can sense from an unerring instinct.[35]

It seems unlikely that van Eeden knew Schlegel personally and therefore these comments are based on what he heard from others, mostly Borel. Van Eeden's biographer claims the

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Professor at Leiden University Gustaaf Schlegel, Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Religion and Industry Willem Pieter Groeneveldt (1841-1915), and President of the Orphan Chamber (Weeskamer) Johannes Eduard Albrecht (1838-1890). Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010488492:mpeg21:a0024

[30] Idema 1995, pp. 92-93. See also entries in Henri Cordier's *Bibliotheca Sinica*.

[31] In the obituary in *The Fatherland* of 3 May 1930, Borel explains that it so happened that Varenhorst was the teacher at the HBS in The Hague from which he was expelled. They met again when Borel was studying Chinese in Leiden.

[32] Mention of this is made in the document when van Wettum, Ezerman and Borel request extension of study in Xiamen.

[33] In Fontijn's *Discord: the Life of Frederik van Eeden until 1901*, there is a section 'A Sentimental Friendship' (Een dwepende vriendschap) describing the relationship between van Eeden and Borel which started in 1889: 'Together with his fellow student, his friend Lodewijk J. F. Ezerman, Borel wrote a letter to van Eeden. This was the beginning of a friendship that would last—intermittently—until the death of van Eeden.' See Fontijn 1999, p. 266.

[34] Most likely 'E' is Ezerman, him being around regularly and mentioned in one go with Schlegel.

[35] Van Eeden 1933, pp. 18-19.

relation between van Eeden and Borel was unequal, it was built on Borel's admiration for van Eeden and the satisfaction van Eeden derived from playing the role of an educator.[36] But as Joosten writes, their friendship was for life, and only in the early years was van Eeden in terms of the arts 'the mental guide and counselor' to Borel.[37]

For his personal perception, Borel writes negatively about Schlegel in his diary on 19 December 1891:

> And if I look among my friends, i.e. those with and around me—van Wettum, Prikker, Ezerman, Varenhorst, van Eeden—then it is only van Eeden whom I trust. (…) Van Wettum and Ezerman—people I owe much, oh so much—are afraid and cringing and weakish to Schlegel who is a bad person.—And Varenhorst fears the church.[38]

Despite the pressure by Schlegel, Borel does not give up on his studies, and from the few entries in his diary, a transition from a dislike of Chinese to a fascination for the script can be detected. This is not surprising given the fact that in the early stage of the study of Chinese, the focus is on memorizing characters and vocabulary by themselves, while in the advanced stage the student is equipped with the skills to read more complex texts. The earliest of Borel's diary entries that mention Chinese is dated 20 December 1890:

> I promised Mother, who perhaps can sense it now, that I will from now on live a calm and regular life, and I shall therefore also start learning some of that hateful Chinese because noble motives force me ever so gently.

It is with reluctance that Borel spends time to study Chinese, and not until about six months later is there a positive note on Chinese. On 22 July 1891, Borel writes about a Grimm story that they read in class. It is not clear if he is working on a translation himself or if they are reading an existing Chinese version of the tale in class:

> Oh yes something else. I have really, really worked on my Chinese with Putam.[39] Oh that lovely fairy tale by Grimm 'The Willow-Wren and the Bear' translated into Chinese.

This is followed by the Chinese characters of the Grimm story, *xiong yu qiaofuniao* 熊與巧婦鳥 written vertically, meaning 'The bear and the wren'. Next is a description of his daily schedule on 2 January 1892 which indicates a change:

[36] Fontijn 1999, p. 270. 'The relationship between the two built on fanatical admiration of Borel and pedagogical eros of Frederik was unequal.'
[37] Joosten 1980, p. 14.
[38] Joosten 1980, p. 38.
[39] Putam is the Chinese name of van Wettum. See Kuiper 2016, p. 288.

> I get up at about twelve, have breakfast while reading a newspaper or a novel for a while. At half past one, I am in the university library studying the Chinese [*Shenglun*] 聖論 and [*Daqing lüli*] 大清律例 , i.e. the Sacred Edict of Emperor Kangxi and the Great Qing Legal Code.[40] When I am working at it, I am totally absorbed, it is so fascinating to work my way through all these strokes that I quite enjoy it. I sit there till three thirty. Then I go for a walk and return home to play the piano. I have dinner at five thirty. Sometimes I go out and read the newspaper and *The Amsterdammer* (De Amsterdammer) at Café Neuf but not very often. Back home. Make tea. Work on Plato and review the Chinese I did in the afternoon. Then I spend my time playing the piano, doing the Plato translation, and reading books (which nowadays include other works by Plato, Shelley and Milton). By three, sometimes three thirty I go to bed.

From this description we can see how Borel has developed an interest in his studies, although in comparison with his other activities Chinese still does not occupy the major part of his time, only two hours in the afternoon and for a stint in the evening. On 9 January 1892, Borel describes his room, noting that on top of a chair beside the piano he has his piano books, works of Plato and a copy of the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經).[41] On 29 February 1892, he writes that he is reading Confucius and the Chinese Classics.[42] A last entry about his studies in his final year before leaving for China was written on 23 March 1892, in which he gives a translation of a poem from *Wonders Old and New* (*Jingu qiguan* 今古奇觀), a collection of Chinese fiction from the Ming Dynasty which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Based on the above, it is fair to say that Borel was reading quite a broad range of Chinese works, from the Confucian classics and ancient poetry (*Book of Songs*), to popular fiction (*Wonders Old and New*) and official works (*Sacred Edict of Emperor Kangxi* and the *Great Qing Legal Code*) in preparation of his appointment in the Dutch Indies. In addition to these, the students also studied and used the afore-mentioned dictionary of Hokkien compiled by Schlegel.

The dictionary, as Schlegel explains, is not meant to help Chinese people learn Dutch but rather to facilitate those who have to translate from Dutch into Chinese. Listing entries according to Dutch words, it offers Chinese rendering(s) with pronunciation in Hokkien and example sentences of how to use the word(s). Many examples are taken from documents, such as contracts used in the Dutch East Indies, literary texts, including the *Book of Songs* and *Wonders Old and New,* and the *Kangxi Dictionary* (*Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典). This Chinese dictionary was named after the Kangxi Emperor (1654-1722) and published in 1716. It was still widely in use in the nineteenth century. Besides definitions and sentences, Schlegel also gives direct advice to the user of his dictionary, which is revealing of his Eurocentric view of the Chinese and his pedagogy that must have influenced his students.

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[40] A Dutch translation was available: *The criminal code Da Qing lüli* 大清律例 *translated from the Chinese and annotated by C. F. M. de Grijs, Xiamen 1863* (Het Strafwetboek Tai-tsing-loet-lee, uit het Chineesch vertaald en met aanteekeningen voorzien door C. F. M. de Grijs, Amoy 1863).

[41] LM. Diary of Borel 9 January 1892.

[42] LM. Diary of Borel 29 February 1892.

An example is the entry 'Recht', which means 'justice', 'law', 'right' depending on the context. This entry in volume III covers four pages (577-580) and gives a range of meanings, expressions and examples for the term in Chinese. Half-way through the entry Schlegel informs the user:

> The abstract notion of 'recht' is not so clear to the Chinese mind as to the Western mind, which transforms abstractions into concreta as a result of his mythological education.[43]

The notion that there is a difference between Chinese and Western understanding of 'recht' shows that Schlegel is warning of difficulties with the Chinese rendering, when it comes to justice or rights. To solve the problem, Schlegel then gives examples from the Bible (he does not indicate which translation).

All of this teaching material was typical for students who took lessons with Schlegel, the scholar famous for saying:

> Throw your Chinese grammar book into the fire. Read, read, read—translate, translate, translate Chinese authors until you think in the same vein as the Chinese.[44]

Such was Schlegel's pedagogical approach, and it is not surprising that Borel was reading and translating Chinese works, also after he finished his studies in Leiden. We will see later on how he sets about publishing his translations of some of the most important literary works of China, including the Confucian classics known as the *Four Books* comprising *The Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸), *The Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學) and *The Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), and the *Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子), the Daoist work *Daodejing* (道德經), and popular fiction from the above mentioned *Wonders Old and New*. But in this early period, he is only doing translations for himself, such as the inclusion of a translation of a poem in his diary which will be discussed in the next section.

1.3 A Prelude to Future Publications

During the years in Leiden, Borel is working on various texts but not yet publishing. He maintains regular correspondence with his friends and keeps a diary. He is an avid reader, he writes some poems and is working on translations. Some of his sonnets are published in the literary magazine *Of Now and Later* (Van Nu en Straks) in 1893. They are dark and sad, and not about China. They may actually reflect the 'dark times' of 1888 and 1889 he went

[43] Schlegel 1884-1890, vol. III, pp. 578-579. As James St. André writes the British also had doubts about the Chinese concept of justice and he argues that George Staunton was unable to dispel this idea with his translation of the *Great Qing Legal Code*. See 'But do they have a notion of Justice?' *Staunton's 1810 Translation of the Great Qing Code*. In *The Translator* (10:1). 2004, pp. 1-31.

[44] Schlegel 1892, p. 48. Legge in his book review of Schlegel's *La stèle funéraire du Téghin Giogh et ses copistes et traducteurs Chinois, Russes et Allemands*, however, doubts whether people will accept his advice in full about discarding grammar books. See Legge 1893, p. 403.

through, as mentioned above in the letter by van Eeden. The sonnets in his diary of July 1891 were published much later in slightly edited versions in *The Guide* in 1895. There are more poems in *The Guide* of 1894, which are also from the same period as the collection *Soul Shimmers* (Ziele-schemering) which was never published.[45] These poems are lyrics about a girl and laments about fatigue.

As cited above, Borel is reading works by Plato, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) and John Milton (1608-1674) which have an influence on his own writing, as the next chapter will show. Borel also has an interest in Buddhism and translates excerpts from Spence Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism*, e.g. the diary entry of 15 March 1892 explains:

> It is also for Prikker who is very much interested but is not at ease reading in English. Currently there is a great urge for Buddhist religion. Likewise [Lodewijk] van Deyssel [pen name of Karel Joan Lodewijk Alberdingk Thijm 1864-1952] was enquiring with van Eeden about a good Work about it. But van Eeden did not know until I introduced this to him.[46]

Borel shared his interest in Buddhism with Frederik van Eeden, who had already published an article entitled 'Buddha' in *The New Guide* (De Nieuwe Gids) in 1889. Although Borel is not yet publishing on China in this period, he is translating some literary works. One that he includes in his diary is a poem from a Chinese novella from the afore-mentioned collection *Wonders Old and New.* The inclusion of this poem in his diary on 23 March 1892 is an indication of Borel's interest in Chinese literature, and a prelude to his publication of Dutch translations of Chinese works (even though it will take another thirty years before Borel finally publishes translations of stories from *Wonders Old and New*; see Chapter 7).

Borel's interest in texts from *Wonders Old and New* is undoubtedly caused by the fact that Schlegel used the novellas as teaching material.[47] *Wonders Old and New* is an anthology of forty Chinese novellas, compiled from collections by writers Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) and Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580-1644). The anthology was very popular during the Qing dynasty and almost all nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western translations are based on it.[48] Until about the mid-1920s, the authorship of the stories making up the *Wonders Old and New* was unknown and translators, including Borel, rendered the stories as anonymous. In 1877, Schlegel himself had published 'Le vendeur-d'huile qui seul possède la reine-de-beauté, ou splendeurs et misères des courtisanes chinoises', a French translation of the story 'The Oil Vendor and the Courtesan' (*Maiyoulang du zhan huakui* 賣油郎獨占花魁) (hereinafter: 'The Oil Vendor'). The story is

[45] Poems can be found in *The Guide* of 1894 and 1895 online at DBNL both with the footnote 'From the unpublished collection *Soul Shimmers*.'
[46] Joosten 1980, p. 43.
[47] For more details about the study of authorship of *Wonders Old and New*, see the article by Paul Pelliot 'Le Kin Kou Ki Kouan' in *T'oung Pao* (24). 1925-26, pp. 54-60. See also Arthur Waley's 'Notes on the History of Chinese Popular Literature' in *T'oung Pao* (28). 1931, pp. 346-354.
[48] Idema and Haft 1997, p. 217.

about a girl from a destitute family who is sold to work as a courtesan. Eventually she attempts to buy herself out in marriage, but encounters rejection by her Madam to release her.

The importance of such literary texts, as Schlegel explains in the preface to 'The Oil Vendor', is that the novellas are revealing of the social customs of the Chinese people during different eras, more than any other detailed description could.[49] According to a study by H. T. Zurndorfer who looked at it from a sociological point of view, it was Schlegel's interest in prostitution that led him to study and publish this text. She refers to Maurice Freedman, who had interpreted Schlegel's (as well as de Groot's) work as 'participant observation of social anthropology before it was invented'.[50]

Not all of Schlegel's students were convinced of the purpose of reading 'The Oil Vendor' in class. According to R. J. Zwi Werblowsky de Groot complained about the pedagogical methods of Schlegel and wrote in contempt about the 'educational system à la Schlegel', which he says 'seems to be intended for rear loafers.'[51] Among his complaints was the reading material:

> Why make us crawl our way through a vulgar erotic story from the *Jingu qiguan* [Wonders Old and New] written in broad Peking dialect, not even in reasonably literary Chinese?[52]

De Groot clearly fails to see the use of reading *Wonders Old and New*. Schlegel, however, detects similarities with European literary works at the time and makes great effort to introduce this Chinese text. He compares the fate of the Chinese courtesan with that of Dutch protagonist Klaasje Zevenster in the novel *The Vicissitudes of Klaasje Zevenster* (De lotgevallen van Klaasje Zevenster) (1865) by Jacob van Lennep (1802–1868) and French protagonist Marguérite Gautier in the novel *The Lady of the Camellias* (La Dame aux Camélias) by Alexandre Dumas (1802–1870). Schlegel chooses a subtitle for his translation based on Honoré de Balzac's (1799–1850) *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans* (Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes) which was published in four parts from 1838 to 1847. Schlegel concludes that the difference is that:

> In China, the boudoir of literate courtesans is slowly progressing to a higher level of society where the separation of women is banned, in order to give them a place in society.[53]

However, ten Brink criticizes Schlegel for making these comparisons, albeit in awe of Schlegel's knowledge of Chinese. According to ten Brink, the situation of these courtesans is

[49] Schlegel 1877a, p. VI.
[50] Zurndorfer 1989, p. 28.
[51] Werblowsky 2002, p. 17.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Schlegel 1877a, p. IV.

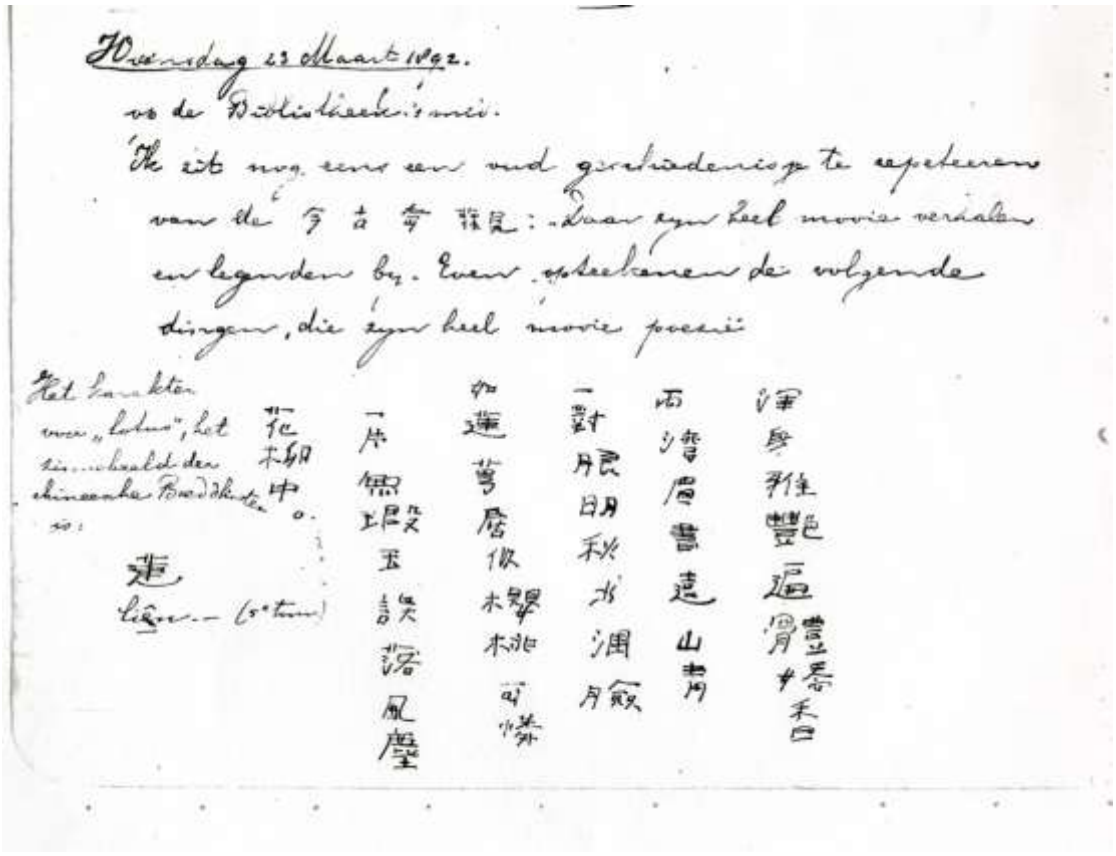
not the same.[54]

The fact that Borel copies a Chinese poem from one of the stories from *Wonders Old and New*, in his diary on 23 March 1892, shows that he appreciates the work. The poem is from the story 'Du Shiniang drowns her jewel box in anger' (*Du Shiniang nu chen baibaoxiang* 杜十娘怒沉百寶箱). This story again is about a courtesan who falls in love with one of her customers. The couple gets married, but for fear of his father the customer succumbs to another man's offer to buy her. When the girl hears about the deal, she jumps into a river and drowns while clinging to her jewel box. The story was probably adapted from a classical tale 'The Courtesan's Jewel Box' that Song Maocheng 宋楙澄 (1569-1620) wrote a decade earlier than Feng Menglong.[55] As both were writing at a time when courtesans appear in many literary genres, they were both undoubtedly inspired by Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550-1616) and his *The Peony Pavilion* (*Mudanting* 牡丹亭).[56]

At the time, there were quite a number of translations of various stories from *Wonders Old and New*, in French, English, German and Latin. There were two translations available of the story in question, one in English in 1872 by Samuel Birch (1813–1885) entitled 'The Casket of Gems', another in German in 1884 by Eduard Grisebach (1845–1906) entitled 'Du Shiniang Angrily Throws her Jewel Box in the Floods' (Tu-schi-niang wirft entrüstet das Juwelenkästen in die Fluten).[57] None were available in Dutch and the only Dutch access to information about the anthology was the above-mentioned literary review by Jan ten Brink of Schlegel's French translation of 'The Oil Vendor' in 1878.

What follows below, is a copy of the entry in Borel's diary:

[54] Ten Brink 1884.
[55] Chang and Owen 2010, p. 119-120.
[56] Ibid, p. 145.
[57] Cordier 1966, Vol. III, pp. 1761-1769.



From Borel's diary. Courtesy of the Literary Museum, The Hague, the Netherlands

Borel writes: 'Wednesday 23 March 1892. in the library in the afternoon. I am reviewing an ancient tale from the [*Jingu qiguan*] 今古奇觀 : It contains many lovely stories and legends. Let me record the following things, they are beautiful poetry.' On the left side of the Chinese characters, Borel notes that 'the character *lian* 蓮 for lotus was a symbol for the Chinese Buddhists.' It is unclear why he explains this here, for in this context there is no relation to Buddhism. Instead, one can say that in Chinese poetry the use of flowers symbolizes the beauty of women. What follows on the next page of the diary is the Dutch translation of the Chinese poem:

Haar geheel lichaam was bevallig en schoon. (Her entire body was graceful and charming.)
Haar geheel lichaam was liefelijk en geurig. (Her entire body was lovely and fragrant.)
Haar gebogen wenkbrauwen waren als de verre omtrekken van blauwe bergen. (Her curved eyebrows were like the distant contour of the blue mountains.)
Hare oogen waren helder en zacht als het water in den herfst. (Her eyes were bright and soft like water in autumn.)
Hare wangen waren als de kelk van den lotus. (Her cheeks were like the calyx of the lotus.)
Hare lippen waren als roode kersen. (Her lips were like red cherries.)
Hoe treurig dat zulk een vlekkelooze edelsteen bij toeval was gekomen in wind en stof! (How sad that such an immaculate gem happened to end up in wind and dust!)

Borel explains that the poem is about a beautiful and good girl who is led by fate onto the wrong path. Borel's translation is quite different from a recent English rendering of the poem

in *Stories to Caution the World* by Feng Menglong, translated by Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang:

> Her body full of grace and charm,
> Her skin soft and fragrant,
> Her brows the color and shape of distant hills,
> Her eyes as limpid as autumn water,
> Her cheeks as lovely as lotus petals,
> She was the very image of Zhuo Wenjun.
> Her lips the shape of a cherry,
> She was a veritable Fan Su.
> How sad that such a piece of flawless jade
> Has fallen by misfortune into the world of lust![58]

Borel's version is much more literal. This works fine where Borel has 'distant contour of the blue mountains', and Yang and Yang have 'shape of the distant hills'. But the Dutch translation of a line such as the last is unclear. Readers would wonder what happens to the courtesan when she 'accidentally ends up in wind and dust', which is comprehensible in the English version by Yang and Yang, where the courtesan has 'fallen by misfortune into the world of lust'. Lines 6 and 8 about the women poets Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 and Fan Su 樊素 are missing in Borel's translation. It is possible Borel did not know how to translate these or he thought translation would not enhance the meaning of the poem. There is no evidence that there are different versions of the Chinese texts. Moreover, Samuel Birch used the full text for his English translation *The Casket of Gems* in 1872. Birch does recognize the name of Zhuo Wenjun and gives an explanation in a footnote, but he mistranslates the line about Fan Su, which shows that he did not know it was a name.[59]

Although the above-mentioned poem was not published, it is evidence of the direction Borel was going. It shows Borel is inspired by Schlegel and is interested in cultivating knowledge about China through reading and translating Chinese literature. This is in contrast with the view of de Groot, who was impatient with this kind of work, complaining 'Why are we never supplied with a word on Chinese literature, history, morals, customs, religion?'[60] It appears that Schlegel, whose books are full of translations and summaries of texts, expects his students to extract the information from written texts in their original Chinese version, rather than lecture in his own words on these topics.

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[58] Feng 2005, p. 548.

[59] Birch 1872, p. 5. Birch's translation of the poem reads: 'Her whole form was elegant, her *tournure* lovely and fragrant; her two winding eyebrows resembled the outline of the distant hills, surmounting a pair of eyes the distillation of the autumnal waves; her waist resembled a lily's stem, she was a Cho-wan-keun [Zhuo Wenjun], her lips were like peaches when they screen the elevation and purity of a white house. It was a pitiable piece of loveliness, as a gem without flaw, delusively letting fall its elegance like wind and dust into willows and flowers.'

[60] Werblowsky 2002, p. 17.

1.4 Perceptions of China

Yet for all the reading and translating, Borel felt in retrospect that he was wrongly prepared for what he would encounter in China. Schlegel's lessons, the class material, and other books available must have contributed to this. The study of Chinese at Leiden University was mainly focused on language acquisition. After all, 'Language represents the whole nation', as Schlegel explained in his inaugural speech mentioned above. This was also noted by Joosten, who draws the following conclusion, based on the letters by Prikker:

> There is no indication whatsoever that the study of Chinese went beyond learning the language. Prikker's remark 'Don't you remember how we harbored suspicions about China in the past? We thought there was nothing to be found there,' confirms this idea resulting from the scarce information in Borel's diary about the program.[61]

The line that Joosten quotes from is a letter by Prikker to Borel, which contains Prikker's reaction to the postcards and photos that Borel had sent to him from China. It occurs to Prikker that neither of them had had any idea about the arts in China. He recalls that they were skeptical about it, which by then he realizes was rather 'foolish.'[62] It means surprise for both Borel and Prikker. This shows that Borel's perception of China was different from the expectations that he had. It is possibly caused by the fact that Borel did not put enough effort in the study of Chinese, but the lessons with Schlegel and his idea that knowledge of the language will give insight into the people, culture, customs, did not help either.

It is not clear which (extra-curricular) books Borel read, but we do have an idea of what was available back then. From very early times in the sixteenth century, the Dutch had access to travel accounts by merchants and sailors, history books (many in translation) and literary relay translations from English, German or French.[63] Quite a number of books on China came out in which readers showed interest, still the overall idea is that knowledge of China remains limited. One example is the anonymous review of the book *Three Years Wandering in China* by Scottish botanist Robert Fortune (1812–1880) about his trip to China, which came out in Dutch translation in 1848. As the anonymous Dutch reviewer indicates:

> His book is a description of what he has experienced in China, the impressions of social circumstances of which little is known and a country which is shrouded in a mysterious darkness.[64]

There was still a consensus in the Netherlands that China was a mystery. It is unclear whether that was caused by the way authors wrote about China (e.g. there was a more

[61] Joosten 1980, p. 11.
[62] Joosten 1980, p. 83.
[63] For more about the history of publications about China in the Netherlands, see Heijns 2012. The image of China in literary works is examined in *The Porcelain Pavilion: Dutch Literary Chinoiserie and the Western Image of China (1250-2007)* (Het Paviljoen van Porselein: Nederlandse Literaire Chinoiserie en het Westerse Beeld van China (1250-2007)) by Arie Pos. PhD thesis 2008.
[64] Anonymous 1848.

mercantile spirit) or because many of the books about China in Dutch were translations (e.g. those by British authors contained matters that were of British interest).

Like elsewhere in Europe, in the nineteenth century an effort is made to transform China into an object of academic study in the Netherlands. Although the focus was still on training students for a career in the Dutch East Indies, the start of an academic trend can be traced to 1857, when Hoffmann translated into Dutch and German *Chinese Moral Maxims* (*Xianwenshu* 賢文書). It was retranslated from the English version by John Francis Davis (1795-1890).[65] Then in 1863, military pharmacist C. F. M. de Grijs (1832–1902) who had studied Chinese, published his *Forensic Medicine* (Geregtelijke Geneeskunde). This is a translation of the original Chinese work *Records of Washing Away of Injuries* (*Xiyuanlu* 洗冤錄) which de Grijs published in the journal *Transactions of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences* (Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen). In 1866 Schlegel published a Dutch translation *Huajian ji: History of the Flowered Letter-paper* (Hoa Tsien ki of: Geschiedenis van het Gebloemde Briefpapier) (*Huajianji* 花箋記) in the same journal. De Groot published his *Annual Festivals and Customs of the Chinese in Xiamen* (Jaarlijkse feesten en gebruiken der Emoy-Chinezen) in Dutch in 1882, albeit not a literary translation.

From Borel's publications, it is clear that he tried to give a different view of China, compared to earlier works. Borel explains the difference of perception in the review of *Alone in China*, which I quoted above: he blames the scholarly approach to writing about China, as these writers are 'icy calm and desperately exact' in describing their findings and fail to describe 'the beauty' of China, 'the very soul of that vast country'. It is this realization that the existing image of China in the Netherlands is dissimilar to his own perception of China when he arrived in China that must have inspired Borel to take a different approach in his own works on China. He was determined to convey his personal impression of China in an attempt to dispel the (in his eyes) existing mistranslation of China. This garnered mixed reactions: Borel is praised as 'the benefactor of humanity'[66] but he is also criticized for portraying something that is not there. He acknowledges this in 'A Book about China':

> Yet I was almost the only one who held such a view of China and the Chinese, and I am perfectly aware that people suspected me of exaggeration, imagination and excessive enthusiasm, even the reviewers who wrote favorably about my works.[67]

It is not only a scholarly approach that Borel rejects, but also other popular writing, such as *Chinese Characteristics* (Chineesche Karaktertrekken), which is a collection of essays by the engineer William Meischke-Smith published in 1895, reprinted from *The New Rotterdam*

[65] Kuiper 2005, p. 116-118.
[66] Anonymous 1897, p. 374.
[67] Borel 1898c, p. 250.

Newpaper (De Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant). According to Borel, these essays that give an overall negative view of the Chinese must surely have aggravated the harsh judgment about the Chinese. Meischke-Smith was an engineer who lived in China many years and is said to have had knowledge of the language, culture and customs. An anonymous reviewer compares *Chinese Characteristics* with *Beauty and Wisdom from China* and attributes the difference in views (Meischke-Smith is negative vs. Borel is more positive) to their background:

> Mr. Henri Borel is a Chinese interpreter and has spent some years in Xiamen and other places of the Heavenly Kingdom. He is an artist who has been transferred to another milieu and looks at matters differently from Mr. Meischke-Smith, who is reputedly an engineer and a cool, emotionless and critical, practical person.[68]

Instead, Borel identifies with a book like *Alone in China*, which recounts the personal experience of Julian Ralph who had no prior knowledge of the Chinese language and culture. Borel admires Ralph's positive appreciation of China and agrees with the way he found China beyond expectations. This explains the approach that Borel will take, but before we go into his own writing and publications, we will first turn to his personal experiences when he travels to China in August 1892, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

[68] Anonymous 1896a, p. 11.

Chapter 2: Romanticism

A change in Borel's view of China occurs when he goes to Xiamen for practical language training in August 1892. It broadens his perspective. There is an increasing tendency toward the Romantic and the poetic, and a distancing from the scholarly. This is reflected in his early essays, which are based on his experience in China.

In 2.1, 'Poetics and Poethood', I will show that Chinese and Buddhist poetics complement Borel's background in European Romanticism. He finds a connection in ideas on poethood and the origin of poems to justify his identity of a poet. Lessons by a Chinese teacher and his natural surroundings help him further form a poetic approach to his reading and translation of China. In his self-proclaimed capacity as a poet he is convinced that he possesses the intuition and sensibility needed to understand China, as discussed in 2.2, 'Chinese Pedagogies'. Borel makes attempts at scholarly articles, but he realizes that it is not the way he wants to write about China. The reasons for this will be explained in 2.3, 'Scholarship and Disappointment'. Instead, Borel adopts the said poetic approach, and writes essays about China, analyzed in 2.4, 'Translation of China'. In these essays there is a clear presence of Borel who interprets Chinese culture and presents it to his Dutch readers. As Michaela Wolf writes:

> If translating between cultures, in ethnography as well as in translation, means intercultural interaction, it is of paramount importance to identify the agencies that are active behind this interaction, in historical as well as contemporary contexts.'[1]

Accordingly, I will look at this 'intercultural interaction' in Borel's essays and explore his methods for the so-called agencies of 'cultural translation and transfer', in order to understand how Borel translated China.

2.1 Poetics and Poethood

Borel's search for Asian notions of poethood and art builds on and develops in tandem with his interest in European Romanticism. His tendency to Romanticism already shows in the mention of authors he reads during his studies in Leiden and Xiamen, and in views expressed in his diary and letters. In the winter of 1891-1892, he writes about his favorite authors. On 19 December 1891, he writes in his diary that the English poet Shelley is the one 'who is most beloved, the most beautiful, the greatest.'[2] On 9 January 1892, Borel gives a description of his room in Leiden and a list of authors he is reading. This list includes the English poets Shelley, John Keats (1795-1821), and Milton; French writer Gustav Flaubert (1821-1880) and poet Paul-Marie Verlaine (1844-1896), German poet Heinrich Heine

[1] Wolf 2002, p. 180.
[2] Joosten 1980, p. 38.

(1797-1856); Dutch writer Frederik van Eeden and poet Herman Gorter (1864-1927).[3] Among these, Milton, Keats and Shelley are well-known names in the Romantic movement. Romanticism, rooted in the German Sturm und Drang, was a late eighteenth and nineteenth-century reaction against the Enlightenment. In general, Romantic writing emphasizes imagination and emotion, freedom of thought and expression, and an idealization of nature. These characteristics can be detected in the works written and translated by Borel.

Another indication of Romanticism is the fact that Borel praises Victor Hugo (1802-1885) as a great poet over Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), even if the above-mentioned diary entry with the list of authors shows that Borel did hold Verlaine in high regard. Victor Hugo is one of France's well-known Romantic authors, while Verlaine is associated with the Symbolist movement. Borel quotes a line from a poem by Victor Hugo on 6 April 1894, when he was studying in China:

> Read something magnificent. Victor Hugo's *The Legend of the Ages* [La légende des siècles] 'An immense goodness fell from the sky!' Is it not a sublime line. Such a giant, Victor Hugo. Such a Good one. Verlaine seems smaller in comparison. Verlaine has something that I cannot stand. That damned coquettishness, that posing. It is not what a great poet possesses.[4]

The poem that Borel is quoting from is 'Boaz Asleep', which is 'Booz endormi' in French, or which according to *A Victor Hugo Encyclopedia*, *'*may be considered one of the happiest lyrics of Romanticism.'[5] This poem is included in the mythical and legendary section of Hugo's *The Legend of the Ages*. The poem 'Boaz Asleep' was inspired by the biblical *Book of Ruth*, and 'highlights the advent of Jesus Christ as one of the most important figures in human myth or history, a Jesus born into the House of David which issues forth from the union of the old Boaz and his relative, the young widow Ruth.'[6]

While the core of Borel's views on poetry and his budding poethood is rooted in European Romanticism, it is complemented by the poetics that he finds in Buddhist and Chinese works. Borel is clearly seeking definitions of 'poethood', as his letter to van Eeden on 9 April 1893 shows. Borel writes how fascinated he is by the idea of a deified status of a poet in the Hindu scripture Rig Veda and he cites relevant phrases from Samuel Johnson's (1822-1882) *Oriental Religions and their relation to Universal Religion—India*:

> So beautiful what is written of poets in the Rig Veda. Their hymns are 'of kin to the god, and attract this heart; for Agni [Hindu deity] is himself a poet.' The 'thoughtful gods produce these hymns.' The rishis [saints] 'prepare the hymn with the heart, the mind, and the understanding.' They 'fashion it as a skillful workman a car;' 'adorn it as a beautiful garment, as a bride for her husband.' They 'generate it from the soul as rain is born from a cloud;' 'send it forth from the soul, as wind drives the cloud;'

[3] LM. Diary in Borel Archives.
[4] LM. Diary in Borel Archives.
[5] Frey 1999, p. 35.
[6] Ibid.

> 'launch it with praises, as a ship on the sea'.[7]

The fragments that Borel cites, pertain to the idea that poems come forth naturally from within the poet. Both the idea of poetry from the soul, as well as the analogy with nature, can be found in Romanticism, as Seamus Perry writes about how the 'stress on the "interior" also grew more important as a specific characteristic of the "Romantic"'.[8]

Moreover, Borel claims that he found the meaning of poethood and his ideal in the beauty of art in China:

> It was in China. It was in a beautiful, tall house built on the highest rock of a wonderful island, with views of mountains and the sea all around me, and glorious horizons of light and sky. I felt safe and lonely there, engrossed in the serene philosophy of the Brahmans, Buddhists and the ancient Chinese. There I discovered something which I now firmly believe in: a poet is not a person who composes lovely verses when he happens to be in a good mood, but a poet is a benevolent person whose highly human virtues have grown to their purest forms. 'The Good is the True Being of Beauty,' sage Zhu Xi [朱熹 (1130-1200) neo-Confucian philosopher] taught me and I knew that only the ethically Good is the Essence of Beauty in Art. And the great Sages—not the obscure meditators—the true, clear sages have always been the Great Poets. The immortal poet of the mountain prayer was so great and holy because he was the ideal wise human being. It was right there that I found my ideal of The Beauty of Art forever.[9]

From this passage, it is clear that being in China had a great impact on Borel, and it shows in his early writing, as I will explain below. From the above, it follows that he is using both Western as well as Buddhist and Chinese ideas to interpret and understand poethood and poetry. Borel's Romantic streak easily combines with his engagement with Chinese cultural traditions. As Michelle Yeh writes, in China 'being a poet is typically part of the multifarious identity of a Chinese literatus,' and she notes there is 'an explicit connection between poetic style and the poet's personality, correlating in a profound way stylistic qualities with personal ones.'[10]

Yet Borel composes very few poems himself. As mentioned in Chapter 1, some poems were published in the literary magazines *Now and Later* in 1893 and *The Guide* in 1894. Borel also translates very few poems from Chinese into Dutch, because in his view Chinese poetry is untranslatable. Much later he explains that in a talk at the literary society 'Practice nurtures knowledge' (Oefening kweekt Kennis), that he gave in The Hague in February 1930. The talk was reported in 'Henri Borel on Chinese Poetry' (Henri Borel over Chineesche poëzie) in the *Fatherland* (Het Vaderland), during which he said:

> Chinese characters are ideograms (pictures), they are not written but 'drawn with a brush' (painting), different pronunciations (sound), lack of links [allusions and symbols] in Chinese (which have to be added in translation), use of parallelism (which is lost in translation). The Chinese poet is poet, painter

[7] UVA. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden Brief, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93. Johnson 1873, p. 104.
[8] Perry 1999, p. 7.
[9] Borel 1898b, p. 10.
[10] Yeh 2005, p. 124.

> and philosopher. (…) A Chinese poem is never of a descriptive or explanatory nature; it is extremely suggestive. Often what is not there is more important than what is. An Englishman characterized this in the words "*Express is non-expression*. [sic] "[11]

Actually, the claim that Chinese poetry is unique and dense is ambiguous, for Borel says the same of poetry in general. To explain the core of poetry, Borel quotes Laurence Binyon (1869-1943). Binyon was a poet and scholar who also published on Asia, including Japanese art and Persian painting. Borel cites Binyon in English in his essay 'Explaining Poetry' (Uitleggen van poëzie) in *The Fatherland* of 9 December 1928:

> Not till the poet discovers his rhythm is he able to express his meaning. It is not a question of sound only, any more than painting is a question of line and color only. To attempt to make an abstraction of these qualities is a fatal mistake; it cannot in reality be done. The power of rhythm is such that not only sounds and forms and colors, but the meaning associated with them becomes different, take up a new life, or rather yield up their full potentiality of life fused into radiance and warmth as by an inner fire.[12]

But the pursuit of similar ideas in Chinese, Buddhist and Western poetics underscores the importance that Borel attaches to poethood. Ultimately, Borel explains in the same essay:

> In poetry (and in all art) it is not about a logical thought, which can be explained, but the rhythmic vitality of the poem and it is impossible to demonstrate this intellectually.
> (…) All poetry contains a kinetic element and a potential element of language, Ransome [sic] has rightly written; the kinetic can be explained if necessary, the potential cannot.[13]

Quoting from American poet and critic John Crowe Ransom (1888-1974) shows Borel agrees with him on the kinetic element in poetry. This implies that a poem that moves from the poet to the reader takes up a new life. The poem originally composed by the poet who gave it rhythm and sound, may or may not be understood or perceived by the reader. This movement can be explained and understood but linguistic perception depends on the reader.

Hence, for Borel poethood is not primarily about writing poems. For him being a poet is like possessing a sixth sense, in other words, a sensitive person who 'reads the spirit of the times' better than others. This awareness of the unique status of the poet, both by poets themselves as well as the observers, can be detected in Borel. This poethood or notion of poetic approach is further nurtured in China by his teacher and his surroundings, as we will see below; it explains why he as a poet found himself the unique person to understand and translate China.

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[11] Anonymous, 18 February 1930. Words in italics are in English in the original.
[12] Borel 9 December 1928.
[13] Ibid.

2.2 Chinese Pedagogies

By summer 1892, Schlegel had declared Borel, Ezerman and van Wettum ready to go to Xiamen, formerly known as 'Amoy' (or Emoi) because of its pronunciation in the local tongue. The purpose of their stay in China was to further study Hokkien, the dialect that they had started learning at Leiden University. Borel went to China with his fellow students, and resided on Gulangyu, literally 'Drum Wave Islet'. The island is located off the coast of Xiamen in Fujian province and can only be reached by ferry. Xiamen became a treaty port in 1842 when the 'Treaty of Nanking' was signed to mark the end of the First Opium War (1839–1842) with Gulangyu as the foreign concession where foreign countries established consulates. The First Opium War broke out between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and China as a result of conflicts about diplomatic relations and the trade of opium.

The study period in China would originally take one year but the students requested an extension with the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. On 22 May 1893, van Wettum and Ezerman explained in their request for extension that they wished to spend a few months in Hakka districts to learn the Hakka dialect, while Borel in his separate request of 5 June 1893, argued that an extended stay would be beneficial to mastering the spoken language and obtain a better understanding of Chinese customs and habits. He explained that he wished to devote himself to studying only the Xiamen and Zhangzhou dialects and noted that he wanted to be free in his decision on whether or not to spend time in the Hakka districts. He added that in case he was appointed to a post in a Hakka district in the Dutch East Indies, he would learn the Hakka dialect at that time. According to the advice provided by W. P. Groeneveldt (1841-1915), then Vice President of the Indies Council, one year in China is indeed too short to master the spoken language. All three were granted an additional year by the Minister of Colonies.[14]

During their stay on Gulangyu, the students had language lessons in Hokkien from a native Chinese teacher. Their teacher was a scholar, who had failed the civil service examinations, which were the means to gain a government post. In imperial China, male students would study and sit for these exams. There were three levels of exams including the prefectural exams for the degree of *xiucai* 秀才, provincial exams for the degree of *juren* 舉人 and ultimately the palace exams nominally supervised by the emperor for the degree of *jinshi*

[14] NA. Letter of 12 September 1893, no. 40. Request by Borel of 5 June 1893 and advice of the Indies Council of 20 July 1893, both numbered 1403a/35. From notes on the documents it appears that Schlegel was contacted for advice about the extension request from van Wettum, Ezerman and Borel, and the question whether it was necessary to amend the period of study of a maximum of five years as stipulated in the *Statute Book* (Staatsblad) of 1873 no. 123. Schlegel replied that amendment was not necessary because three years in Leiden and two years in China should be sufficient. In this case it was van Wettum and Borel whose performance in the first year was poor, and therefore they needed four years of study in Leiden, according to Schlegel.

進士.[15] Students had to memorize the aforementioned *Four Books* and *Five Classics* (*Wujing* 五經), comprising *The Book of Songs*, *The Book of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經), *The Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), *The Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋). These books have canonical status in Chinese cultural tradition and were supposedly written by 'the holy rulers, wise statesmen, and infallible masters of antiquity.' They not only determined the 'literati's attitudes on man, society and the cosmos' but they were also a source of examples, sayings, quotations, and allusions.[16] Women were not allowed to take the examinations but some girls in wealthy families had access to education, either taught by someone in the family or by joining the private classes of their brother(s) at home. Those men who failed the examinations (and thus did not get an official appointment) would consider taking up employment as private tutors.

Borel wrote about his Chinese teacher Tio Siao Hoen, Hokkien for Zhao Shaoxun 趙少勳[17] in his essay 'The First-born' (De Eerstgeborene) published in the literary magazine *The Netherlands* (Nederland) in 1923. Two years later it was reprinted in Borel's book *Of Life and Death* (Van Leven en Dood). The title of this essay, 'first-born', is the literal translation of the Chinese word *xiansheng* 先生 'teacher'. His praise of his teacher in this essay is in sharp contrast with his original negative view when he was in China more than twenty years earlier. As Kuiper writes, Borel felt cheated by Zhao and at one point even fired him.[18] Yet, in this essay, Borel writes how he realized that this teacher had become his 'spiritual father' (geestelijke vader) and he was his child:

> This school teacher who received a meager twelve dollars from me each month, and appeared promptly every morning at my door like a paid servant, knew how to enlighten me on the wisdom of Confucius as well as Laozi, in such simple manner, by using only a few powerful words and elegant expressive gestures, that no eminent European professor would have been able to achieve. Everything I have written about the Wisdom and Beauty in the Indies, I owe to this teacher. In fact it is not easy at all to explain the ancient wisdom because in the classical Chinese texts (strange as this may sound), what is not written is much more important than what is written and should be received in silence.[19]

Clearly and unsurprisingly, Zhao Shaoxun had a different pedagogical approach than Schlegel and Borel found that teaching Chinese wisdom in the Chinese way was more effective than the Western way. His acknowledgement that Zhao inspired him to write about 'wisdom and beauty in the Indies' is possibly a mistake, it should be 'China' not 'the Indies' or it is referring to the time and place in the Indies that he was writing about China.

The lessons were not limited to language and literature only. The publications by Borel, but also by van Wettum as described below, show that the students were exposed to many

[15] For more on state examinations, see Spence 1990, pp. 10-11.
[16] Idema and Haft 1997, p. 54.
[17] Conversion provided by Koos Kuiper.
[18] Kuiper 2016, p. 358.
[19] Borel ca. 1925 (1926?), p. 32.

facets of Chinese culture. Borel mentions Zhao's explanation of Karma *yinguo* 因果 in the essay 'The Beggar' (De Bedelaar) included in *The Last Incarnation* (De laatste incarnatie), where he asks his teacher about the fate of beggars, because there was one lying outside Borel's house on Gulangyu. Zhao explains that it is the beggar's Karma, or 'cause and effect' in previous lives that led to his present circumstances.[20] Besides attending lessons, the students also made short local trips. Borel makes notes in his diary about his trips to Zhangzhou and Guangzhou.[21]

While living in China, Borel was very impressed with the natural settings there, which he described in his diary on 22 November 1893:

> This afternoon I walked around the island. I walked hard against the cold wind. Oh how beautiful. The sea high up the rocky path and the huge mountainscape on the Chinese mainland on the other shore. Mountains are much more beautiful than rocks. The sea is endless. The mountains are also endless. The sun was about to set.

In contrast to the flat landscape in the Netherlands, Borel admires the difference in natural settings, which must have contributed to his appreciation of China.

2.3 Scholarship and Disappointment

Early on Borel starts writing scholarly articles but realizes after publishing one article in the academic journal *T'oung Pao* that it is not the way he likes to write about China. *T'oung Pao* was launched in 1890 under joint editorship of Schlegel and French sinologist Henri Cordier (1849-1925), professor at l'École spéciale des Langues orientales, known today as the Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales, INALCO). It is one of the oldest scholarly journals on traditional China still publishing, especially on traditional sinology. It must have been a disagreement between Borel and Schlegel over a second submission and advice from Prikker against further publication in *T'oung Pao* that make Borel shun pure scholarly writing. We will return to this below.

Borel's *T'oung Pao* article was written in French and entitled 'Chinese Oath of Friendship' (Serment d'Amitié Chinois) and appeared in 1893. Incidentally, Borel was not the only one who published in *T'oung Pao*. Earlier Ezerman and van Wettum had already published their article 'An Alphabetical List of the Emperors of China and their Year-Titles or Nien-Hao with the Date of their Reign and Duration' in *T'oung Pao* in 1891 in English. Offering alphabetical lists in English and Chinese, the authors hoped that 'Chinese students

[20] Borel 1901a, p. 121.

[21] LM. Borel Archives. Upon return from his trip to Zhangzhou, Borel describes his impressions (of scenery and temples) in diary entries of 2, 6 and 8 January 1893. His plan to go to Hong Kong and Canton is written in the diary entry of 16 February 1894 and his experience upon return is recorded in the entry of 6 or 7 (the two digits are written one over the other) March 1894. Borel's travel account 'From Canton. Travel impression.' (Uit Canton. Een reisimpressie) was published in *The Guide* (60), 1896, pp. 179-195 and reprinted in Borel 1897c.

[will] find them a convenient and practical guide for ascertaining, at a moment's notice, a given name or date.'[22] Later there is another article in English by van Wettum in *T'oung Pao*, included in 1894, entitled 'A Pair of Chinese Marriage Contracts', introducing marriage in China and providing the translation of two marriage contracts. In the article, van Wettum notes 'I heard a good deal about them [i.e. wedding ceremonies], especially from my Amoy teacher,'[23] indicating the influence of his teacher in China.

Returning to Borel's article about friendship, he wrote this, as he explains in the introduction, because he thought it might be interesting for *T'oung Pao* readers to understand such an oath of friendship, and so he translated an oath which was taken by friends who lived in Xiamen. Of course, it was also the result of his training under Schlegel who was the first to study the Triads who used such oaths. Schlegel had published *Thian ti hwui: the Hung-league, or Heaven-earth-league: a secret society with the Chinese in China and India* in English in 1866. Since such oaths were a common form of bonding among Chinese, also in the Dutch East Indies, it was important for students of Chinese to understand this practice. Borel stresses that it was a real Chinese document and that the oath was taken by living Chinese people. According to David K. Jordan in his 'Sworn Brothers: A Study in Chinese Ritual Kinship' the text that Borel had translated was:

> a *Jinlanpu* 金蘭譜 or Register of Gold Orchids document, where gold and orchids are somewhat threadbare symbols of the durability and 'fragrance' (attractiveness) respectively of the sworn brotherhood relationship.[24]

Jordan's explanation of Borel's translated text reads:

> the oath was taken by four nineteen- and twenty-year-old men. In this text the candidates first invoke the precedents of Guan Zhong and Bao Shuya, men of the Eastern Zhou dynasty famed for maintaining an intimate friendship despite enormous differences in wealth, and of Lei Yi and Chen Zhong, two Han dynasty scholars whose devotion was said to have made them as inseparable as lacquer mixed with glue.

Borel's article then goes into the historical background as well as the practical aspects of 'brotherhood' in use at that time. Following this publication, Borel was working on an article about the 'Chinese Principles of Poetry', which he submitted to *T'oung Pao* according to his letter of 7 May 1894 to van Eeden. In this article he includes a quote from the preface by Wang Yaoqu 王堯衢 (18th century) to a Tang dynasty poetry collection. I have identified this work as the anthology *Combined Explanations of Tang Poetry* (*Gutangshi hejie* 古唐詩合解), published in 1732. Borel quotes the part where Wang explains that any sound in nature is caused by movement and the greatest of all are wind and thunder. This is applied to the human heart which is set in motion and creates sound. Schlegel, however, takes issue

[22] Ezerman and van Wettum 1891, p. 357.
[23] Van Wettum 1894, p. 371.
[24] Jordan 1985, p. 150.

with Borel's interpretation of the phrase 'Poetry is the sound of the heart' *shi ye zhe, xin zhi sheng ye* 詩也者，心之聲也, upon which Borel feels offended, as shown in his letter of 7 May 1894 to van Eeden:

> Therefore "*Oh! Poetry is the sound (music) of the heart*" is exactly translated from the simplicity of the Chinese. This was ridiculous, said Schlegel. *Sound of the heart* is nonsense. It should be "*What makes poetry poetry is that it is the echo (!!!) of our feelings*" which is not there in Chinese, because the character for feelings is different than that of heart and echo is completely different from sound. The Chinese literati were astonished when I mentioned this translation. I wrote to Schlegel about it and he replied: the Chinese know nothing about it.[25]

Here are two opposite views of poetry and translation. In Borel's view the sentence can be translated directly from the Chinese. Schlegel, however, disagrees and adds an explanation into his translation, which then also changes the meaning of 'poetry'. For Borel the sound comes directly from within, for Schlegel it is a repetition of sounds. This results in what Borel writes in that same letter that he 'gives up on scholars such as Schlegel', whom he says he admires for his 'genius as an intellectual, but [who is] a zero in higher things (…)'. Eventually Borel uses the paragraph from Wang Yaoqu's preface in 'Wu Wei—a fantasy based on Laozi's philosophy' (Wu Wei: een fantazie naar aanleiding van Lao Tsz's Filosofie), which will be discussed in the next section.

Then there is the influence of Prikker on Borel on what to publish where. Prikker expresses surprise at the scholarly nature of the article which he is not expecting from Borel. He writes in his letter of 20 March 1894: 'My goodness, you are so erudite in that journal, that is not something to be sneezed at.'[26] But it is not just about the scholarly nature of the piece: in the same letter of 20 March 1894, Prikker further goes on advising against Borel's plan to publish more in *T'oung Pao*:

> I think it is wrong if you publish your Buddhist studies in that journal *T'oung Pao*. What good would that do? I had much rather include them in a collection. It seems to me that for that kind of scholarly studies in that journal a publisher can be found. If you write more for that journal Slegel [sic] will throw his weight around and take all the credit. This would make that chap Slegel [sic] happy and there is no need for that.[27]

Apparently Borel had the intention to submit a piece on Buddhism to *T'oung Pao*. It shows that Prikker is most concerned about publishing in *T'oung Pao* because of Schlegel taking undue credit. It is difficult to say if it is Schlegel or Prikker or both who influenced Borel, but no other articles by Borel can be found in later issues of *T'oung Pao*. From the letters it appears that Prikker was acting as a middleman stationed in The Hague, advising on venues

[25] UVA. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden Brief, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93. Cursive words were in English in the original.
[26] Joosten 1980, p. 175.
[27] Ibid.

and using his connections to facilitate Borel's publications.[28]

2.4 Translating China

After the episode with *T'oung Pao*, Borel turns to writing in a romantic and non-scholarly manner. He focuses on writing cultural essays about things Chinese to be published in the afore-mentioned Dutch literary magazine *The Guide* (this magazine has been publishing since 1837 and still exists today). As Borel explains in defense of critical views of his writing on China, it was not his intention to write sinological and scholarly articles.

The topics and contents of his early essays on China focus on culture, poetry and art in China: Chinese theatre, funeral customs and Daoist thought. Borel's essay 'Chinese Theatre' (Het Chineesche tooneel) appeared in *The Guide* of June 1894. In the first part it introduces various aspects of Chinese opera and the story of Fan Lihua, which according to Borel was one of the most popular operas in China at that time. As explained by Borel, the story of the female warrior Fan Lihua is extracted from the popular book *War in the West* (*Zhengxi* 征西, which he renders in Dutch as *Strijd in het westen*).[29] To give his readers the background to the story, Borel summarizes the plot which he occasionally interrupts with explanatory remarks, such as 'it was not unusual at all at that time for women to be warriors.' In the second part of this essay, Borel describes the performance, the musical instruments, costumes and makeup. Borel also goes backstage to talk to the performers and he realizes that they know nothing about the background or the history of the play. He also learns that the person who plays Fan Lihua is a man. Borel on purpose keeps this secret in his own narrative only to be divulged at the end, in the same way as he experienced it. In imperial China, male actors also played women roles, because Chinese women were not allowed to perform on stage.

A few months later Borel published a second essay, 'A Dead Mandarin' (Van een dooden Mandarijn), in *The Guide* of September 1894. This is a description of Borel attending the funeral of a Chinese official, upon the invitation of a friend of the deceased. Details of the table with the offerings, the food, the candles, and the whole ambience are given.

A third essay is 'Wu Wei—a fantasy based on Laozi's philosophy', first published in *The Guide* of March 1895 as 'Wu Wei—a study based on Laozi's philosophy' (Wu Wei—een studie naar aanleiding van Lao Tsz's filosofie). In reprints of this work, Borel explains that he initially called this 'a study', but after comments by critics that his work was not a translation, he changed it into 'fantasy'.[30] As Borel remarks this is his own creative writing, based on

[28] According to Prikker's letter to Borel of 22-28 January 1893, Prikker also helped enquire the possibility of Borel to become the foreign correspondent in China for the *Rotterdammer*. This was never realized because a broader range of topics was needed and Borel's Dutch language use did not meet the newspaper's requirement. Moreover, Borel's stay in China was too short. See Joosten 1980, p. 98-99.

[29] Borel 1894a, pp. 364-365. For more details about the story, see Eva Hung's 'Fan Lihua and Xue Dingshan: a Case Study in Battlefield Courtship', *Journal of Chinese Studies* (NS No. 1). 1992, pp. 299-313.

[30] Later Borel publishes another essay 'Wu wei' which is not a fantasy, but a more scholarly study. This was

Daoist philosophy, to explain his interpretation of the concepts of *wu wei* 無為 or 'non action' and *dao* 道, or 'the Way'. The story of 'Wu Wei: a fantasy based on Laozi's philosophy' is divided into three parts: I. Dao, II. Art and III. Love. In all three parts there are examples of how Dao is a part of everything, in objects, in people, in art, in emotions. It reads as if the narrator is Borel and the old sage in the story is his teacher. In the story, which is supported with quotes from Daoist works, the narrator is asking the old sage questions about poetry, love, and happiness. In the end the sage reminds the narrator that Dao, Poetry, Love is all one and the same: 'Everything is holy because of the essence of Dao that lives inside.'

Based on what he wrote in his diary and in a letter to van Eeden, it appears that Borel is inspired by the Dialogues of the Greek philosopher Plato (428/427-348-347 BCE) in writing 'Wu Wei: a fantasy based on Laozi's philosophy'. On 2 January 1892, Borel notes in his diary that he started doing a Dutch translation of Plato's *Symposium* from the English.[31] It is likely that the English version is the one by Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893), because Borel quotes from Jowett's preface for ideas on translation, as we will see in Chapter 3. Later in a letter to van Eeden of 12 April 1895, Borel laments that Chinese literature lacks any explanation about (the beauty of) love and women, like that in Plato's *Symposium*.[32] The main influence of Plato in 'Wu Wei: a fantasy based on Laozi's philosophy' is the use of dialogues, and probing into the concept of Love as of Socrates did in the *Symposium*.

The three essays of 'Chinese theatre', 'A Dead Mandarin' and 'Wu Wei: a fantasy based on Laozi's philosophy' were collected and published in 1895 in *Wisdom and Beauty from China* (Wijsheid en Schoonheid uit China), with one additional piece, 'The Appearances of the Chinese' (De schijn der Chineezen).[33] The latter is an account by Borel of his feelings when he first arrived in China, and describes his impressions of the Chinese people and the differences from his home culture. For example, he writes about the time when he saw an old man searching for the right location for his grave. Here he introduces *fengshui* 風水 or Chinese geomancy.[34] Another example is the description of the perfect happiness that old Chinese men derive from having many children and living to old age.[35] Further down, Borel notes that once he saw his old teacher sitting silently high on a rock near his house, and upon his question what he was doing, the old man said 'nothing' which is also characteristic of the Chinese, according to Borel. When Borel expresses surprise, the old man explains he is

published in *The Guide* of 1897.

[31] LM. Diary entry of 2 January 1892 in Borel Archives. Joosten 1980, p. 38.

[32] UVA. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden Brief, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93. Letter of 12 April 1895. With this letter Borel sends a copy of Herbert Giles's translation of the *Daodejing*.

[33] There is a German translation *Weisheit und Schönheit aus China*, which contains a selection of essays from both *Wisdom and Beauty from China* and *Kwan Yin*.

[34] Borel 1895a, p. 8.

[35] Ibid, p. 11.

xiaoyao 逍遙 (floating, free and unfettered).[36] This notion has become a common expression for leisurely retirement away from the hectic mundane life, but in fact it is a Daoist concept that originates in the *Zhuangzi* (莊子). This Daoist work is traditionally ascribed to Zhuangzi (also known as Zhuang Zhou) who lived around the fourth century BCE. *Zhuangzi*'s first chapter is 'Free and Easy Wandering' *Xiaoyaoyou* 逍遙遊 in which *xiaoyao* has a deeper meaning of 'going beyond' in understanding things in life. But Borel does not refer to the interpretation in the *Zhuangzi*. Here, he notes that this is hard for 'us' to understand 'the Chinese', and presents 'them' as a mystery, a different world. From these descriptions, we can see that Borel is observing and digesting the customs and habits of China. The description of his experience in China, seeing and appreciating the beauty of many things, tends to be in an Orientalist fashion, as will be discussed in the next chapter; but eventually in the end he feels cheated, because ultimately it is all 'appearances'.[37]

His view of the Chinese, however, changes over the years. The undated fifth print of *Wisdom and Beauty from China,* which I use here, has a foreword dated 1919, in which Borel explains that after all these years, he looks at matters differently. He points at sentences in the book which he would not have written like that later, especially in his essay on 'Chinese Appearances,' where he wrote 'The Chinese are such lovely people, if one only sees them from the outside',[38] and 'Is it not surprising, that I started to admire this nation with innocent joy, which I now laugh about?'[39] Both the publisher and writer, however, decided that it would be better to retain the essays in their original form.

Based on the contents of the essays in the *Wisdom and Beauty from China* I will analyse the characteristics of how Borel introduces China. In the essays Borel observes the differences between Chinese and Dutch cultures. Borel is constantly interacting between China and the Netherlands, in terms of trying to understand the source culture and trying to present it in an accessible way to his Dutch readers. Below, I will probe into 'the agencies', in Wolf's words as quoted above, behind this interaction.

In a way, the essays can also be considered a kind of travel writing because they reflect the experiences of Borel in a foreign country. Travel accounts, according to Douglas Kerr and Julia Kuehn (as briefly referred to in the introduction):

> often adopt an extreme method of translation by either, in an imperialist gesture, domesticating and thus reducing the foreign to fit into a framework that reproduces that of the self, or, in an opposite anti-imperialist gesture, exoticizing the Other so as to make it distant and simply alien from the observing self.[40]

[36] Ibid, pp. 17-18.
[37] Ibid, p. 20.
[38] Ibid, p. 5.
[39] Ibid, p. 7.
[40] Kerr and Kuehn 2007, p. 7.

Both extreme methods of translation are present in the essays, as will be discussed below. In these essays, Borel expresses his views and feelings about China while he was there, observations of Chinese customs and habits which he finds different from his home culture and which are of interest to the reader. Moreover in these early essays, it is more like Borel discovers not just China, but also himself. As Kerr and Kuehn explain:

> All travel writers about China, in recording an impression of the country, have also portrayed themselves, whether as the briefest sketch or in a full-blown self-portrait for which China is simply the background. We can only become aware of ourselves in relation to others beyond ourselves, and for these writers this is the other meaning of China's ulteriority.[41]

Here the term 'ulteriority', as Kuehn explains, is meant to say that for nineteenth-century travelers in China, there was always something 'beyond', China was too vast and remained something of a mystery.[42] Of course this 'mystery' is a perception, symptomatic of the era's travelers. In the case of Borel, in his eyes China was indeed a mystery, and he stresses this idea in his writing. But because he sees himself as a poet, Borel is convinced that he has what it takes to go 'beyond.'

If we look at the so-called agencies of 'cultural translation and transfer' as explained by Wolf, and based on the contents of *Wisdom and Beauty from China* described above, we can identify ways in which Borel interacts between China and the Netherlands. As I will show in the next sections, I have identified four characteristics of how Borel presents Chinese culture: in contrasts by juxtaposing Chinese cultural aspects with Dutch/Western counterparts, the romanization of Chinese concepts, the use of analogies by referring to similar concepts in Dutch/Western culture, and the stress on the uniqueness of Chinese culture.

1) Contrasts: for example in his claim in the essay 'Chinese Appearances', where he writes that upon seeing the Chinese in China, Borel realizes that he is relieved of the burden of seeing the bourgeois side of the Dutch people, who as ordinary civilized Dutch citizens in clean, stiff suits take walks with the family on Sundays.[43] This he sets in contrast with the Chinese of whom he writes that the way they dress, where they live, what they use, everything is beautiful.[44] He puts the Chinese right opposite of the Dutch, it is 'them' and 'us' mostly in a positive view of the Chinese. Other contrasts can also be found in for example the description of tea cups: the Dutch tea cup is 'clumsy and unwieldy' whereas the Chinese cup 'has an elegance of form and color which will give someone, who has a sense of art, a particularly good feeling.'[45] Emphasis on cultural differences is a form of

[41] Ibid, p. 5.
[42] Personal communication in November 2014.
[43] Borel 1895a, p. 5.
[44] Ibid, pp. 4-5.
[45] Ibid, p. 5.

'foreignization', a strategy in translation studies, which is in the words of Lawrence Venuti 'an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad.'[46] In his writing, Borel tries to give the reader the foreignness of Chinese culture, in the same way he experienced it.

2) Retaining Chinese words in romanization further strengthens foreignization, which I use here for Borel's use of Chinese concepts in romanization or where he gives very literal translations of Chinese words and phrases. Cases of romanization are terms for which according to Borel there are no suitable equivalent words in Dutch, including *xiao* 孝 (filial piety)[47], *xiaoyao*[48] and *gui* 鬼 (ghost).[49] In other cases, Borel gives literal translations of Chinese words or phrases. An example is 'The hero was scared until his soul no longer fitted his body' (*De held vreesde 'tot zijn ziel niet meer bij zijn lichaam paste')* which includes the expression *hun bu fu ti* 魂不附體 (literally 'the soul separated from the body', meaning scared out of one's wits).[50] By introducing these aspects of Chinese culture Borel exposes his readers to new notions. This can have a foreignizing effect, although it can also be seen as enrichment of the Dutch language.
3) There are also instances of domestication, which I use here for cases where Borel gives his readers notions they can relate to, such as terms from the Bible, the term 'fate' in Greek mythology, and connecting Dao with God. In an analogy that might appeal to his readers, Borel writes 'Everything is revelation. Everywhere is God. Dao is in everything.'[51] The idea that Dao just like God is everywhere may enable the reader to better understand the notion. Yet, his approach from Western concepts in the comparison and the use of the word 'God' may be misleading for the intention of the work, which is clearly inspired by Daoist texts. Another example is where Borel says that the mystical music and monotonous singing at the funeral as described in 'A Dead Mandarin', is 'Litany, similar to the hardly moving, immensely quiet music of old-Gregorian funeral songs.'[52] These are analogies which readers can easily imagine and may be considered a form of 'domesticizing'. It must be noted here that not each analogy is a form of domestication. Domestication in translation studies is a strategy that reduces the foreignness of the text, and adjusts the text to cultural norms of the target culture, thereby erasing foreign cultural values. Yet, not all domestication involves erasing

[46] Venuti 2008, p. 20.
[47] Borel 1895a, p. 12 and p. 58.
[48] Ibid, p. 18.
[49] Ibid, p. 65.
[50] Ibid, pp. 33 and 38.
[51] Ibid, p. 98.
[52] Ibid, p. 85.

differences. In Borel's case, he is making comparisons in an attempt to help the reader to understand certain cultural aspects.

4) But foreignization outweighs domestication and in the description of Chinese culture, Borel prominently stresses the uniqueness of Chinese culture. According to Borel typical Chinese characteristics can be found in everyday things, such as a special fondness for flowers, birds and little children. An example is where Borel refers to an old man who carries his bird in a cage, or carries his grandchild around 'without the risk of being laughed at'.[53] This implies that what is 'normal' in China, may actually be not accepted in the Netherlands. Borel also mentions phenomena in China such as storytellers who can be found all over the city[54] and matchmakers to help to arrange marriages and negotiate between two families.[55] Another example is that while watching Chinese opera, Borel indicates that the Chinese appreciate the repeated reappearance of the Mandarin official, while 'this is tedious for a Western person'. The reason for this, as Borel explains, is that in China to become a Mandarin is a reward to someone for being a good person in a previous life, it is the best that can happen in the life of a Chinese.[56] Therefore, the Chinese audience is excited to watch the Mandarin. He compares Chinese and Dutch performances by describing the simple construction of a Chinese stage set up anywhere in the open where audiences come and go as they like, different from performances in the Netherlands which are held indoors in theaters.[57]

Besides the above-mentioned characteristics, another way of presenting Chinese culture to the reader, is in the 'self-discovery' in Borel's writing. This is most prominent in 'Wu Wei: a fantasy based on Laozi's philosophy', in which Borel acts as the ignorant student who seeks out the old sage in search of the truth. For Borel this essay remains his own favorite among all his works, as he writes in the article to celebrate his sixtieth birthday in 1929. In this article Borel claims that if all of his work had to be burnt and he could only keep one item, he would choose 'Wu Wei—a fantasy based on Laozi's philosophy', a work which according to him should have been published separately, just as the French, English and German translations of the tale had appeared as individual titles:

> The best of me can be found in this short tale 'Wu Wei' which fortunately is not only literary but also philosophical, and in which I have expounded on the way of life and vision of the world. All along I have wished for a separate edition in Dutch too (hence not as part of *Wisdom and Beauty from China*), but this was never realized.[58]

[53] Ibid, pp. 6-7.
[54] Ibid, p. 13.
[55] Ibid, p. 36.
[56] Borel 1894a, p. 383.
[57] Ibid, pp. 363-364.
[58] Borel 23 November 1929.

It was only after his death that his wish was fulfilled. *The Fatherland* of 28 November 1933 announced the special edition of 'Wu Wei: a fantasy based on Laozi's philosophy,' for subscribers to *The Fatherland* and Henri Borel's loyal readers.

In this work, Borel is actually part of the story, which is a combination of Daoism, Buddhism and poetics. It contains dialogues between the narrator and an old sage with translated key phrases from the Daoist classics *Zhuangzi* and *Daodejing* that weave the story around them. The *Daodejing*, also known as *Tao Te Ching*, is attributed to the Chinese philosopher Laozi 老子 (Old Master) and generally dated around 205 BCE. It appears that Borel tries to reinforce the point he is making in the dialogues by including translated phrases. Yet in some cases he misses the point, as the following example shows, where Borel explains about *wu wei* and *dao.* He starts a wordy explanation in his own words about his interpretation of *wu wei* which he interprets as Going-Naturally (Van-Zelf-Gaan) and then Borel quotes a phrase from the *Daodejing*:

> 是以聖人處無為之事行不言之教 *Shi yi shengren chu wuwei zhi shi xing bu yan zhi jiao* (Therefore the sage practices his teaching of non-action, which he conveys without words)
>
> *De ware Wijze betracht de Leer die zonder woorden is, die ongesproken blijft* (The true Sage practices the Teaching that is without words, and remains unspoken)[59]

The problem with the Dutch translation, which stresses the 'wordlessness' of Dao's teaching, is that it omits a direct translation of *wu wei*. The only effect that this line has is the idea that what is left unsaid is more important than the text. Content-wise this is exactly what Borel said about his teacher Zhao Shaoxun, who was, to Borel, better at teaching the classics than Schlegel.

Part I 'Dao' is about how the narrator is in search of the old sage Laozi and it contains translated passages from the *Zhuangzi*, to explain one should not make too much effort in the search for the truth.

Part II on 'Art' starts with the question by the narrator 'What is Poetry?' (Wat is Poëzie?). To answer that question, Borel gives the translation of the first paragraph from the preface by Wang Yaoqu to the Tang poetry collection mentioned above. What follows then in Borel's story is a dialogue between the narrator and the sage about what makes a poet. In answer to the narrator's question of why poets write poems, the sage retorts 'why do birds sing?' From this whole conversation, it appears that the idea of being a poet is that it is something natural, it comes from within. But this is not limited to 'word-artists' (*woord-kunstenaars*), but applies to artists in general, says the sage. To show this, he pulls out a precious box with the figurine of Guanyin 觀音, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, and

[59] Borel 1895a, p. 100. In the footnote he mentions the source: This sentence is translated from the *Daodejing* (chapter 2).

explains that the creator of this art object has the same naturalness as a poet. Toward the end of this part, the narrator concludes 'your wisdom is poetry and your poetry is wisdom.'[60] The sage, however, refutes this and says 'I do not know what my wisdom is, or what my poetry is. All returns into one. It is so simple, so natural if you know it. All is Dao.'[61] This is a kind of statement by Borel of how he sees himself as a poet at work.

In part III on 'Love', there is a dialogue between the narrator and the sage on the question of what is love. The sage remarks that 'Love is nothing else than the Rhythm of Dao,'[62] yet the narrator thinks that, 'Love is a longing to always be with her, to unite two souls.' But the sage laments that human beings are always searching for happiness, while happiness is only short-lived, and he quotes *Zhuangzi* 'The highest happiness is no happiness'. Finally, the sage reminds the narrator that Dao, Poetry, Love are all one and the same. 'Everything is holy because of the essence of Dao that lives inside.' The sage tells him to go home and gives him the precious box with the figurine of Guanyin inside.

Prikker in his letter of 1 May 1895, criticizes Borel for explaining too much in 'Wu Wei—a fantasy based on Lao Tsz's philosophy' because he says the idea of Laozi was in fact to say more with fewer words:

> My conclusion is that it is beyond doubt that you have done many people a great service by your adaptation of Laozi's philosophy, but I do not think your work agrees with the intention of Laozi.[63]

It appears that Prikker would much rather read the *Daodejing* in its original state, which are the brief chapters containing Daoist wisdom and advice. Perhaps this also stimulated Borel to get on with his translations of the classics that he was working on.

Considering the fact that at least five reprints of *Wisdom and Beauty from China* exist,[64] we can safely assume that the book was successful. The reaction to 'Chinese Theatre' was beyond expectations, as Borel writes in his diary on 14 August 1894:

> Can you imagine the ignominy. A very ordinary, overall subdued piece of mine in *The Guide*, written to pay back van Eeden, and to gain a foothold there henceforth, has created a kind of storm. Almost all the newspapers give excerpts from it and praise me.[65]

Reviews of *Wisdom and Beauty from China* generally praise the work, for example the anonymous review published in *The Guide* of 1895, notes that there might be more scholarly studies about China available, but 'they are certainly not more attractive and artistic.'[66] The

[60] Borel 1894a, p. 130.
[61] Ibid, p. 131.
[62] Ibid, p. 145.
[63] Joosten 1980, p. 219.
[64] It first came out in 1895, the second print in 1898 (?), the third in 1901, the fourth in 1916 and the fifth in 1919.
[65] LM. Diary of Borel in Borel Archives.
[66] Anonymous 1895a, p. 572.

anonymous reviewer attributes the success of the collection to the way Borel has shed light on the

> beauty—that *external* loveliness, gracious forms, taste for colors and lines, and the gestures by those mysterious, basically concentric, characters that form the Chinese people.[67]

From this review, it appears that the image of China and the Chinese people that readers get is different from other (more scholarly) works. The reviewer thinks that Borel has introduced the beauty of China from the outside, rather than the dialectic reasoning of Chinese wisdom. It is almost as if the reviewer can see a painting of China, as if through the eyes of Borel he gets a more visual view of China, because Borel's descriptions go deeper into the visual aspects, such as colors, lines and shapes of cultural sights in China.

Borel used various methods or agencies in the act of cultural translation, such as expressing his own view, comparing Chinese cultural phenomena with Dutch or Western ones, providing connections with Western culture, explaining Chinese concepts, and translating paragraphs and key phrases from important literary works. By doing so, he is negotiating between cultures, creating pathways for meaning and cross-cultural reproduction. At the same time, he gives a very subjective view of China, thus shaping and determining the image for his readers. This can also be seen from reactions of visitors to China, who fail to find the China that was depicted by Borel. In his letter of 29 February 1896 to van Eeden, Borel writes that he received a letter from a young interpreter to-be in Xiamen:

> He wrote to me about his disappointment after having high expectations from my book. Naturally, I cannot explain it, if he lacks the aptitude.[68]

This is telling of Borel's perception and interpretation of China, but also his attitude toward his readers. He is aware of his different view but is convinced his is the right one. With this view and attitude Borel travels from China to the Dutch East Indies. In his letter of 7 May 1894 to van Eeden, he laments that he wishes to stay in China and dreads going to the Indies. Indeed, life in the Indies turns out to be repressive and restricted, both in terms of the freedom of expression in his writing and his movement at work. This results in transfer and sick leave, as will be shown in the next chapter.

[67] Ibid, p. 573.
[68] UVA. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden Brief, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93.

PART II: IN SEARCH OF ‘THE REAL CHINA’ (1894–1916)

Chapter 3: Orientalism

After arriving in the Dutch East Indies in autumn 1894, Borel is appointed Chinese interpreter at Riau. Soon he feels disappointed and dissatisfied with the expatriate community, where he witnesses corruption and injustice. In addition to that, he realizes that the Chinese people in the Indies are different from the Chinese in China. In his capacity of Chinese Interpreter, he introduces Chinese culture to inform Dutch readers, in particular his local colleagues. From the way Borel writes it appears that he develops an Orientalist perspective, in the words of Edward Said:

> Yet the Orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the Orient from something into something else: he does this for himself, for the sake of his culture, in some cases for what he believes is the sake of the Oriental.[1]

To a great extent Borel's translation of Chinese culture is determined by his own personality. Without questioning his own being, and his 'cultural and discursive identity', Borel wishes to think 'from a Chinese perspective'. In the process he is 'converting' China into something else, but it is not clear if—in Said's words—he is doing this for himself or for his Dutch readers (to gain a better understanding of China), or if he is doing it for the sake of the Chinese (who will as a result be better understood). There are two types of writing in which Borel informs his readers about the Chinese people in the Dutch East Indies and about Chinese culture. The first type are articles which Borel publishes about the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies which contain his observations based on experience and (legal) documents and comments on a new law design. The second type are literary translations from the Chinese, some combined with his own prose. In these texts, there is a very subjective view: Borel is presenting China/ the Chinese, how he sees 'them', claiming that he is looking at things 'from Chinese perspectives', but does not let 'them' speak for themselves.

What we will see here is that Borel is taking on a role of 'negotiator', in the capacity of ethnographer and translator. As Sturge points out, both the ethnographer as well as the translator have 'to reconcile respect for the specificity of the "native point of view" with the desire to create a text comprehensible to the target readership.' Depending on the goals and the target reader, writes Sturge, there are:

> dangers of, on the one hand, an orientalizing translation style associated with hierarchical representations of other cultures as primitive and inferior to a normative "western" civilization, and, on the other, an "appropriative" style that downplays the distinctiveness of other world views and claims universal validity for what may in fact be domestic categories of thought.[2]

[1] Said 1995, p. 67.
[2] Sturge 2009, pp. 67-68.

As examples below will show Borel is leaning toward an orientalizing translation style and as and in spite of his admiration and passion for Chinese culture, he writes about the Chinese as naive and backwards.

3.1 'A Degeneration of the Chinese'

An analysis of the first type of writing concerns: the complexity of relationships among the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies, because of their identity and their differences from the Chinese in China; suspicious trade and exchange between the Chinese and Borel's Dutch superior; and criticism of his colleagues for failing to draft law proposals from 'Chinese perspectives'. Between the lines of his writing, there is an urgent request to the readers to look further, deeper into the thoughts and the culture of the Chinese. This shows through in his explanation about Chinese identities in the essay 'Chinese Officers' (Chinese Officieren), about Chinese culture in 'Just a Chinese…' (Maar een Chinees…), and in his quotes from Chinese sources in his article with comments about the proposal on 'New Regulations of Private Law for Chinese'. But, in the words of Said, was he doing this for himself, because he wanted justice, or was it for the sake of the Dutch, as a nation who ruled over the Chinese in Dutch East Indies, or perhaps for the Chinese, to be better understood and hopefully receive an equal treatment – or several or all of the above?

The reason why Borel writes about all these matters is because of his position as a Chinese Interpreter and his dislike of the expatriate community in the Dutch East Indies. Borel was appointed Chinese Interpreter in October 1894 at Tanjung Pinang in the Riau Archipelago, located south of Singapore. Duties at the time consisted of the written translation of various documents, including accounts, new regulations, announcements, and of interpreting in court. Later in 1895, when the post of Chinese Interpreter was renamed 'Official for Chinese Affairs', duties were expanded to offering advice on a range of issues involving the Chinese population, e.g. secret societies, prostitution, gambling, and the appointment of Chinese Officers. Later, from 1911 onwards, some Officials for Chinese Affairs would get the personal title of 'Advisor for Chinese Affairs' (Adviseur voor Chineesche Zaken).[3] Sometimes they were also required to travel inland on short trips to inspect Chinese-populated areas. In one of his essays, for example, Borel writes about his visit to a District Officer in the jungle of Borneo, when he was stationed in Pontianak from August 1908 till August 1909.[4] He was there to meet with the District Officer because 'something was brewing' among the Chinese in his district.[5] In general, the workload was not too heavy. Borel claims that they had less to do than their British colleagues in the Straits Civil Service:

[3] As seen in the *Government Almanac for the Dutch East Indies* (Regeeringsalmanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië).
[4] Borel 1921b, p. 206.
[5] Ibid. This is probably part of the disturbances that The Siauw Giap writes about in his article 'Rural Unrest in West Kalimantan'. The also refers to Borel's reports on resentment and discontent among the Chinese. See The 1981.

> The English are busy all day (but never as *jurubahasa* [interpreter], for which they hire Chinese people). They work hard from 9 till 4, either as magistrate, or at the protectorate, or elsewhere, whereas Dutch interpreters of Chinese have hardly a thing to do, if they are not working for themselves and without any official stimulus. They must wonder sometimes why they remain without work after such a truly splendid, generous training, save the occasional translation of a decree or a part of the Statutes. Among them, some have not spoken a word of Chinese for months, simply because they are not given the opportunity.[6]

In a later article, Borel even goes so far as to claim that many of the Chinese Interpreters preferred to speak in Malay with Chinese people, because they were not competent enough in the Chinese language.[7] It appears that knowledge of Malay was generally expected of Chinese interpreters (I have not found any references to this in the materials pertaining to their training). Borel often includes Malay words in his essays and for example from his remark on the language ability of the lawyer in his essay 'A Legal Case of Opium Lease' (Een opium-pachtperkara) 'in perfect Malay a stream of eloquence began to flow',[8] it appears that Borel is familiar with the Malay language.[9]

Borel's dislike of the expatriate society is rooted in the lifestyle of many of the Dutch in the Dutch East Indies, as described in his review of the book *Facts and Fancies about Java* by Augusta de Wit (1864-1939), which she wrote in English.

> Upon arrival, the entire set up of society, both private and official, repulsed me and annoyed me so much that it obstructed me to see the beauty of the Indies. And yet it is truly there, even though I never expected it. It was not the lack of good will. I would love to find wisdom and beauty in the Indies, just like I found them in China, that lovely wonderland. But it was the surroundings, the society with its suffocating stuffy breath of bureaucracy and materialism, which scared and numbed me, so that I was dead to beauty for a while. (...) The cancer of the bureaucratic official gnaws off the freshness and purity of the community. Officials are not only working and being official during office hours but also when they are sleeping, when they are having tea, when they are kissing their children, yes right up to the most intimate things in life.[10]

This feeling of oppression is in great contrast to the freedom of his previous lifestyle in Xiamen. His description of the expatriate society of the Dutch East Indies must have been rather fierce, for in a reply letter of 3 November 1895 to Borel, van Eeden retorts his view. Van Eeden had just returned from a trip to England and wrote that to him it was like 'a refreshing bath'.[11] But he writes it was enough and he was glad to be back among the Dutch and 'this serves as an offset for your curses against our dear compatriots'.[12]

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[6] Borel 1900a, p. 43.
[7] Borel 19 August 1915.
[8] Borel 1900a, pages 11-12.
[9] As discussed with Koos Kuiper (in February 2014), neither of us has seen mention of the study of Malay. It is possible that the interpreters were expected to pick it up easily, because one of the qualities they were selected for was their talent for languages.
[10] Borel 1898d, p. 83.
[11] Van Eeden 1933, p. 54.
[12] Ibid, p. 55.

Besides his disappointment with the expat community, Borel writes about the identity of Chinese, which he invokes to explain their corruption. A reflection of his experience is his probe into the identity of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies and the comparison with the 'real Chinese' in China. It seems Borel had a similar sentiment to that described by Rey Chow when she writes about melancholic disorder:

> In the case of the sinologist's relationship with his beloved object, 'China', melancholia is complicated by the presence of a third party—the living members of the Chinese culture, who provide the sinologist with a means of externalizing his loss and directing his blame. What Freud sees as 'self'-directed denigration now finds a concrete realization in the denigration of others.[13]

For Borel, the Chinese in Dutch East Indies are 'a degeneration of the Chinese' in China, and he becomes sentimental of his time in Xiamen and the Chinese people there. This results in a continuous longing for the 'real China'.

Borel explains about this so-called degeneration of the Chinese in the preface to *The Chinese in the Dutch East Indies* (De Chineezen in Nederlandsch-Indië), a collection of nine articles aimed to inform the reader about the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies of whom he thought so little was generally known. The issue of identity is explained in detail in his piece entitled 'Chinese Officers', in which he expresses agreement with the idea that the post of Chinese Officer is redundant. Borel sets out the difference between Peranakan Chinese who are born in the Dutch East Indies, as opposed to the Singkeh (新客 *xinke*, 'new guest') migrants who are born and raised in China and come to the Dutch East Indies later in life. Borel claims that actually neither is qualified to be appointed Chinese Officer, with few exceptions.[14] The Chinese born in the East Indies are not real Chinese because they lack knowledge of Chinese culture and customs, while those who come from China are uneducated and illiterate. According to Borel, the problem was that the governing board (bestuurshoofden), who were the Resident and Controller on district level, preferred to consult the Chinese Officers, in spite of the fact that *Statute Book* (Staatsblad) of 1897, No. 97 stipulates that in 'all matters concerning the Chinese the governing board should seek advice from the Officials for Chinese affairs.'[15]

This brings us to the conflict between Borel and his superior Arend Ludolf van Hasselt (1848-1909), Resident of Riau, whom Borel suspects of taking bribes. Van Hasselt had been in the Dutch East Indies since October 1868 when he started in military service, and switched the following year to administrative posts in the colonial administration of Batavia. In 1871, he went on leave to take the Higher Civil Service Entrance Examination

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[13] Chow 1993, p. 4.

[14] An example of an exception is Chinese Lieutenant Jo Hoae Giok, who died in 1899. In a letter to the *Java Post* Borel remembers and praises Jo Hoae Giok for being a literatus and gentleman. Quoted in *The Telegraph* of 3 May 1899: 'A well-known Chinese' (Een bekend Chinees). Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110553294:mpeg21:a0091

[15] Borel 1900a, p. 41.

(grootambtenaars-examen), which was the exam required for those who wished to obtain higher ranks in the Dutch East Indies.[16] Van Hasselt was back in the Indies by 1873, where he was eventually promoted in 1888 to Resident of Tapanuli, an administrative division on the Western coast of North Sumatra, and to Resident of Riau in June 1893.

The earliest mention of suspicion van Hasselt taking bribes can be found in Borel's letter to van Eeden of 15 December 1895. In this letter Borel describes his concerns about rampant bribery that causes injustice and murder, which he thought van Hasselt was involved in. In his response, van Eeden urges Borel in his letter of 25 January 1896 to be patient. He advises Borel to collect evidence because he had the impression that Borel's sources, which were mostly Chinese, were not trustworthy,[17] which in itself is a racist assumption. Van Eeden further tells Borel to 'be active and at the same time discreet and tactful'. Borel in turn writes in his letter of 29 February 1896 that if his suspicions were merely based on information from the Chinese it would not be as bad, and that he has evidence of the fact that van Hasselt received money from the Captain to prevent murder charges be brought against him. This case which according to Borel's letter to van Eeden was made public in his essay 'The Final Verdict' (Het Eindvonnis) in 1896, was reprinted as 'Just a Chinese…' in *The Last Incarnation* (De laatste incarnatie), published in 1901.

This story narrated by Borel is not a translation from an original Chinese printed text, but a story which Borel tells from what he imagines to be the view of a Chinese interpreter in the Dutch East Indies, and based on official documents about the case.[18] This brings to mind what Sturge writes about anthropological translation, where the fieldworker's experiences are also translations between cultural contexts (as quoted in the introduction). The story 'Just a Chinese...' is such a reworking of Borel's experiences: Borel is translating between Dutch and Chinese contexts, which is complicated by the fact that it is set in the Dutch East Indies. It starts with a recount of what happened before Borel takes over the case. The protagonist Kang Soei is a poor man from China, who goes to the Dutch East Indies with the purpose of making money and returning to China, as so many did. Kang Soei successfully rises from sampan rower to owner of a gambier and pepper plantation. One day Kang Soei is sued by the powerful Captain, who is 'feared' as Borel notes repeatedly. The Captain claims that Kang Soei owes him money (in fact as Borel explains, the Captain, as trader of gambier, was after the plantation). Friends advise Kang Soei to settle the fictive debt because they know he will not stand a chance in court. Yet, Kang Soei stubbornly denies the charges and seeks help from a lawyer (procureur). The Captain confiscates his property while Kang Soei

[16] For more on the training of officials for civil service in the Dutch East Indies, see 'Leiden and Empire: University and Colonial Office 1825-1925' by C. Fasseur in *Leiden Oriental Connections: 1850-1940*, edited by W. Otterspeer. Leiden: Brill. 1989, pp. 187-203.

[17] Van Eeden 1933, p. 60.

[18] In the footnote on the first page Borel states: Author guarantees the historical accuracy of the facts related in this story which are based on official documents. Only the names have been modified. Borel 1901a, p. 173.

continues to fight for his rights. Half-way through the case, Borel arrives and tries to help Kang Soei to seek justice. When it looks like Kang Soei is gaining the upper hand, he is suddenly found fatally wounded in the bushes. The story ends with the description of how Borel buys paper money and burns it for Kang Soei to support him in afterlife and how Borel declines an invitation to an extravagant party hosted by the Captain to celebrate the marriage of his youngest daughter to an influential opium farmer of Singapore.

This account is representative of Borel's role in colonial society and his vision of other people. There is a kind of stereotyping of characters. Borel claims that 'everyone in the Indies looks down on the Chinese' for their smell, lack of hygiene and bribery.[19] Borel disapproves of Dutch appreciation for the Chinese Officers and opium farmers, who throw parties for high ranked Dutch officials to enjoy together with their wives. He thinks that the worst is that these rich Chinese have a history of suspicious cases of fraud or bankruptcies, yet to Dutch officials this does not seem to make the champagne taste less good.[20] The portrayal of the Captain as cunning and powerful is in sharp contrast with Kang Soei who is described as 'fat, stupid, and naive'. The Arabic lawyer (procureur) is a con man and flees to Singapore after pocketing money from Kang Soei. The story gives the impression that Borel is the only one who listens to Kang Soei and makes an attempt to seek justice for him. Ironically, the success of the case results in the death of Kang Soei.

Meanwhile, there is Borel the narrator who provides information about Chinese culture and writes in a colloquial way that is easy to understand, in an attempt to gain sympathy and understanding from the readers. For example, where Borel explains about the prayers of Kang Soei, that even though he had faith in winning the case:

> still he started burning extra incense for the house gods, and begged Thi Kong (God of Heaven) every night to save him from disaster. Of course it helped. For the Gods are surely there for a purpose![21]

These explanations of Chinese culture come with a tone of sarcasm, as if Borel is mocking the Chinese and trying to amuse his Dutch readers. Yet, it is beyond doubt that Borel does have respect for the Chinese, for towards the end of the story, Borel explains that he burns paper money in the Chinese way:

> so that they can reach his spirit and provide him with some pocket money. For who knows! In Chinese hell all is the same as on earth, there are hell Mandarins with an entourage of judiciaries and executioners, who knows! A Chinese is a Chinese, even in hell—it might help him in his difficult perkara, it might soothe the Yama King and his mates!

In the explanation about Chinese hells, Borel is on the side of the 'real Chinese' from China,

[19] Borel 1901a, p. 173.
[20] Ibid, p. 174.
[21] Ibid, p. 197.

even though Kang Soei is portrayed as 'uneducated, simple and stupid'. But Kang Soei's naive views and valuable gestures please Borel, so much so that he asks Kang Soei to tell him parts of the case more than once.

Taking bribes is 'adat' (derived from Arabic but used in Malay for 'custom') according to Borel, and he is regarded as odd to go against it. He accuses van Hasselt of taking bribes and letting the old leaseholders renew the lease. Borel publishes some of his findings and opinions in the local newspapers of the Dutch East Indies and this makes him prone to criticism. As a result, the Resident complains about Borel's insubordination and the Director of Justice demands an explanation from Borel. In his letter to van Eeden of 29 February 1896, he writes:

> Brazenly I accused the resident of being a liar, someone who broke promises and conducted dishonest practices. I expected to be dismissed, but I could not help it, it was too much to me.[22]

This shows his determination to make public the wrongdoings of van Hasselt. Borel admits van Hasselt is 'a very charming person', but 'everyone knows he is a scoundrel.'[23] Apparently the situation becomes unbearable for van Hasselt, for he applies for sick leave. Among the documents that I found in the National Archives, there is no evidence of a conflict between the two, or a 'Van Hasselt vs Borel' case. There are documents from the period March-May 1896, that discuss van Hasselt's application for sick leave. A report by the Indies Council of 29 March 1896 makes comments on a list of tasks compiled by van Hasselt and questions the ability of van Hasselt as a Resident. The Council snubs van Hasselt for listing routine tasks that any Resident is expected to take care of. Furthermore, the Council thinks van Hasselt has accomplished little in terms of governing, and accuses him for failing to put an end to undesirable practices, including that 'the local chiefs still do as they like, such as levying unauthorized taxes.'[24] Hence, the advice by the Indies Council is to reject the application for sick leave by van Hasselt and to release him on the grounds of the malperformance and dereliction of duties.[25] Yet, eventually the advice is not taken, van Hasselt's application for sick leave is granted and he returns to the Netherlands in April 1896. There is no evidence that the departure of van Hasselt has any connection with Borel. However, in hindsight it was found that 'the allegation [about van Hasselt being corrupt] was unfounded, Borel had been hoodwinked by his Chinese informant,' according to Kuiper.[26] This is based on a document dating from 1914 about Borel's career in the Dutch East Indies. Yet, the question

[22] UVA. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden Brief, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93.
[23] Same letter of Borel to van Eeden of 29 February 1896.
[24] NA. Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Koloniën, nummer toegang 2.10.02, inventarisnummer 6238
[25] NA. Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Koloniën, nummer toegang 2.10.02, inventarisnummers 6238 and 9129.
[26] Kuiper 2016, p. 834.

of whether or not the allegation was correct, does not change the idea of Borel's drive to be involved with the Chinese people and the urge to write about his findings in the newspaper.

Van Eeden praises Borel:

> Not long ago you would have had to pack your bags and not van Hasselt, because you dared to stir up dirt. But times truly progress. Public opinion becomes more powerful. And even though the moral level is not high compared with the best individuals, it is rising. Otherwise you would not have gained this success.[27]

Nevertheless, Borel is transferred to Makassar on 1 October 1896 on the grounds of 'the serious dissatisfaction of the Government about the improper conduct engaged last year, for his contribution to a newspaper article directed against Mr. A. L. van Hasselt, Resident of Riau and dependencies at the time.'[28] But that does not stop Borel from continuing to speak his mind in search of justice.

3.2 Private Law from a Chinese Perspective

In his new post in Makassar, and later in Surabaya where he is located per 3 April 1898, Borel continues to write articles to offer his knowledge and view of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies. An example is his article in *The Indies Guide* (De Indische Gids) as feedback on Leiden Professor de Groot's comments on the proposal of the 'New Regulations of Private Law for the Chinese' (Nieuwe regeling van de privaatrechtelijke toestand der Chinezen) drafted by a ministry official by the name of Pieter Hendrik Fromberg (1857-1924). Fromberg submitted his proposal to the Governor-General on 26 December 1896.[29] A draft of the proposal was published to seek comments. The Minister of Colonies also sent a copy to de Groot to solicit his view. A summary of the main issues that de Groot raised were published in Volume I of *The Indies Guide* in 1898. In his article, de Groot sympathizes with the idea of Fromberg to give Chinese women more rights, in particular inheritance and guardianship, yet he believes that these points go against the aim of Fromberg that the new regulation would continue to 'follow the spirit of Chinese rites and habits.'[30] With quotes from Chinese source texts, including the *Book of Rites* and *Chinese Legal Code*, de Groot shows that what Fromberg proposes goes against views prevalent in China. Also, he says Fromberg is inconsistent, when it comes to the rights of guardianship for wives and concubines.

In the following issue of the same journal, Borel criticizes de Groot for claiming that a Chinese woman shares the 'patria potestas' with her husband, meaning that after the

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[27] UVA. Letter dated 21 July 1896. Van Eeden 1933, p. 68.

[28] LM. Extract from the Register of Decrees of the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies (Register der Besluiten van den Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië), No. 14 (16 August 1896). Van Hasselt himself applied for sick leave, which was granted per 4 April 1896.

[29] Tjook-Liem 2009, p. 209.

[30] De Groot 1898, p. 134.

husband's death the widow inherits everything.[31] According to Borel, this claim that a woman can inherit is incorrect and goes against the view of well-known sinologists including B. Hoetink (1854-1927), de Grijs, J. W. Young (1855-1898), H. N. Stuart (1855-1917) and Pieter Meeter (1844-1901), who have had longer practical experience than de Groot in the Dutch East Indies. Borel mentions the names of these sinologists to justify his arguments in anticipation of the reaction of de Groot.[32] Borel also notes that the interpretation of an idiom in the Chinese text, saying that *(zeng) fumu* (曾)父母 means (grand) parents and not 'one of the (grand) parents', as de Groot translates.[33] Borel goes on with an explanation about the position of women in China and also quotes from Chinese sources, such as the *Mencius*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Great Qing Legal Code*, and concludes that only '[w]hen Chinese women receive decent education and have reached a development that the European women have, or ought to have, will she be mature enough to have such civil rights.'[34] This is a racist and sexist argument, even if Borel may have had the best of intentions in trying to explain that more effort should be made to understand Chinese culture, where women were expected to obey men and were deprived of education. Accordingly, he feared that if Chinese women were given the right to inherit, male relatives would doubtless take advantage of them or they themselves would seek help from male relatives.

The discussion shows that Borel criticizes de Groot for ignorance of the actual practice in the Dutch East Indies. By then twenty years had passed since de Groot served as Chinese Interpreter (April 1878-March 1883) in the Dutch East Indies. It was not uncommon for sinologists in the Netherlands and those among the Chinese in China/ Dutch East Indies to disagree along these lines: de Groot held a more theoretical view which effectively means that he may not be aware of (changes in) the local circumstances, whereas sinologists in the Dutch East Indies had a more practice- and experience-based approach.[35] In retrospect, this is the start of Borel's criticizing de Groot, a habit that he cultivates over the years, as will be explained more in detail in Chapter 6. A summary of the discussion in the *Surabaya Commerce Paper* of 12 January 1899 puts it in another perspective:

> In the Chinese newspaper *Thien Nan Shin Pao* [*Tiannan xinbao* 天南新報 (The New Tiannan News)] of 29 December, that is published in Singapore, there is an article about the polemics between sinologists Henri Borel and prof. de Groot recently published in *The Indies Guide* and *Law Weekly* about inheritance of the Chinese woman in China. The editors state that the claim by de Groot that women shall inherit should not be included in the proposed new rule. About the statements of Borel the editors say: 'Mr.

[31] Borel 1898e, p. 780.

[32] De Groot is nevertheless greatly offended and indignantly writes 'Reply to Mr. Henri Borel' (Repliek aan den heer Henri Borel) in the next issue of *The Indies Guide* (II), 1898, pp. 987-989, upon which the editor decides to close the discussion.

[33] See de Groot 1898, p. 136, and Borel 1898e, p. 795.

[34] Borel 1898e, p. 785.

[35] Conflicting views of China recur in other periods, the Dutch writer Jan van der Putten is an example of present-day claimant of practical knowledge of China.

> Borel's words are quite right, we have nothing to add to them.' But perhaps professors in Leiden know even better than the Chinese…[36]

The newspaper questions the validity of sinologist knowledge over knowledge of ethnic Chinese but also the difference between the knowledge of a sinologist in Leiden and that of one in the East Indies. What is implied here also, is that Dutch experts know better than the Chinese people themselves. Yet, it appears there is some improvement in the sense that the Dutch government did consider a Chinese view of the matter. This is explained, in for example Patricia Tjiook-Liem's *The Legal Position of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies* (De rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië), who notes that for Fromberg's proposal,

> once again European law was the starting point, while taking into account Chinese views to a far greater extent. Fromberg had in his own words 'attempted to couch the Chinese mind in a Western form at crucial points.'[37]

The difference here is that while Fromberg suggests the Chinese mold their thinking in a Western way, Borel in his article remarks that Fromberg 'reasons with Western logic whereas Eastern logic is called for.'[38] There Borel echoes Schlegel's view in his dictionary: 'the actual Chinese law does not contain exact, definitive clauses, like ours does.'[39] So Borel asks the Dutch to look at things from a Chinese point of view, and let the Chinese keep their own values. But to achieve this, knowledge about (and the appreciation of) Chinese culture is needed.

Hence, Borel presents Dutch translations of Chinese literary works. This is the second type of writing that Borel employs to introduce Chinese culture, which I mentioned above. Most important are his translations of the Chinese classics, but his essays on Chinese hell and Guanyin also help the readers better understand Chinese culture. Borel had already begun his translations back in Leiden and Xiamen, which at the time was purely out of interest and dissatisfaction with existing (European) translations. The fact that there were misunderstandings or there was a lack of knowledge of Chinese culture in the Dutch East Indies confirmed his belief that there was a true need for such works.

3.3 Chinese Philosophy

Characteristic of Borel's translations of the Chinese classics is that he stays close to the source text, retaining Chinese concepts in romanization, reference to and comparisons with existing translations in English and German, and his objection to translations by missionaries. Some of these aspects help make the translation 'deliberately obscure', which Susan

[36] Anonymous 12 January 1899.
[37] Tjiook-Liem 2009, p. 210.
[38] Borel 1898e, p. 781.
[39] Ibid.

Bassnett writes of translations by William Morris (1834-1896) in connection with Romanticism:

> [n]o concessions are made to the reader, who is expected to deal with the work on its own terms, meeting head-on, through the strangeness of the TL [Target Language], the foreignness of the society that originally produced the text.[40]

During his two years in China and early years in the Dutch East Indies,[41] Borel started translating the Chinese classics. They were published when Borel was working as Chinese interpreter in the Dutch East Indies, except for the third volume of the *Mencius* which was published much later. As he explains in the introduction, the reasoning behind his series *Chinese Philosophy Explained to Non-Sinologists* (De Chineesche Filosofie Toegelicht voor Niet-sinologen) was that if Greek philosophy can be made accessible to the Dutch public in the Dutch language then why not Chinese philosophy. In this series a total of three volumes would eventually appear:

I. *Confucius* (Kh'oeng Foe Tsz'), in 1896, which includes the Confucian classics of *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Great Learning* and part of *The Analects*;
II. *Laozi* (Lao Tsz'), in 1897, which is the complete *Daodejing*;
III. *Mencius* (Mêng Tsz'), in 1931, which is the near-complete *Mencius*.[42]

Volumes I and III constitute the *Four Books*, while Volume II is a Daoist text. Discussed below are the first two titles, as the third was done at a much later phase in his life. Borel explains that, until his later years, he lacked the time and opportunity to work on that third volume of *Mencius*. It is probably also because the *Mencius* is the longest of the works in question.

Borel felt that he should undertake the task of educating the Dutch public in Chinese philosophy. He aimed primarily at the Dutch reader in general, but also at the Dutch officials in particular, as they dealt with Chinese people on a daily basis in the colonies, ruling over them and administering justice. So he had a dual readership in mind.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Borel noted in his diary that one of the reasons he was translating an English work on Buddhism was that it would help Prikker, who had an interest in Buddhism but had trouble reading English. This must have also been one of the reasons why Borel embarked on this project: there was an interest in Dutch translations of works from Asia in the Netherlands. Another reason he noted in his diary on 29 February 1892, when still a fourth year student at Leiden University:

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[40] Bassnett 2014, p. 76.
[41] In *Daybreak in the East* Borel notes that he was translating Chinese philosophy while he was in the Dutch East Indies (see Chapter 5).
[42] The *Mencius* was also published in *The Guide* in 1931.

> This afternoon I resumed work on my translation of Plato in the library, as well as my study of Confucius and the Chinese classics. I start to discover real gems in them although it is ever so difficult. I have to find everything myself because those translators—mostly English missionaries or professors—translate word by word but they don't catch the meaning. Their translation is therefore usually nonsense. And the most bizarre of all is that they write in footnotes that they don't understand and complain that 'the Chinese text is so obscure.' Yet the text is much less obscure than their soul. Now I am trying to understand the books although I don't know enough Chinese yet. In about five years' time I will do translations—good ones—which will be a great Fine work.[43]

This shows that while Borel was still studying Chinese, he was reading translations of the Chinese classics which he thought were no good. Apparently Borel already had a different interpretation of the texts, and therefore had the intention of doing his own translations.

In the introduction to the first volume *Confucius*, Borel also argues that although translations into other European languages could be ordered from the bookshop, a Dutch reader would much rather purchase a Dutch version if this was readily available in the bookshop because:

> There are people who do not read a foreign language as fluently as their own and do not have the time to dedicate themselves to the study of another language due to other busy activities.[44]

As Borel explains there was a fellow sinologist who had asked him reproachfully how he dare embark on such translation after the eminent Professor James Legge, who had studied Chinese for more than twenty years, had published his. Although Borel could conveniently translate via Legge's English version, he believed that he should not take the easy way out. While in great awe of Legge's knowledge and linguistic talent, Borel disagreed on certain points with Legge, which included both interpretation and translation approach. In his translation, Borel offers comparisons with translations in other European languages and indicates where he agrees or disagrees in case he has doubts about his own interpretation of a certain word or phrase. The introduction, notes and comments constitute the paratext, which as Gérard Genette writes:

> [is] what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold. (…) It constitutes 'a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that (…) is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it.' [45]

Paratextual elements tend to shed light on divergent concepts and historical implications of the translation in a given period within a given culture. Hence they are valuable for learning more about the socio-cultural context in which the translation(s) were produced and

[43] LM. Diary of Borel in Borel Archives.
[44] Borel 1896a, p. 2.
[45] Genette 1997, p. 1-2.

received but also the position and views of the translator on historical, social and linguistic aspects of their time.

At the time when Borel was doing the first volume on Confucius he was not aware of an existing Dutch translation of Confucian works. He admits later in the foreword of the volume on Laozi that he had come across an earlier translation of the Confucian classics only after his own came out, but that the earlier one was not a direct translation from Chinese into Dutch. Although Borel does not mention the title, he was most likely referring to Salomo Keyzer's relay translation of *The Holy Books of the Chinese, or the Four Classics of Confucius and Mencius* (De Heilige Boeken der Chinezen, of de klassieke boeken van Confucius en Mencius), published in 1862. This book, as the note to the subtitle explains, has 'an introductory biography of Confucius and Mencius and is provided with explanatory remarks and historical notes, adapted from the best European translations by the compiler of the Low German publication of the Koran.' (voorafgegaan door een inleidend levensberigt van Confucius en Mencius; en voorzien van ophelderende aanmerkingen en historische aanteekeningen, naar de beste Europesche vertalingen door den bewerker van den Nederduitsche uitgaaf van den Koran.)

As Borel indicates, the few works written by Dutch authors on China and Chinese topics including literature, philosophy, ethnography, etc had mainly been published in foreign languages, mostly in English or French, to reach an international readership. Examples are articles in *T'oung Pao* in English or French, such as the ones mentioned above, the Chinese novella 'The Oil Vendor' translated into French by Schlegel and *The Religious System of China* in English by de Groot. The general Dutch reader had limited or no exposure to these. Hence Borel's starting point was that his reader had little or no knowledge of the Chinese language and culture. His foreword, introduction and historical background in the first two titles explain in detail what the lay person would need to know to appreciate the work and gain a better understanding of Chinese culture. These paratexts show Borel's concern for his readers but they also represent his approach and interpretation of the texts.

In his translation in the most literal-conventional sense, it is clear that Borel opts to stay close to the original; he frequently gives romanizations of Chinese concepts. His many explanations about Chinese history and culture make the texts understandable for the general public. Borel brings the readers of the target language closer to the source culture but at the same time also frames certain passages in Western thinking, to enable the reader to better construct an image of China and the Chinese.

As Lawrence Venuti argues, translations have far-reaching social effects in forming cultural identities:

> To limit the ethnocentric movement inherent in translation, a project must take into account the interests of more than just those of a cultural constituency that occupies a dominant position in the domestic

> culture. A translation project must consider the culture where the foreign text originated and address various domestic constituencies.[46]

As will be shown below in specific examples, Borel tries to limit the ethnocentric movement in his translation. He takes into account both the position in the source culture as well as that in the target culture. It seems that according to Borel, it was important to understand the intention of the source text in the source culture, which is why he gave extensive notes and explanations. Venuti further writes, 'non-ethnocentric translation promises a greater openness to cultural differences' and this may well be worth the risk of a certain degree of unintelligibility. In what follows here, I will present an examination of the first two titles, *Confucius* and *Laozi*, probing into the translation strategy and the paratextual elements. A discussion of Borel's translation of the *Mencius* will follow in Chapter 7.

3.3.1 Untranslatability

The idea that literal translation was not possible is one of Borel's principles as set out in his second volume on Laozi. He quotes Legge as follows:

> The written characters of Chinese are not representations of words but symbols of ideas, and the combination of them in composition is not a representation of what the writer would say, but of what he thinks. It is in vain, therefore, for a translator to attempt a literal version.[47]

Borel agrees with Legge and takes this approach as a strategy for his own translation. Then Borel goes on quoting Jowett, who claims in his preface to *The Dialogues of Plato* that a translation should not be a literal rendering of the work but 'to him [the translator] the feeling should be more important than the exact word.'[48] So the translator should be able to sense the thoughts and feelings of the writer and the text. But what does that mean for his translation? Does it mean that Borel can sense the thoughts and feelings of the writing by interpreting the symbols of ideas of Chinese characters? Take the following example of a literal rendering from *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Ch. IV, no. 2:

> 人莫不飲食也，鮮能知味也。*Ren mo bu yinshi ye, xian neng zhi wei ye*. (No people do not eat or drink, but few can know the flavor.)
>
> *Er zijn geen mensen, die niet eten en drinken. (Maar) weinigen kennen (den) waren smaak!* (There are no people, who do not eat or drink. (But) few know (its) real taste!) [49]

Borel puts in brackets words which are not in the source text but that are needed in Dutch to

[46] Venuti 1995, p. 23.
[47] Borel 1897a, p. 1.
[48] Ibid. See Jowett's preface to the third edition of *The Dialogues of Plato, vol. 1*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1892, p. xiv. Accessed on Online Library of Liberty on 24-01-2016. http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/111#Plato_0131-01_20
[49] Borel 1896a, p. 86.

make a sentence. He retains the double negation in translation, but in his note to this paragraph, he explains that this concerns many things in life and comes up with a much smoother Dutch version: 'Iedereen drinkt en eet, maar weinigen kennen den smaak.' (Everyone drinks and eats but few know the taste.)[50]

A certain degree of 'foreignization' occurs with the romanization of Chinese concepts for which Borel explains there are no suitable equivalents in Dutch. The most essential are 君子 *junzi* 'gentleman', 禮 *li* 'decorum', *dao* 'way', and *wu wei* 'non action', but also include 孝 *xiao* 'filial piety', and 誠 *cheng* 'sincerity'. Borel argues that:

> It is not possible to sense the meaning of those typically Chinese concepts such as Cheng and Dao exactly and express them in a single European word.[51]

From this we can see again, the emphasis by Borel on this contrast between Chinese and European. It is his belief that Chinese concepts are unique. If he had given plain Dutch equivalents, then the impression of the text on the reader would have been less 'foreignizing'. Therefore, Borel also rejects various renditions by other translators and explains that he would much rather introduce the Chinese term in Romanization, and encourage the reader to take these in as new ideas. Borel offers detailed explanations to digest in order to obtain an understanding in the process of reading the rest of the text in which the concepts recur. Furthermore, he also explains that certain concepts in Chinese have more than one meaning, which no single Dutch word could possibly cover. An example of the untranslatable word 'Dao' from the *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter XXVI, no 7:

> 天地之道，可一言而盡也：「其為物不貳，則其生物不測。」 *Tiandi zhi dao, ke yi yan er jin ye: 'qi wei wu bu er, ze qi shengwu bu ce'.* (The Way of Heaven and Earth can be exhausted in one sentence: it is without double, and creates things in an unfathomable manner.)
>
> *De Tao van Hemel en Aarde kan met één zin gezegd worden: hij is één-in-zich-zelf, en baart de dingen op een ondoorgrondelijke wijze.* (The Dao of Heaven and Earth can be said in one sentence: he is one-in-itself, and creates things in an inscrutable manner.) [52]

Borel indicates in his footnote: 'Here again we see that the meaning of Dao in some cases is more than just Way, it is more in the sense of "the principle of action", if at all translatable. Zhu Xi notes that *cheng* itself brings the one-in-itself of Dao. It does not literally say "one-in-itself" but "without a second", "without double".'[53] Borel adds the comments of Zhu Xi, because as he says 'these are included in almost all Chinese editions of the text.' Zhu Xi's commentaries on the *Four Books* have been the most influential.

Until today the interpretation and translation of some Chinese concepts remain

[50] Ibid, p. 87.
[51] Ibid, p. 128.
[52] Borel 1896a, p. 128.
[53] Ibid, p. 128.

debated issues, such as the concept of '*cheng*' 誠, as Kent Guy points out in his review of *Translating Chinese Classics in a Colonial Context: James Legge and His Two Versions of the Zhongyong* by Wang Hui:

> the translation of *cheng* as 'sincerity' is well within the range of permissible renderings; in fact Wing-tsit Chan also uses 'sincerity' to render *cheng*, although Daniel Gardner chooses 'truthfulness.' Tu Wei-ming opts to leave the word in its original Chinese, but tells us that Lao Ssu-kuang of The Chinese University of Hong Kong prefers 'full realization'.[54]

Throughout his translation work, Borel wanted his reader to know that different interpretations are possible, which he does mostly in footnotes.

Another example of a notion Borel considers untranslatable, from *The Analects*, Book XIII, chapter 4:

> 樊遲出。子曰：「小人哉，樊須也！上好禮，則民莫敢不敬…」 *Fan Chi chu. Zi yue: 'Xiaoren zai, Fan Xu ye! Shang hao li, ze min mo gan bu jing...'* (When Fan Chi left, the Master said: "How petty Fan Xu is! When those above love the rites, none of the common people will dare be irreverent.)

> *Toen Fan Ch'i uitgegaan was, zeide de Meester: "Wat een klein mensch, die Fan Sü!*[55] Als die van boven de Lí (het Decorum) liefheeft, dan zal het volk niet oneerbiedig durven zijn.* (When Fan Chi had left, the Master said: "What a little man, that Fan Xu! When those above love the Lí (the Decorum), the people will not dare to be irreverent.) [56]

Here Borel retains the original term *li* in romanization, with 'decorum' in brackets, but stresses in his footnote: 'I again point out that those who translate Li into Decorum, Yi into duty (or as Legge renders it, righteousness), and Xin into sincerity and loyalty, do come close to the Chinese concept but do not capture the entire meaning.'[57]

By giving comparisons and explanations, there is room for the reader to appreciate different interpretations and, if he/she wants, develop his/her own ideas. This too is very representative of ancient Chinese texts which at different periods in history were interpreted differently by Chinese and Western readers alike. As with most texts and translations, there is not just one possible or correct translation.

3.3.2 Criticizing the Missionary Approach

Especially noteworthy and influential is Borel's strong objection to translations which were done by missionaries as they were permeated with Christian ideas. He argues:

> That most sinologists were missionaries is a great disadvantage to the correct interpretation of Chinese philosophy, as they were prejudiced in the idea that when it deviated from the Christian teachings, it

[54] Guy 2001, p. 305.
[55] Borel's footnote here is *Anderen naam van Fan Ch'i (Other name of Fan Ch'i).
[56] Borel 1896a, pp. 240-241.
[57] Ibid, p. 241.

intrinsically contained false notions.[58]

The problem of prejudice has also been discussed by scholars, although it appears that Borel was one of the first to point it out in 1895. In the study *Translating Chinese Classics in a Colonial Context: James Legge and His Two Versions of the Zhongyong*, Wang Hui explains how Legge had his share of criticism, and quotes Eugene Eoyang in 1993 who considered Legge's Confucian translations

> masterly but misguided, because he failed to see [China and the Chinese] on their own terms and the bias inherent in a fundamentally Christian outlook which he could not escape, nor see objectively, that infuses his intemperate and inconsistent critiques of the Confucian canon, while Girardot in 2002 claims that Legge was too naively reverent and simplistically uncritical of the Chinese classics and their commentarial mode of scholarship.[59]

Someone from Borel's own era was Ku Hung Ming 辜鴻銘 (Gu Hongming) (1857-1928), who declared Legge to be a mere 'pundit with a very learned but dead knowledge of Chinese books,' but Ku did not put the blame on Legge's missionary background as Borel did.

An example where Borel criticizes Legge is the following from *The Analects*, book VI, chapter 15:

> 子曰：「孟之反不伐，奔而殿，將入門，策其馬，曰：非敢後也，馬不進也。」 *Zi yue: 'Meng zhi fan bu fa, ben er dian, jiang ru men, ce qi ma, yue: fei gan hou ye, ma bu jin ye*.' (The Master said: "Meng Zhifan does not boast. When the army was routed, he was in the rear. When entering the gate, he urged his horse and said, "It is not that I dare to lag behind, but my horse refused to advance.")
>
> *De Meester zeide: "Měng Chi Fan roemt niet (op zijn deugd). Op een vlucht, in de achterhoede zijnde, toen men aan 't binnengaan van de poort was, zweepte hij zijn paard aan, en zeide: "Niet dat ik de laatste durf zijn, (maar) mijn paard wilde niet vooruit."* (The Master said: "Meng Zhifan does not boast (about his virtue). When fleeing, he was in the rear and when entering the gate he urged his horse and said, "It is not that I dare to be last (but) my horse would not advance.") [60]

Borel feels very strongly about this case:

> It is annoying to see that Prof. Legge, although an excellent scholar, tries to run down Confucius at all costs everywhere in his translation, in order to exalt Christianity. Thus he says, in relation to this: "But where was his virtue in deviating from the truth?" In this way all modesty is naturally made impossible.

Borel argues that Legge's Christian view was an obstruction to his appreciation of the Chinese way of modesty. Legge's translation reads:

> The Master said: Meng Chih-fan does not boast of his merit. Being in the rear on an occasion of flight, when they were about to enter the gate, he whipped up his horse, saying, 'It is not that I dare to be last.

[58] Borel 1897a, p. 3.
[59] Wang Hui 2008, pp. 54-56.
[60] Borel 1896a, p. 205.

My horse would not advance.'[61]

In the footnote to this chapter, Legge explains that Meng was blaming the horse for being in the rear which was the place of honor.[62] In other words, Meng was not being modest, but just making up an excuse and hoped that he could get away with it. To Borel, Legge was downplaying Confucian modesty.

Even more annoying and confusing for Borel was the fact that the missionaries had chosen to translate their God with the Chinese term 'Shangdi' 上帝, which as Borel explains was originally one of the most ancient deities of China, the supreme ruler in heaven, long before Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism came into existence. He therefore decides to leave Shangdi untranslated. See for instance chapter X, no. 5 of *The Great Learning*:

> 《詩經》云:「殷之未喪師,克配上帝。(……)」 *Shijing yun: 'Yin zhi wei sang shi, ke pei shangdi.* (...) (The *Shijing* says: before the emperors of the Yin Dynasty had lost the love of the people, they were equal to the Supreme God.)
>
> *De* Shi King *zegt: Toen de keizers der Yin dynastie nog niet (de liefde van) het volk hadden verloren, waren zij de gelijken van Shang Ti.* (The *Shijing* says: When the emperors of the Yin Dynasty had not yet lost (the love of) the people, they were equal to Shangdi). [63]

With his note on Shang Ti or Shangdi, Borel eliminates possible association with Western religion. While rejecting the Christian approach in appreciation of Confucian philosophy, Borel does compare some entries in the *Daodejing* with phrases from *The Imitation of Christ* (De Imitatione Christi). This book originally written in Latin by Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471) is a Christian devotional book. Borel regards Kempis just like Plato as a scholar who brings wisdom to the people and is therefore of the opinion that the reader should

> feel his simple words with a pure heart, read them in silent solitude away from the rumors of the world, empty of earthly thoughts, just like one should read the book of worldly wisdom with which it is worth comparing: *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis.

A comparison occurs in chapter XXXIV of the *Daodejing*:

> 以其終不自為大，故能成其大。 *Yi qi zhong bu zi wei da, gu neng cheng qi da*. (All his life he never attempts to be great, therefore he can succeed in becoming great.)
>
> *Daarom doet de Wijze zijn geheele leven lang niet groot, en daardoor juist volmaakt hij zijn grootheid.* (That is why the Sage does not presume greatness throughout his life, and thereby he makes his greatness perfect.)

Borel here refers to Book I, Chapter 3 of Kempis, quoting in French: 'Vraiment grand est celui

[61] Legge 1971, p. 189.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Borel 1896a, p. xx.

qui en soi-même est petit et tient pour néant tout faîte d'honneur.' According to the English translation of *The Imitation of Christ* by Richard Whitford: 'He is truly great who has great charity. And he is great who is little in his own sight and who sets naught all worldly honor.'[64] There is a contradiction in refuting the missionary approach and referring to Kempis in some instances. Although there is no influence of Kempis directly on the translation and the comparison is only used to explain these passages, it shows that Borel too uses Western works in his approach to translation. Yet the purpose is not to worship Western works, but rather to compare and explain Chinese literature. It helps the reader to understand the meaning of the relevant passages.

3.3.3 Achievement/Reception

With his translation approach (staying close to the source text and giving romanizations of Chinese concepts) and the paratexts (explanations on Chinese history and culture), Borel brings the readers of the target language closer to the source culture but at the same time also associates certain passages with Western thinking.

As for the purpose of the works, as Borel wrote in the introduction to volume I *Confucius*:

> If I succeed in conveying the essence [of Confucian thinking] to the general public so that it may understand the morals, habits and customs of the Chinese in our colonies then I have achieved my goal.[65]

Hence, the translation of Confucian works was for both his general reader and those in the Dutch East Indies. For the second title *Laozi*, he had similar objectives, albeit less in the educational sense and more in the sense of spiritual inspiration. Borel very passionately expressed his hope that the reader would become as inspired by Laozi as he had been and that the *Daodejing* would become his/her companion in life. So we see a shift in target reader. Although it is difficult to determine whether Borel did achieve these goals, he does mention in the third volume of *Mencius* which came out much later in 1931, that his first two titles saw second and third editions which indicates public interest.

If we look at the reception of the translations of *Confucius* and *Laozi* by Borel, e.g. in the review 'Two Books' (Twee boeken) published in the newspaper *General Commerce Paper* of 25 October 1896, the anonymous reviewer introduces Borel's *Confucius* and H. Mazel's French work *The Social Synergy* (La Synergie sociale). The reviewer first introduces Borel's book and compares Confucian teaching with the Christian. In spite of some similarities such as brotherly love, filial piety and humans being good by nature, the reviewer says there are also major discrepancies in for instance the idea of sinners and the almighty God above in contrast to the more earthly view of Confucius about government

[64] Kempis 1955, p. 36.
[65] Borel 1896a, p. 5.

and rules of Li. The reviewer also says that the Dutch reader is indebted to Borel, despite some modern terms which seem out of place, and emphasizes:

> It appears right in a time where interest in the East in general and China and Japan in particular is roused, more than before. The Far East is being pulled to us in a way that we ask ourselves: What is it that we expect? What is coming from the East?
> The book by Borel does not give the answer to this question even though it is an excellent introduction to it. Another recently published [French] work, *The Social Synergy* by H. Mazel, however, does bring us closer to the answer.[66]

For the reception of the works it shows that the reviewer detects a link between the two works. The reviewer describes how Mazel denounces the French Revolution and thinks it is high time to end the fake glory of that era. The reviewer thinks that the essential collaboration of the elements of all nations disturbed the much needed social synergy, and concludes:

> The book summarizes the entire history of Christian civilization but also that of our ancestors, Antiquity and the East, which is where it touches upon the book of Borel.
> (…)
> The two books also give a vision of a future in which Europe, led by Russia, reaches out to Asia, led by the Yellow Race, and a fusion will develop between the practical Confucianism and ideal Christianity, so that maybe for once society will be built on satisfaction due to wise resignation and reverent belief. For Western society until now was built on discontent or rather unfulfilment.[67]

Here again the reviewer sees a sharp contrast between East and West, but the curious thing is that he/she predicts a fusion between Confucianism and Christianity. Surely, this could not have been the intention of Borel.

In 'A Voice from Afar' (Eene stem van verre) in the *Sunday Post of News of the Day* (Zondagsblad van Het Nieuws van den Dag) of 23 October 1898, the reviewer Ypsilon, the pen name of Carel van Nievelt (1843-1913), starts:

> After Confucius, Borel now brings us Laozi and his wisdom, and all of us non-sinologists are grateful to him. Now we can discover the mystery of the *Daodejing* in an original and reliable Dutch translation. Anything that is difficult to understand is explained in notes by the translator. It will be a new sensation to many readers: a revelation, a surprise, like being able to see the dark side of the moon. Is it possible that this could come from China? Many will wonder.[68]

It appears from this review, that Borel has made the unknown accessible, and the reviewer thinks this book is an eye-opener, but finds it hard to believe that such a thing could come from China. This is a racist remark showing how the Dutch looked down upon the Chinese. After further explaining the contents of the *Daodejing*, Ypsilon also notes another effect of the work:

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[66] Anonymous 25 October 1896.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ypsilon 23 October 1898.

> After reading this book many will gain a more positive view of the Chinese race and the prospects of China.[69]

This confirms the idea that reports on China and the image of the Chinese in that period in the Netherlands are still rather negative, e.g. in the *General Commerce Paper* of 28 February 1895 there is an article 'State of Affairs in China' (De Toestanden in China). It is based on reports from Sir Andrew Clarke who had heard William A. Pickering (1840-1907), a well-respected China expert fluent in several Chinese regional languages, criticize the moral behavior of Chinese soldiers and officials. Although some are loyal and reliable, he says, many are corrupt and cruel and always aiming at profit and promotion at any cost. In conclusion he says:

> If China was a Christian nation and governed by officials like those serving under British authority it would be one of the happiest countries of the world... provided that the Chinese shed at least some of their quite indecent and very unacceptable bad habits.[70]

These kinds of racist reports in national Dutch newspapers, although reflecting the view of non-Dutch nationals, must have had an impact on the image of the Chinese among Dutch readers too. This is seen for instance in the reaction of Prikker on Borel's article on friendship, where Prikker cast doubt on whether the Chinese could uphold such lofty ideas about friendship. Prikker expressed his ideas on this article in his letter of 20 March 1894:

> It is a nice idea though that the Chinese promise each other eternal friendship. Do you think they would keep it that way? The Chinese are so shabby and shrewd.[71]

Borel's description of Chinese customs of friendship goes against the image that Prikker has of the Chinese. Another example of racism is the instance where Borel's poetry submission is rejected and he is thinking of funding a private publication. When Prikker reads about this idea, he is very concerned, so he writes to van Eeden for advice:

> Borel wrote to me that if necessary he could fund part of it himself but I had rather he didn't. You know that he usually needs a lot of money to get by and it is sheer misery if he runs out. And he had better not borrow from the Chinese because they are smart little thieves.[72]

Here again, Prikker discriminates against the Chinese: he advises against any close contact with the Chinese because they cannot be trusted, whether it involves friendship or money.

Hence, there is a need for and interest in books on China. The publication of a third

[69] Ypsilon 23 October 1898.
[70] Anonymous 28 February 1895.
[71] Joosten 1980, p. 175.
[72] Ibid, p. 184.

print of both the Confucius and Laozi volumes, is evidence of the popularity of Borel's books among Dutch readers as noted by an anonymous reviewer in *The Fatherland* of 30 November 1922. Even in 1933, R. H. van Gulik is still praising Borel. In his negative review of *Dao, Universal Consciousness* (Tao, Universeel Bewustzijn) translated by C. van Dijk, which van Gulik criticizes as blatantly wrong, he refers to

> the very successful translation by Henri Borel which has an outstanding introduction to Daoism and the problems of translating and adapting Daoist texts.[73]

In van Gulik's view Borel's version remains the one to read.

Influence of Borel's work can also be found in Dutch literature, e.g. the novel *Metamorphosis* (Metamorfoze) by Louis Couperus (1863-1923) published in *The Guide* of 1897. In this novel, the protagonist has Borel's work put on a special place on the shelves, claiming that his art is pure and that he himself is 'similar to a Chinese landscape, which he can describe so beautifully.'[74] Borel and Couperus were friends, although as Borel admits they did not meet often. In his 'Memories of Louis Couperus' (Herinneringen aan Louis Couperus) Borel recalls their walks through The Hague and their shared topics of conversation, including travels in Asia.[75]

It appears Borel's work also stirred an interest in Chinese culture. An example is Josephus Carel Franciscus Last, aka Jef Last (1898-1972), a writer, socialist, communist and sinologist, who claims it was work by Borel that inspired him to study Chinese. According to the article 'Jef Last is in love, really in love with the East' (Jef Last is verliefd, echt verliefd op 't Oosten) in the *News of the North* (Nieuwsblad van het Noorden) of 19 January 1960, Last explains:

> I went to the mines in Limburg. It was quite a long journey from Amsterdam so at the platform I bought a book with a bit of a mysterious title. I am fond of horror stories, so I thought 'ha, a nice Chinese horror story!'
> But it was not. It was a book about Chinese philosophy by Henri Borel. When I finished reading the book, I had the feeling that Confucius had an answer to all the questions. That really struck me and never let go.[76]

This shows that Borel's work stimulated and inspired readers who did not know Chinese. Although I have not been to able verify the year, Last probably went to Limburg in 1917, and went to study Chinese in Leiden in 1918.[77]

Borel was a pioneer in his field by publishing the first Dutch translation directly from the original Chinese classics, when relay translation was more common. Although it did not

[73] Van Gulik 1933c.
[74] Couperus 1897, p. 464.
[75] Borel 1933. For more on their relationship, see 'Louis Couperus and Henri Borel: impression of a friendship' (Louis Couperus en Henri Borel: impressie van een vriendschap) by José Buschman in *Vlaanderen* (52), 2003, pp. 190-196.
[76] Anonymous 19 January 1960.
[77] Wester 2001.

immediately set a trend, the number of direct translations did gradually increase in the course of the first half of the twentieth century.[78]

Besides literary translations of Chinese philosophy, Borel also further explored Chinese themes of culture that helped explain some of the customs and behavior of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies. In the next section, I will show how Borel introduces aspects of Chinese culture by translating excerpts of Chinese fiction and in telling a story in which he is directly addressing the reader. So Borel is the narrator and tells his story based on his experience and knowledge, combined with his translations of excerpts of Chinese fiction. As such, he is a negotiator between Chinese sources and Dutch target readers.

3.4 Negotiating between Cultures

From the way Borel introduces topics on Chinese culture, it seems that he was trying to bring Chinese culture closer to his Dutch readers. It shows his continued passion for China and things Chinese and his devotion to introducing China and Chinese culture to Dutch readers. Most important then is the collection *Kwan Yin: A Book of the Gods and the Hell* (Kwan Yin: een boek van de goden en de hel) published in 1897, although the essay 'Kwan Yin' was earlier published in *The Guide*. Besides the ethnographical writing in essays, such as 'A Bride' (Een bruid) and 'A Funeral' (Een begrafenis) in a style similar to some of his essays collected in *Wisdom and Beauty from China*, Borel now presents a new combination of literary and ethnographical translation. Two examples of this are 'Kwan Yin: The Goddess of Mercy: About Chinese Buddhism and Chinese art' (Kwan Yin. De Godin der Genade. Over Chineesch boeddhisme en Chineesche kunst) (hereinafter 'Kwan Yin') and 'The Chinese Hell' (The Chineesche hel). With the change of position and change of environment, Borel is no longer introducing China as a sinologist as he did previously in his essays collected in *Wisdom and Beauty from China,* which he wrote for his readers in the Netherlands. Since his move to the Dutch East Indies and in his capacity as a Dutch official for the colonial government, his position and purpose of writing had changed. From these essays, it shows he is not only targeting his Dutch readers at home but also those in the Dutch East Indies. The essays show how he had to deal with Chinese people on a daily basis but he also had to work with Dutch colleagues who he felt lacked an understanding of some Chinese customs, and therefore he had to have an understanding of both Dutch and Chinese cultures.

The way Borel writes about Guanyin and Chinese hell in the essays, it appears that Borel is a visible and present translator with a message. He is informative in the way that he writes about first-hand experience from visits to temples and antique stores in China and combines this with excerpts from primary source texts and references to scholarly studies. Both 'Kwan Yin' and 'The Chinese Hell' draw on the seventeenth-century Buddhist work *The True Scripture of Guanyin's Original Vow of Salvation* (*Guanyin jidu benyuan zhenjing* 觀音

[78] Heijns 2003, p. 248.

濟度本願真經) (hereinafter referred to as *The True Scripture)*, and the novel *Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji* 西遊記).

The True Scripture is a text which Borel was already studying while he was in China, as he wrote to van Eeden.[79] The text is one of the reinterpretations of the Miaoshan story which relates how Guanyin decides to go to the world below and be reborn as Princess Miaoshan to King Zhuang. When Miaoshan is old enough to be given away in marriage, she objects to her parents and retreats to the Daoist chamber in the White Sparrow nunnery. King Zhuang orders the nunnery to be burnt down which leaves all but Miaoshan dead. In his rage, the king has Miaoshan strangled and Miaoshan goes to visit the courts of hell only to come back to cure the king who has fallen ill. The story contains a combination of Buddhist (Guanyin), Daoist (nunnery) and Confucianist (filial piety) elements.[80]

According to Western frames of analysis *Journey to the West* is of a completely different nature. This is a novel attributed to Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩 (d. 1582) although the author's name does not appear on pre-modern editions. Research conducted by Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) in the early 1920s argues that Wu Cheng'en was the author, but some scholars contest the claim. While ostensibly based on the true story of Chinese monk Xuanzang's quest to India to collect sutras, it is a fantastical novel with supernatural elements.[81] Consisting of 100 chapters, the story starts with the birth of the monkey Sun Wukong and continues with Xuanzang's birth and pilgrimage. Together with other companions, their adventure is dangerous and treacherous. As Idema and Haft write, 'In his description of the perils and monsters, the author gives free reign to his humor and fantasy.'[82]

In his essays, Borel does at times refer to scholarly literature, but he explains that his own work was never intended as scholarship itself. As he indicates in the preface to *Kwan Yin: A Book of the Gods and the Hell*, without emotion China would be a dead country to him.[83] This seems to imply mutual exclusion of 'emotion' and 'scholarship'.[84] From his criticism on contemporaries it appears that to him those who engaged in scholarship lack 'emotion'. In Borel's point of view 'scholarship' is a means to understand China, but he wouldn't have written about it if it didn't stir any 'emotion'. He also emphasizes this in the introduction to

[79] UVA. Letter of 26 February 1893. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93. There are also notebooks in the Borel Archives at LM, which contain Chinese characters with translation of *The True Scripture of Guanyin's Original Vow of Salvation*.

[80] For more details, see Yu Chun-fang, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

[81] Hoffmann wrote about Xuanzang as early as 1853. See his article 'The Chinese pelgrim Xuanzang and his travels in India from 629-645' (De Chinesche pelgrim Hioeên Ts'áng en zijne reizen in Indië van 629-645) in *The Guide* of 1853.

[82] Idema and Haft 1997, p. 208.

[83] Borel 1896c, p. VII.

[84] Van Eeden has a similar idea of scholarship and emotion, as can be seen in the preface (dated July 1904) to the second edition of his novel *The Deeps of Deliverance* (Van de koele meren des doods) where he claims that the novel was 'not about scientific research but rather about admiration for the beauty of being'. Amsterdam: Querido. 1997, p. 5.

the essay 'Kwan Yin' where he refers briefly to Buddhist sources and quotes from studies by de Groot and Monier Monier-Williams (1819-1899), Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, for the background and origin of Guanyin, without mentioning the title or page number. But he refrains from going too deep into the matter, because:

> my appreciation of the Guanyin idea has little to do with the question of whether she comes from India or China, I prefer to convey the beauty and the emotions of the Chinese people for Guanyin that I felt, as well as [to convey] the religions and things, much rather than scholarship which is merely a tool to me.[85]

This is revealing of Borel's ideas on the interpretation of Chinese culture and how it should be taken from the source to the target culture. His professed aim was to bring more than facts and theories, and he hoped he could let the reader feel 'the emotions of the Chinese people'. It appears that by indicating different perspectives of Guanyin, Borel claims some kind of an 'authority' in the appreciation of Guanyin. By going beyond a factual introduction, Borel gives an experience and observation of the Goddess within Chinese culture. This is also reflected in his selection of topics, texts and translation strategy.

3.4.1 Topics and Texts

Borel's choice of topics and texts was undoubtedly primarily out of his own interest, but also because he thought it would help his reader to better understand the Chinese. It is telling of Borel that he chose Chinese texts that were not regarded as essential literary texts by Chinese and Western scholars in his time, and Borel was aware of this. It is possible that not until changes in Dutch sinology in the 1920s, Dutch sinologists by virtue of their training in Xiamen and their predominant exposure to local Chinese in the Dutch East Indies were not so much influenced by the ideas and prejudices of the educated elite. Borel chose *The True Scripture* but acknowledges in a footnote that many use *The Complete Biography of Guanyin of the South Sea* (*Nanhai Guanyin quanzhuan* 南海觀音全傳). Borel prefers *The True Scripture*, because he thinks it is 'much better written and of much more serious character'.[86] Neither book would have been seen by Chinese literati as literary texts. Moreover, Borel thought that *The True Scripture* conveyed best the things he wished to explain to his readers:

> It is a wonderful book in which the teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism appear together like brothers, and which leaves the reader wondering about several important issues, precisely when it matters most, while at the same time it is revealing of very typical Chinese folk beliefs about religion.[87]

The importance of the book according to Borel lies in the sense that it gives an insight in

[85] Borel 1896c, pp. 5-6
[86] Ibid, p. 16.
[87] Ibid, p. 16.

Chinese thought. Here a kind of essentialism can be detected in Borel in the way he regards the contents of the book as 'very Chinese'. Eventually he says 'Numerous other stories and legends about Guanyin are in circulation.'[88] So he makes it clear that he read and selected from among a wide range of material. The fact that many used *The Complete Biography of Guanyin of the South Sea* is also confirmed by Glen Dudbridge who writes:

> its importance is remarkable and undeniable. In China its pervasive influence can be felt in popular local renderings of the Miaoshan story down to modern times. In the West, largely through the agency of de Groot, it decisively shaped much thinking and writing about the later cult of Guanyin.[89]

Dudbridge attributes the preference for *The Complete Biography of Guanyin of the South Sea* to de Groot, whose Dutch study *Annual Festivals and Customs of the Chinese in Xiamen* was published in an expanded and authorized French translation entitled *Les fêtes annuellement célébrées à Emoui (Amoy): étude concernant la religion populaire de chinois* in 1886. Subsequently, scholars after de Groot accepted *The Complete Biography of Guanyin of the South Sea* as authoritative. Dudbridge also mentions *The True Scripture* and refers to Borel for a summary of the contents in Dutch. Dudbridge acknowledges that Arthur Waley (1889-1966) found *The True Scripture* 'long and tedious', and adds:

> if judged solely on aesthetic merits, it would remain unprinted and unread. Yet it survives to claim a value of another kind: a document which we can relate to fictional sources, to sectarian doctrine, and to a specific readership. It therefore adds usefully to our knowledge of the 'uncertain boundaries between religion, literature and entertainment' which we have recognized as the home territory of the Miaoshan legend.[90]

The choice of texts shows that Borel ignores prevalent views. He knows that scholars look down upon *Journey to the West*, yet he appreciates the book for its power of imagination.[91] In Chinese literary tradition, fiction was not recognized as a literary genre because literature 'intended to be useful, exert an influence on readers that was simultaneously intellectual, moral and aesthetic.'[92] Hence, *Journey to the West* fell outside the scope of literature 'proper' of China until the early twentieth century, when canonical views of literature began to change. But as explained by Alexander Wyllie (1815-1887) in his *Notes on Chinese Literature* written in 1867:

> Those who imbibed European ideas on the subject, however, will feel that the novels and romances are too important as a class to be overlooked. The insight they give into the national manners and customs of various ages, the specimens which they furnish of an everchanging language, the fact of this being the only channel through which a large portion of the people gain their knowledge of history, and the

[88] Ibid, p. 50
[89] Dudbridge 2004, p. 67.
[90] Ibid, p. 87.
[91] Borel 1896c, p. 111.
[92] Ibid, p. 9.

> influence which they must consequently exercise in the formation of character, are reasons too weighty to be left out of account, notwithstanding the prejudices of scholars on the subject.[93]

Among the novels listed by Wyllie is also *Journey to the West*. In fact, quite a number of other popular vernacular novels were read by early Dutch sinologists. Besides *Wonders Old and New*, they were also reading the historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi yanyi* 三國誌演義): in the collection of de Grijs there are 'Selections from the history of the three states' and the collection of Maurits Schaalje (1840-1899) contains a partial Dutch translation of this novel.[94] Moreover other titles of Chinese literature in the KNAG (Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap) collection, now stored in the East Asian library of Leiden University show that Dutch sinologists had purchased literary texts.[95] Clearly, the Dutch interpreters were very much aware of Chinese fiction.

The fact that Borel is translating fragments from the novel, makes it clear that he too looked at it from a Western point of view. This has to do with use and intention: Borel only selected relevant parts for his purpose, and did not leave the source text 'intact'. So the perception of Borel's Dutch readers *Journey to the West* will be completely different compared to how Chinese readers read it, also because Dutch readers lacked religious worship for Guanyin.

Later *Journey to the West* came to be regarded as one of China's major classical novels, when the need arose to create an indigenous vernacular literature that could be constructed as the ancestor to a new 'spoken language' standard for literature of the 1920s. The text has been popular in the West especially since the publication of Waley's abbreviated translation *Monkey: A Folk-Tale of China* in 1942. Still, Hu Shi in his introduction to Waley's translation, thinks the novel 'is simply a book of good humor, profound nonsense, good-natured satire and delightful entertainment.' Since Waley's, there have been other translations in English by William J. F. Jenner and Anthony Yu, and studies on the novel by Andrew Plaks, Paul S. Ropp, and Dudbridge among others, which is an indication of the increased recognition of the novel. In hindsight, one can say that Borel was right in recognizing the novel's potential before it was widely accepted.

3.4.2 Ever-presence as Translator

In the essays on these two topics of Guanyin and Chinese hell, Borel combined literary translation with ethnographical writing and illustrations. It is difficult to categorize the constituent parts precisely, but from the 72 pages of 'Guanyin', roughly 26 are translation, two pages consist of illustrations and 44 pages are Borel's own writing, while for the 67 pages of 'The Chinese Hell', five pages are taken up by illustrations, the translated text and

[93] Wyllie 1964, pp. 201-202.
[94] Kuiper 2005, p. 106, 138.
[95] For more details, see Kuiper 2010.

Borel's own writing and footnotes roughly divide into 45 and 15 pages respectively. As mentioned above, Borel is a visible translator, and also or even in the rendering of the source texts he uses various devices to keep his own voice in. As I will explain below, Borel is ever-present as a mediator, commentator and negotiator with editorial interventions, directly addressing the reader and commenting on the text. Borel also uses romanization for certain Chinese concepts and analogies to facilitate understanding.

From the text, it appears that Borel's aim was to make his readers appreciate the text, while retaining the foreignness of aspects of Guanyin and Chinese hell. The essays only contain relevant, selected passages from the Chinese texts that would help the reader better understand the concepts. As mentioned before, we know that Borel was reading and translating Buddhist texts when he was in China, so he was familiar with the contents of the texts. Giving examples of a word for word translation in a letter of 26 February 1893 to van Eeden, Borel shows how difficult it was to grasp the meaning.[96] Within the selected passages in the essays, Borel mostly remains faithful to the original unless it involves repetition, then he omits lines or abbreviates. Borel also leaves out characters from the source text that he considers irrelevant to his idea of the story and he changes literally quoted speech into indirect discourse. Characteristic are the interventions in the translation with comments addressed to the reader directly and the use of colloquial speech of which the style is different from the original. An example from *The True Scripture* is the point in the story, where Princess Miaoshan is talking with the Mandarin at the gate to Chinese hell. Borel's translation of 'Mandarin' for 'faguan' 法官' should have been rendered as '(Daoist) Priest' as it traditionally refers to Daoist ritual specialists. Borel comments that the government in hell works the same as on earth. This Mandarin explains how people are sent to different courts of hell depending on their sins and merits when they were alive and he answers any questions the princess has:

> 公主曰："此一關口可算煩闕，想你等亦有升降否?"法官曰："如查考分明，辦事勤勞有功者，上帝依功升賞;如善惡有錯，亦要降職問罪!"公主曰："我聞陰府有孽鏡台，照人陽間所作之事，善惡一一照出，可是真否?"法官曰："果有此事，原非虛語。" *Gongzhu yue: 'Ci yi guankou ke suan fanque, xiang ni deng yi you sheng jiang fou?' Faguan yue: 'Ru cha kao fenming, banshi qinlao you gongzhe, shangdi yi gong sheng shang; ru shan'e you cuo, yi yao jiang zhi wen zui!' Gongzhu yue: 'Wo wen yinfu you niejingtai, zhao ren yang jian suo zuo zhi shi, shan'e yi yi zhaochu, ke shi zhen fou?' Faguan yue: 'Guo you ci shi, yuan fei xu yu.*' (The princess said: 'This (post at the) gate is troublesome. Do you have rewards and punishments?' The Priest said: 'If the investigation is distinct, outstanding work will be rewarded, Shangdi will offer promotion according to achievements, but will also punish those who make mistakes, he will interrogate crimes and call for demotion!' The princess said: 'I hear that there is a Mirror of Sins, which reflects all the things people do, it gives a reflection of all good and evil, is that true?' The Priest said: 'There is truly such a thing, this is no empty talk.')
>
> *De prinses zeide hierop: "Deze betrekking van U lijkt mij nogal ellendig toe. Kunt U ook promotie maken?" De mandarijn antwoordde hierop bevestigend, daar Shang Ti, de opperste God, wel het kwaad strafte,*

[96] UVA. Letter to van Eeden of 26 February 1893. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden Brief, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93.

maar ook het goede beloonde. Als hij dus maar goed oppaste kon hij hoogerop komen. Toen vroeg de prinses: "Ik heb gehoord, dat hier een Spiegel der Zonde is, waarin de dingen, die de menschen gedaan hebben, worden weerspiegeld, en die goed en kwaad weêrkaatst. Is dat werkelijk zoo?" "—Óf het," antwoordde de mandarijn. "Dat zijn heusch geen leêge praatjes!" (The princess then said: 'This job of yours seems rather miserable to me. Is there any chance of promotion?' The Mandarin affirmed, for Shangdi, the Supreme God, although he punished evil, also rewarded good. As long as he took good care, he could climb higher up. Then the princess asked: 'I heard that there is a Mirror of Sins which shows the things that people have done, it reflects good and bad. Is it really true?' 'Sure,' the Mandarin replied. 'This is no empty talk!')[97]

The reply by the Mandarin to the first question of the princess is changed by Borel into indirect speech. Borel retains Shangdi 上帝 in romanization with an explanation right behind it 'the supreme God' (de opperste God), who is the Jade Emperor here. As we saw earlier in 3.2.2., in the translation of philosophical texts, Borel retains Shangdi in romanization, to avoid confusion or conflation with the Western God. What is also characteristic of the translation here, is the colloquial use of 'Sure' (Óf het) for 'guo you ci shi' 果有此事' (indeed there is such a thing), and then he sticks close to the original in 'yuan fei xu yu' 原非虛語 with 'this is no empty talk' (dat zijn heusch geen lege praatjes), which works fine in Dutch.

More colloquial expressions can be found in Borel's translation of excerpts from *Journey to the West,* a text which was written in vernacular Chinese. Borel also notes, that the language of the text is not in the classical style, but as colloquial as 'the people talk at home and the storytellers on the corner of the street.'[98] For his purpose of writing about Chinese hell, Borel only took some parts from three chapters in *Journey to the West*. Borel does not say which edition he used or which chapters the excerpts are taken from.[99]

The following passage shows how Borel's translation follows the Chinese original, and where Borel intervenes.

龍王曰："請卜天上陰晴事如何。"先生即袖傳一課，斷曰："雲迷山頂，霧罩林梢。若占雨澤，準在明朝。"龍王曰："明日甚時下雨？雨有多少尺寸？"先生道："明日辰時布雲，巳時發雷，午時下雨，未時雨足，共得水三尺三寸零四十八點"。 龍王笑曰："此言不可作戲。如是明日有雨，依你斷的時辰數目，我送課金五十兩奉謝。若無雨，或不按時辰數目，我與你實說，定要打壞你的門面，扯碎你的招牌，即時赶出長安，不許在此惑眾！"先生欣然而答："這個一定任你。請了，請了，明朝雨后來會。 *Long Wang yue: 'Qing bu tian shang yinqing shi ruhe.' Xiansheng ji xiu chuan yi ke, duan yue: 'Yun mi shan ding, wu zhao lin shao. Ruo zhan yu ze, zhun zai mingzhao.' Long Wang yue: 'Mingri*

[97] Borel 1896c, p. 88.
[98] Ibid, p. 111.
[99] In the Chinese version of *Journey to the West* that I used, the excerpts are from chapters 9, 10 and 11, but in the complete English translation by Yu it is chapters 10, 11 and 12. The discrepancy is caused by a controversy over the authenticity of chapter 9. As this lies outside the scope of this study, I refer to Antony Yu's translation *The Journey to the West*, where he notes in the introduction to his translation 'As the present translation is intended to be a complete reproduction of the modern edition, I have not followed Dudbridge's advice to exclude chapter 9. For reasons stated elsewhere, I am persuaded that the "Ch'ên Kuang-jui story" is essential to the plot of the Hsi-yu chi as a whole, even though it lacks the best form of textual support.' 1977, pp. 15-16. The article Yu refers to is 'Narrative Structure and the Problem of Chapter Nine in the Hsi-yu Chi,' JAS (34), 1975, pp. 295-311.

shen shi xia yu? Yu you duoshao chicun?' Xiansheng dao: 'Mingri chen shi bu yun, yi shi fa lei, wu shi xia yu, wei shi yu zu, gong de shui san chi san cun ling sishiba dian.' Long Wang xiao yue: 'Ci yan bu ke zuoxi. Ru shi mingri you yu, yi ni duan de shichen shumu, wo song ke jin wushi liang feng xie. Ruo wu yu, huo bu an shi chen shumu, wo yu ni shi shuo, ding yao dahuai nide menmian, chesui nide zhaopai, jishi ganchu Chang'an, bu xu zai ci huo zhong!' Xiansheng xin ran er da: 'Zhege yiding ren ni. Qingle, qingle, mingzhao yu hou lai hui.' (The Dragon King said: 'Please tell me the weather forecast.' The soothsayer worked the sticks and recited 'The clouds drift above the mountains, haze cover the trees and the grain; if I soothsay when rain will fall, the answer is tomorrow.' Then the Dragon King asked: At what time tomorrow will it rain and how much rain will fall?' The soothsayer replied: Tomorrow at Chen hour clouds will gather, at Si hour there will be thunder, at Wu hour it will start raining, and at Wei hour it will stop. In total there will be three feet three inch of rain with forty-eight after-drops.' The Dragon King smiled: 'You shouldn't joke about this. If it does rain tomorrow at the time you indicated, exactly the amount you say, I will grant you fifty ounce of gold as reward. But if it doesn't rain or not at the time that you said it would and not the same amount, then I will come back and demolish your front door, tear down your signboard and banish you from Chang'an, and allow you no longer to deceive the people here.' The soothsayer said unruffled: As you wish. Please come back tomorrow, after the rain.')

'Zoudt u mij ook kunnen zeggen,' vroeg de koning, 'wanneer er regen zal vallen?' Daarop begon de wichelaar met zijn wichelstokjes te werken en zeide het volgende versje op: "De wolken dwalen boven de bergen, Mistdampen bedekken het woud en het graan; Als ik wichel wanneer de regen zal neerzegenen, Is het antwoord: 'morgen.'" Toen vroeg de Zee-Draken-Koning: 'Op welk uur dan morgen, en hoeveel regen zal er zoowat vallen?' De wichelaar antwoordde: 'Morgen op het uur Ch'an zullen de wolken bijeenkomen, op het uur Sz' zal de donder komen opzetten, op het uur Wu zal de regen neervallen, en op het uur Wei zal die ophouden. Er zal in 't geheel vallen drie voet en drie duim regen, en laatste na-droppels acht en veertig.' De Zee-Draken-Koning zeide lachende: 'Zulke woorden mag je niet uit gekheid uitspreken, mannetje! Als morgen juist op de tijden, die gij bepaald hebt, precies zooveel regen valt, zal ik u vijftig ons goud geven tot belooning. Maar als er geen regen komt, òf niet op den bepaalden tijd en in de bepaalde hoeveelheid, dan zal ik uw voordeur kapot trappen, uw uithangbord vernielen, u uit Ch'ang Ngan jagen, en u niet meer toestaan, hier de menschen te bedriegen.' 'Zoals u wilt,' zeide de wichelaar kalmpjes. ('Could you tell me,' the king asked, 'when it will rain?' Thereupon the soothsayer started working the sticks and recited the following verse: 'The clouds drift above the mountains, haze cover the trees and the grain; if I soothsay when rain will fall, the answer is tomorrow.' Then the Sea-Dragon-King asked: At what time tomorrow will it rain and how much will fall?' The soothsayer replied: Tomorrow at Chen hour clouds will gather, at Si hour there will be thunder, at Wu hour it will start raining, and at Wei hour it will stop. In total there will be three feet three inch of rain with forty-eight after-drops.' The Sea-Dragon-King smiled: 'You shouldn't joke about this, little fellow.' If it does rain tomorrow at the time you indicated, exactly the amount you say, I will grant you fifty ounce of gold as reward. But if it doesn't rain or not at the time that you said it would and not the same amount, then I will come back and demolish your front door, tear down your signboard and banish you from Chang'an, and allow you no longer to deceive the people here.' 'As you wish, the soothsayer said unruffled.)[100]

From this passage, we can see that there are foreignizing elements in the translation, such as the romanization of names of the hours. Borel gives an explanation in the footnote, which reads 'The Chinese have twelve hours in a day. The hour 'chen' corresponds with our 7-9 am, the hour 'si' to our 9-11 am, the hour 'wu' is 11am-1 pm and the hour 'wei' is our 1-3pm.'[101] At the same time the use of colloquial language and some abbreviation makes the text easy to read. The initial request of 'Please forecast the weather,' was changed by Borel simply into 'when will it rain?' Then in the King's answer to the prediction of the soothsayer, Borel adds 'little fellow' in 'You shouldn't joke about this, little fellow!' (Zulke woorden mag je niet uit

[100] Borel 1896c, pp. 115-116.
[101] Ibid, p. 115.

gekheid uitspreken, mannetje!) This adds a bit of arrogance on the part of the king which is not there in the source text. The final answer of the soothsayer in this passage is abbreviated by Borel to 'As you wish' (Zoals u wilt), while in fact he says 'come back tomorrow after the rain' as he is positively certain that it will rain.

In previous writing, Borel tends to opt for analogies to help his reader understand or imagine what he means. Here I also found some occasional reference to similar notions in the West, e.g. at the start of 'Kwan Yin', where he reminisces on Buddhist figurines which he saw in the window of an antique shop in The Hague four years ago: 'I thought this woman resembled figurines of the Holy Virgin, so much so that I imagined her to be a Mary of the East.'[102] Another example is the title of *Journey to the West*, which Borel translates as *Roamings in the West—fairy tales of a Chinese Grimm* (Zwerftochten in het Westen—een fabelenboek van een chineeschen Grimm).

To draw the readers' attention Borel uses the device of addressing the reader directly. It is here that we can see that Borel has changed his attitude: he displays a tone of superiority over the Chinese people not detected before. In addressing the reader, he tries to convince them that there is truth in the Chinese way of thinking, even though people may laugh at their superstition. An example is the intervention in the translated text from 'the Chinese Hell' where Guanyin transforms the courts of hell:

> Nowadays the Chinese can no longer meet such high expectations. It is indeed a bit too much to rescue all souls from the hells for good. *But don't laugh, dear reader,* for their naivete is truly adorable, to allow the poor fellows a month vacation from the flames of hell. It is reasonable and it is done![103]

Again, it seems Borel is mocking the Chinese, in an attempt to reach out to the readers. At the same time, he makes a great effort to explain Chinese customs which is evidence of his understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture. He further clarifies that on the last day of the sixth month, the gates of hell are opened and ghosts are allowed to wander around on earth for a month, and therefore the Chinese light candles and burn paper outside the house. The purpose of his explanation is:

> I hope that these very serious ideas will compensate the reader for the somewhat childish and creepy horrors of those hells, and in particular the reader in the Indies who has to pass through the Chinese camps during the festival, when there are pigs, sheep, goats and all kinds of suspicious Chinese snacks on long racks that lie there stinking among the awful smoke of smoldering oil lamps and burning paper offerings.
> It is, however, perfectly understandable of the Chinese, who believe in above related horrors, to offer the poor, ravished ghosts some delicacies. After all, the truth of the matter is that after *they* savored them invisibly then the delicacies will disappear into their own stomach![104]

It appears from this description about a Chinese festival, that Borel uses his knowledge of

[102] Ibid, pp. 1-2
[103] Ibid, p. 106. My emphasis.
[104] Ibid, p. 110.

Chinese customs to explain the cultural elements, while at the same time showing consideration for his readers, in particular those in the Indies, who encounter this personally when they move among the Chinese during festivals. It is possible that Borel may have heard complaints by colleagues, for those who lacked the knowledge of Chinese customs will fail to understand the meaning of offering food and burning paper offerings. Ultimately, it seems likely that Borel in his quest to seek justice, he also did it for 'the sake of the Oriental' (in the words of Said), because if the Dutch better understood Chinese customs, it would benefit the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies.

One of the Dutch reviewers of *Kwan Yin: A Book of the Gods and the Hell* also notes that the book is highly subjective and that Borel writes about the Chinese in a different way than authors before him. But in spite of its subjectivity in for instance the piece on Guanyin, the anonymous reviewer points out it is based on

> the history and the meaning of the goddess, taken from various, original Chinese sources many of which are unknown to the outside world. The same goes for his statements about the representation of Chinese hell that he makes. The five studies and descriptions united in this collection are of a strong personal character in which suggestive imagination plays a major role, yet they convey a lot of interesting and important information about a nation that we are accustomed to think differently about. That is why this book by Mr. Borel is worth reading for anyone who is not living in unchanging, petrified reverence of the ancient tradition.[105]

So it appears that the fact that Borel is using hitherto untranslated texts makes him worth reading and compensates for his subjective writing. Moreover, as the reviewer notes, Borel makes his readers see China in a different light, different to what readers were used to.

3.5 Return to the Netherlands

Borel's efforts toward a better understanding of the Chinese people had hardly any effect on people working in the Dutch East Indies, and it appears that his reports on corruption and suggestions for new policies were neglected by his superiors, which must have frustrated him.

As noted above Borel dislikes the expatriate society and lifestyle in the Dutch East Indies and over the years he seeks alternative posts. In his letter to van Eeden of 25 November 1896, Borel writes that the Governor-General proposed to him an appointment at the consulate in Hong Kong. Borel hopes he will get it, but doubts that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will approve.[106] Letters in 1897 by van Eeden to Borel also inquire about a possible transfer to China, but apparently it was never realized.[107] Over time Borel is

[105] Anonymous 1898.

[106] UVA. Letter by Borel to van Eeden of 25 November 1896. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden. Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93.

[107] Van Eeden is asking about the position of consul in China, expressing his hope that Borel will be appointed. See letters of 19 March 1897, 8 August 1897, and 30 September 1897. Van Eeden 1933, pp. 77-87.

complaining of heart and nerve problems, and he goes to Tosari for convalescence. Eventually, Borel is granted paid sick leave on 23 June 1899 to return to the Netherlands.

Soon after his return, Borel becomes embroiled in a controversy about the book *Life in the Dutch East Indies* (Het leven in Nederlandsch-Indië) by Bas Veth, whose full name is Bastiaan Veth (1860-1922), published in 1900. According to E. M. Beekman in his 'Bas Veth: A Colonial Muckraker', Veth was a businessman in the Dutch East Indies for twelve years.[108] He went to the Dutch East Indies in 1878 and returned to the Netherlands in 1891. Borel became acquainted with Veth in the Dutch East Indies and he cherishes their friendship.[109]

In this book, Veth 'attacked just about every aspect of colonial existence, from dogs to sanitary habits.'[110] Beekman notes the book was a kind of best seller as it was reprinted four times, but it also 'unleashed a stream of letters to the editor, [as well as] articles, brochures, and pamphlets.'[111] Some commentaries on the book refer to Borel to give a different perspective on life in the Dutch East Indies. In a letter to the editor which was printed in the *General Commerce Paper* of 19 August 1900, Borel complains that people are using his work to set off against Veth's work. Borel vehemently defends his point of view, stressing that he agrees with the contents of Veth's book and adds that his praise of the beautiful mountains of Java does not mean that he likes the colonial society of the Dutch East Indies, for he suffered too much there.[112] His strong reaction is further evidence of his dislike of the Dutch East Indies, and he does not want readers to be mistaken.

It seems that Borel originally intended to remain in the Netherlands and not return to the East Indies anymore. His sick leave is extended and he signs a contract with his publishers to publish novels on a regular basis, possibly as a result of his relatively successful novel *The Young Boy* (Het Jongetje) in 1898 which was reprinted four times.[113] Still

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[108] Beekman 1986, p. 102. There is no evidence of a direct relation between Bas Veth and the renowned Dutch indologist Professor Dr. Pieter Johannes Veth (1814-1895). According to genealogical information, Bas Veth was the eldest of five sons of shipowner Jan Veth (1833-1899) and Neeltje von Lindern (1837-1892). (www.genealogieonline.nl)

[109] In the diary entry of 29 October 1897 Borel mentions that he met and became friends with Bas Veth in the East Indies.

[110] Beekman 1986, p. 101.

[111] Ibid, p. 102.

[112] Borel 1900c. Later in a reply letter to a certain 'Bles D.' who apparently asked for advice about the Dutch East Indies, Borel refers to Veth's book. He explains that going to the Indies is 'a moral demise for 9 out of 10 people' and recommends reading Veth's book. Letter can be found in the Borel Archives at LM.

[113] A reprint of *The Young Boy* appeared in 1899, a third print in 1902, a fourth print in 1912 and a fifth print in 1920. This indicates readers' interest in the novel, even though many of the reviews were negative. According to M. G. Kemperink in his article 'An image of a Woman' (Een beeld van een vrouw) in *The New Language Guide* (De Nieuwe Taalgids) of 1992 (pp. 479-494), Frederik van Eeden identified with the contents of the novel (which made him cry as he noted in his diary of 4 February 1898), but he was not impressed by the literary quality. (p. 492) See DBNL. Another contemporary writer Lodewijk van Deyssel, however, condemns Borel for his sentimental writing in general and denounces *The Young Boy* as 'complete rubbish' (volslagen prul). (See essay written on 26 March 1899 included in *Literary Scolding* (De Scheldkritieken) (1979), pp. 258-260. See DBNL.) For an evaluation of Borel's early work, see chapter 14 of *Dutch Literature in the Fin de Siècle: reception-historical overview of prose from 1885 to 1900* (Nederlandse Literatuur in het Fin de Siècle: een receptie-historisch overzicht van het proza tussen 1885 en 1900) by Jacqueline Bel. See also Otto Knaap's *Henri*

struggling with health problems, Borel is unable to deliver on time, and to make matters worse his novels receive negative reviews. Further extension of leave is granted by the Minister of Colonies, but changed to unpaid leave after June 1902.

Given the pressure, critics and an unstable income, Borel accepts a new appointment as 'Official for Chinese Affairs' in the Dutch East Indies in 1903. It was a new opportunity, even though all previous effort he had put into his role as translator and negotiator in his work in the Dutch East Indies, as well as in his writings, seemed to have had little effect. Yet through his works as discussed above, it may have raised in Borel an awareness of nationality, of belonging, of a feeling of conflict between East vs West. This approach in life and work, inner struggles, and choosing sides, makes it hard to sustain life in colonial society. So it's not so surprising that when Borel travels again to the Dutch East Indies in 1903, it turns out to be a very short period as we will see in Chapter 4.

Borel (Amsterdam: Veen, 1900), who seeks to explain the reasons why some praise and others criticize the works of Borel.

Chapter 4: Torn between East and West

During the period of sick leave from 1899 until his reappointment in 1903 and sick leave again in 1904, Borel publishes few works on China, other than *The Chinese in the Dutch East Indies* in 1900 mentioned before. It is likely caused by the pressure of producing novels on a regular basis.[1] There is still an essay in *The Guide* (also in 1900), about the wrongdoings of European missionaries in China, entitled *The Chinese Question* (De Chineesche kwestie). This includes Dutch translations of Chinese reports on misconduct by some missionaries in China. Borel claims that with a few exceptions, missionaries were living in luxury, ignored Chinese laws and failed to study the Chinese language and culture. Reviewers are skeptical about this work because other reports write positively on the achievements of missionaries. Based on this, it strikes one that Borel is often trying to empathize with the Chinese side of the issue at hand, and blame the Western side. To a certain extent Borel is right, but as Spence writes 'Behind Chinese exaggerations of Christian excesses lay a complex web of truths that made their exhortations effective.'[2] Studies show that several aspects should be considered and viewed in the longer historical context of the missions and the Chinese reaction to Christianity. The Chinese view of Christianity as heterodox (criticizing Christian beliefs and making up strange religious practices), the frustration of missionaries at disappointing results of conversion, and the penetration of missions deeper into China's interior are but a few of them. I will not go further into this issue here, as it falls outside the scope of this study.[3]

Borel is reappointed at Riau in November 1903, the same location as his first post in 1894, but is not there for long. About six months into his appointment, Borel goes on sick leave again. According to his diary, he is convalescing in Sukabumi on West Java from May till June 1904,[4] and then he goes back to the Netherlands again on 19 October 1904 for a year, before another appointment in Semarang in 1905. According to later documents, however, it appears that Borel was suspended from work in 1904, and an arrangement was made for his

[1] Such titles include: *A dream* (Een droom) in 1899, *Sister* (Het zusje) in 1900, *The Little Butterfly* (Het vlindertje) 1901.

[2] Spence 1990, pp. 205-206.

[3] For more details see Paul A. Cohen, 'The Anti-Christian Tradition in China', in *The Journal of Asian Studies* (20:2), 1961, pp. 169-180; and Daniel H. Bays (Ed.) *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996. As Paul A. Cohen notes in his review of *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* in *China Review International* (5:1), Spring 1998, pp. 1-16, the emphasis has finally shifted from foreign missionaries to Chinese Christians and their experience over time. See also chapter 3 'Late Qing Scene' of part One 'Late Qing China' in the *Handbook of Christianity in China. Volume Two: 1800 to the Present*, edited by R. G. Tiedemann, Leiden: Brill, 2010. In particular 'Proliferation of "religious cases"' under 3.3 'The Treaty System', describes the causal factors that gave rise to anti-Christian conflict, pp. 302-310. Daniel H. Bays also goes into the anti-Christian conflicts and violence in chapter 4 'Expansion and Institution-Building in a Declining Dynasty, 1860-1902' of *A New History of Christianity in China*, Maiden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, pp. 66-91.

[4] LM. Diary in Borel Archives.

transfer to Makassar. There are two possible causes for this transfer and both are the result of his writings. The first is the essay 'A Visit to the Sultan of Lingga' (Een bezoek bij den sultan van Lingga) in which Borel describes his disappointment with the palace which he expected to be 'oriental'. This essay was first published in *The Telegraph* of 27 February 1904 and reprinted in the *Batavian Newspaper* of 30 March 1904. Later it was also included in the collection *Wisdom and Beauty from the Indies* (Wijsheid en schoonheid uit Indië), published in 1905. This book will be discussed in more detail below. In the preface to the reprint of the book in 1919, Borel explains as follows:

> With reference to the essay 'A Visit to the Sultan of Lingga', a curious incident should be mentioned. As a result of the publication of this essay in the spring of 1904, the colonial administration of the Dutch East Indies found reason to call for my transfer from Tanjung Pinang (Riau) to Makassar (which I could evade by requesting to return to the Netherlands at my own cost). Reason for the transfer was that 'it would be impossible to maintain a good relationship with the Sultan.' Given that in my capacity of Official for Chinese Affairs I never had any official business with this Malay ruler, one will be able to evaluate the relevance of it. Yet several years later the Dutch government, who was so scared of the sultan's sensitivity in 1904, forced the sultan to abdicate. They rightly suspected him of political scheming against our authority, and he was denied the right to remain in any of our colonies and sent to Singapore! Since then the sultanate of Lingga no longer exists.[5]

The essay gives a negative image of the sultan and his staff who were (to Borel's dismay) dressed in Western royal fashion. Borel criticizes the ugly Western-style interior of the palace which he calls 'a warehouse of furniture' and the terrible performance of the dancers. He also mentions the sultan's possession of numerous cars and bicycles that stand idle and rusty, and notes the rumor about the sultan's excessive spending. The voice in the essay could be perceived as that of a spokesperson for the Dutch which could indeed be damaging to relations. Here, it seems beside the point as to whether Borel ever had any official business with the sultan, as Borel argues, and it only shows egocentrism without concern for the consequences. There's no doubt that the essay was an insult to the sultan. As history now writes: the sultan whose name was Abdul Rahman II (1885-1911) was the last head of the Malay sultanate in Riau. It turns out that he increasingly resisted cooperation with the Dutch which led to military action by the Dutch in 1911. The sultan was forced to abdicate and the sultanate was dissolved.

The second possible cause for transfer is the report Borel allegedly wrote after investigating the implementation of the Coolie Ordinance (Koelieordonnantie) in the tin mines of Singkep, an island not far from Riau.[6] The Coolie Ordinance was introduced by the Dutch government in 1880 in order to regulate the contracts of coolies, which included the clause that employers could punish coolies who failed to comply with the terms in the contract. In hindsight, Borel explains in 1928 that it was his report on the appalling

[5] Borel 1919, pp. 1-2. Reprint of Borel 1905.
[6] So far I have found no evidence in the National Archives of such a report.

conditions (including spoilt rice in the kitchen and a lack of basic facilities in the residential quarters of the coolies) that led to his transfer.[7] In conclusion, Borel accuses the government of hushing up his findings about the coolies, and using the problems surrounding his essay on the sultan as a pretext for his transfer.[8] Either way, again it is his writings that cause trouble.

In spite of the problems at work, Borel is writing about life in the Dutch East Indies. Besides the essay on the Sultan of Lingga, the topics include various other aspects of life in the East Indies, from festivities and a praying Haji[9] (a Muslim who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca), to landscapes and coolies. A total of ten essays are collected in *Wisdom and Beauty from the Indies* and published in 1905. Borel writes quite positively about nature and scenery, about people he meets, about a party in Preanger (mountainous region on West Java) in honor of a Regent who is bestowed with an award. In these essays, he is still drawn to things Chinese, and a beautiful sight would remind him of something Chinese. It appears that he perceives beauty in the Dutch Indies in Chinese terms, as will be illustrated below. Most importantly the essays also give insight into Borel's awareness of his position and how he feels torn between East and West. An increasing influence of Chinese culture into his writing can be detected, as if he is no longer working from one culture into another but connecting them, and so Borel's translation of China is Borelian. This can be explained, in the words of Wolf (briefly referred to in the Introduction):

> In ethnographies as well as in translation in the traditional sense of the word, the cultural Other is not verbalized directly but only indirectly, and filtered and arranged through the ethnographer's or the translator's consciousness.[10]

In a sense, it appears that Borel is merging Self and Other, or rather he has found a connection between 'conceptualizing' culture and 'textualizing' it, which we will turn to below.

4.1 Issues of Belonging

Of special interest is the first essay in the book, about Borel's trip to Singapore, which is most revealing of what he experiences as his position between East and West. There are alternating feelings of joy of being in Asia vs feelings of shame of being white. His trip to Singapore was, as Borel explains, to escape from the suffocating life in Riau.[11] He had all along seen Singapore as a place to recharge, and was in the habit of doing some shopping

[7] Borel 3 October 1928. Thanks to Koos Kuiper for referring to this article.
[8] Ibid.
[9] An excerpt of 'Praying Haji' (Biddende Hadji) was first published in *The Sumatra Post.* Medan, 11-08-1905. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010321967:mpeg21:a0002
[10] Wolf 2002, 181.
[11] Borel 1905a, p. 41.

there as well. As early as 15 December 1895, in a letter to van Eeden, Borel writes that he is going to Singapore for Christmas: 'There is the true tropical splendor, which strangely enough is lacking here.'[12] Moreover, he claims he feels much younger there, with more energy and joy in everything. In another letter, which he wrote when he was transferred from Riau to Makassar in 1896, he also mentions a trip to Singapore in between. One of the reasons that he wishes to spend time there, is: 'I enjoy taking a carriage, an open Victoria, to pass through beautiful lanes, or along the sea, and see nice people in light-colored suits (but no Dutch people).'[13] This is in contrast with his oppressive feeling in Riau. Borel blames it on the climate. Yet, it seems more likely that Singapore, which was under British rule at the time, feels English. Borel also stresses that it is the people of different nationalities in Hotel de l'Europe, who 'bring something from the great World-Life' (ze brengen je iets mee van het groote Wereld-Leven).[14] This explains his need for a Western environment, which Riau lacks. Finally, it is undoubtedly also because he is not part of politics there, and he is not personally involved. After all, Borel is on a holiday and not working in Singapore.

4.1.1 From Intimacy to Superiority and Shame

His description of the trip, from leaving home and boarding the boat to arriving in Singapore and going out for the night, reflects his feelings of being torn between East and West. Borel starts off on a positive note, on the way to the pier, shouting at his old Chinese servant Ah Tong who is walking behind him with his luggage:

> I urge him to move faster, pleased to hear my singing Chinese, happy that I have not lost my old accent after the long years in Europe and that there is still a kinship between me and that strange, wonderful people that even in the twentieth century are still living in a distant *ur*-antiquity.[15]

It appears that Borel feels close to the Chinese because he can speak the Chinese language. But the image of himself in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century in contrast with 'that strange, wonderful people' in the distant *ur*-antiquity reflects the different temporalities that typically come with a colonial mindset. This is also what Said calls 'imaginative geography', as he writes there is 'no use in pretending that all we know about time and space, or rather history and geography, is more than anything else imaginative.'[16]

At the same time Borel reveals his admiration for the Chinese people despite his superior feeling of being more 'advanced'. This superior feeling, however, is soon replaced with shame, as on the boat the shiny eyes of a Haji give him such a penetrating look that it

[12] UVA. Letter of 15 December 1895. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93.
[13] UVA. Letter of 19 September 1896. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93.
[14] Borel 1905a, p. 39.
[15] Ibid, p. 6.
[16] Said 1995, p. 55.

makes him feel uncomfortable:

> I feel racial hatred, the religious hatred in his eyes. I am a stranger to these Orientals, they tolerate me, and if necessary are polite to me, because I belong to that brute force who has overpowered them, but deep in their hearts they deeply despise me, and their inner feelings are hidden like a treasure too sacred for my eyes. I always have this feeling of strangeness, to be intruding among the dark people of the East, and if I think of many things, of how these people are done with their dreams and imagination, I sometimes feel ashamed to be white.[17]

This description is evidence of a reflection of how Borel feels living in the Indies. There is a sudden turn from being happy shouting at his servant in Chinese to feeling guilty for his presence there. Perhaps the happiness comes from within himself as an individual with an interest in China, whereas the shame that he feels originates from being a representative of foreign powers. But whether 'these Orientals' only refer to 'the dark people of the East' such as the Indians, whom Borel feels he does not understand (unlike the Chinese), or whether they include other nationals is not clear. It is not strange that Borel wonders about this awareness of what 'they' feel when 'they' see him ('deep in their hearts they deeply despise me'). In his view, as a consequence of the expatriate presence in the East, 'these people are done with their dreams and imagination', as a logical result of being under control of 'the white people'. This belonging to that 'brute force' vs admiring the Chinese, in a complex society such as that in the Dutch East Indies with so many different cultures and religions, makes it difficult not to feel contradictory, and it must be one of the reasons of his great dislike of living there.

4.1.2 Acting as a Local

This would explain why it is that Borel is quite relieved to arrive at the pier in Singapore. He enjoys the Western comfort of the Hotel de L'Europe while at the same time the view of the harbor reminds him of Xiamen and makes him long for China. Later that night he calls for a rickshaw and notes the surprise on the coolie's face upon hailing him in Chinese, which immensely pleases him. In the Chinese district Borel strolls around until the noise, smells and colors get to him and he wants to run away. Right at that moment a rickshaw with Europeans arrives, and it happens to be a group of Dutch people Borel knows from Riau. They tell Borel of their wish to visit a 'sing-song house' where courtesans, or sing-song girls, entertain male customers. Upon the Dutch people's request, Borel goes up to the door to ask in Chinese for permission to enter. A huge, fat Chinese tells him in English 'No can do Sir! no can do! this belong chinamen only Sir! This belong old chinamen private Club!' but Borel goes on to persuade him:

> But I respond in his own singing language, I tell him that I too am half Chinese, really, I did live in his

[17] Borel 1905a, pp. 9-10.

> country for two years, I just wish to come in and have a look, truly I am no drunken sailor who will brawl and be rough with the sing-song girls, and that I know so well what 'li' means, and that I will leave again in an orderly manner after I am allowed to take a look. The high pitch singing language which is the key to the whole of China plus a couple of dollars do the trick.[18]

Borel flaunts his knowledge of the language and customs, and expresses this feeling again that he is 'one of them': he claims he is half Chinese. It seems that when he is communicating in Chinese with Chinese people, there is no feeling of shame. Note also the colloquial speech he is using, as if talking to the reader about his experiences. He also retains the word *li* in romanization and only notes in a footnote that it is an equivalent of 'decorum.' In earlier works, he already explained that this Chinese concept is untranslatable, for example in his essay 'Chinese degeneration' (Chineesche ontaarding), Borel notes that the meaning of *li* surpasses the intensity of words of politeness and etiquette as used in the West. It is exactly this *li* that makes the Chinese feel superior to all foreign people, Borel explains:

> Where Europe has the supremacy of armored ships and Krupp canons, China has always defeated her conqueror with *li*. *Li* is the basis of an extremely difficult art, a labyrinth full of pitfalls, that is called 'the Chinese official style'. (…) So long as Europe cannot beat the Chinese *li*, her disciplined armies will not be able to uphold her prestige.[19]

By juxtaposing weapons against *li*, Borel takes *li* to be a symbol of obstruction and as long as only the Chinese master this, it cannot be translated. By transcribing and explaining *li*, Borel emphasizes on the one hand his knowledge of Chinese and on the other attempts to keep the foreignness in the text. If Borel had only written that he knew how to behave according to Chinese etiquette, this would have had a different effect.

As a result of Borel's persuasive words, he and his friends are allowed to go upstairs and look around. While the friends enjoy themselves, Borel's anxiety strikes again. A combination of noises, colors, heat and sweat disgust him, and Borel feels that he—a white man from the West—does not belong there, among those brown and yellow and black faces, those alien, Oriental lives:

> The obsession of the dangerous, hostile Orient strikes me, I feel small and lost in the roaring crowds of gloomy, brown devils, and I look for a way out in fright, to flee away, to the other side where the green Esplanade is, where the English houses are, safe and familiar. No, never will a white Westerner belong to the sultry, flaming, blazing East, his home is not where the flames are, and the glow, I feel that now acutely and severely, with a burning feeling in my brain and a cold shiver down my spine.[20]

Strong contrasts emphasize feelings of confusion: Orient vs West, dangerous and hostile vs. safe and familiar, burning vs cold. Feverishly, he storms out of the establishment and finds

[18] Borel 1905a, p. 67.
[19] Borel 1900a, pp. 86-87.
[20] Borel 1905a, p. 74.

himself on the street again. Eventually he calms down and strolls along while wondering:

> How strange, those cinnamon-brown lads, or is it me who's strange, a white Westerner strolling here so far away from home?[21]

There is this constant conflict within Borel, feeling akin to the Chinese, but at the same time not at ease in Asia/the East and ashamed of being white. It is as if he has an internal conversation with himself, he is wondering whether it is the Chinese who are out of place or if it is himself who is. These thoughts take place in Borel's mind, and show his awareness of the question of identity. This longing to be one of 'them' vs the realization that he is not, stresses the distinction between the Dutch and the Chinese. Divisions, such as 'us' (Westerners) and 'they' (Orientals), according to Edward Said, are:

> generalities whose use historically and actually has been to press the importance of the distinction between some men and some other men, usually towards not especially admirable ends. When one uses categories like Oriental and Western (...) the result is usually to polarize the distinction—the Oriental becomes more Oriental and the Westerner more Western—and limit the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies.'[22]

Despite this distinction, there is an awareness of a 'sense of Western power over the Orient [as being] taken for granted as having the status of scientific truth.'[23] From Borel's writing, we can see that whenever he gets (too) close to being part of 'them', suddenly fear strikes, perhaps also because he feels that he can sense 'their' (Asian) enmity and hatred towards him and wants to flee – even though his affinity with the Chinese remains, and he continues to be pleased at his ability to speak their language.

4.1.3 Perception of Beauty in Chinese Terms

Most of the essays in *Wisdom and Beauty from the Indies* focus on cultural elements and the natural environment in the East Indies. This includes mention of the Chinese and their language, for instance in the essay 'A train journey in the Preanger' (Een treinreis in de Preanger). On his way to the railway station of Sukabumi, Borel hears a few Chinese people talking and notes 'Their melodious Chinese sounds like singing, and it makes me happy that I understand them, that I feel related to their feelings and thinking.'[24] From the train he notices a young boy on a buffalo walking on the dyke: 'Dark is the silhouette against the light air, it looks like an old bronze figure that I brought from China, so delicate and fine.'[25] Again there is a different temporality for the local people: to Borel, they live in another age, and

[21] Ibid, p. 77.
[22] Said 1995, pp. 45-46
[23] Ibid, p. 46.
[24] Borel 1905a, p. 93
[25] Ibid, pp. 98-99

they represent the non-modern, non-Western person. Borel's description is strikingly imaginative and subjective. If we were to try to imagine the boy's point of view, it is unlikely that he would see himself as a piece of Chinese antique. The image in itself surely has nothing to do with China. But for Borel it is an association with China which he idealizes. Hence, this indicates that Borel perceives beauty in Chinese terms. It is only beautiful because it looks Chinese, or it looks Chinese therefore it is beautiful.

4.1.4 Too Little Wisdom

The author's self-portrayal and his inner struggles in the East are crucial components of *Wisdom and Beauty from the Indies*. Most of the book's reviewers complain of a lack of objectivity. According to an anonymous reviewer in *The Sumatra Post* of 2 February 1906, the book was not well received:

> But I can imagine the dissatisfaction of some reviewers about Borel's youngest paper child. As I noted above, Borel's expression of 'how beautiful things are' has become something of a habit. He repeats the same thing too often—moreover he talks too aggressively of his own soul... And yet—even though I often felt the urge of using the known "blue pencil" [i.e. to offer critical feedback]—still I would not have wanted for Borel to have left this book unwritten, because it contains many fine descriptions of nature and life in the Indies. (...) In the Singapore impression there are many clever sketches, some of which are part of the specific Borelian habits.[26]

Here and in other reviews it appears that his readers feel appreciation for his work for being different, but are also critical of its repetitiveness and a subjective writing style. Among the criticisms by J. van den Oude, another pseudonym of Carel van Nievelt, writing in *News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies*, is that the title of the book is not realized:

> There is a lot of beauty in the book, but little wisdom—unless it is the wisdom that is concealed behind the thick veil of mystery, hidden even for Henri Borel. Luster of colors and elegance of lines in abundance, but very little light or clarity.[27]

Van den Oude is mocking Borel's use of mystery and thinks the title of the book does not agree with the contents. However, at the end he expresses gratitude for the collection, and declares it, together with *The Hidden Force* (De stille kracht), a famous novel by Louis Couperus, and *The Goddess who waits* (De godin die wacht) and *Orpheus in the Dessa* (Orpheus in de dessa) by Augusta de Wit as 'the most insightful, the most inspired that has been written in belletristic form about people in the Indies. Henri Borel found a good restart of his literary performance.'[28] Given the fact that both Louis Couperus and Augusta de Wit are renowned writers about the Dutch East Indies, it shows appreciation for Borel's work. At the same time, however, the three titles are novels, based on experience of life in the Indies,

[26] Anonymous 2 February 1906.
[27] Van den Oude 1905.
[28] Ibid.

and Borel's *Wisdom and Beauty from the Indies* is thus compared with fiction.

4.2 Searching for China

During the time that Borel is stationed in Semarang from 23 September 1905 until his transfer in May 1908, newspapers show that Borel gives talks and publishes articles on Chinese topics. Borel is very much engaged with Chinese culture. In autumn 1906, Borel gave a talk at the Royal Physics Association (Koninklijke Natuurkundige Vereeniging) in Batavia on 'Dao, Chinese ideas of God, also in connection with Theosophy' (Tao, het Godsbegrip der Chineezen ook in verband met de Theosofie) as reported in *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies* of 24 November 1906. He also wrote an article about a dinner with a Chinese trade commissioner that he had attended, part of which was quoted in *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies* of 14 March 1908. The anonymous writer quotes Borel about the difficulty of making a speech in Chinese, with the right words in the right tones:

> This called for caution! It seemed, however, there was a special deity for 'insignificant lastborns' for when I lifted my goblin of champagne, the goddess Guanyin came invisibly to the rescue and I finished my speech as a cunning Mongolian. The pigtailed guests responded to my speech with a passionate 'wan sui' [a congratulatory phrase for wishing someone longevity and good health]! When Mr Borel returned home he had such a 'hangover' that later in bed he wondered whether he was a European dreaming he was a Chinese or a Chinese dreaming he was a European.[29]

Characteristic here, is how Borel displays his knowledge of the Chinese language, customs and philosophy. He retains the Chinese words *wan sui* 萬歲 in romanization, an expression which means 'long live' as used in 'long live the emperor'. He further gives a detailed explanation about the mistakes you can make in Chinese when you get the tones wrong. Then he refers to the goddess Guanyin, which need not be irony, for in his other works, he displays a genuine interest and admiration for her: witness his art collection of Guanyin figurines, of which photos are included in his *Chinese Art* (Chineesche kunst) in 1906 and his later article on Chinese ceramics.[30]

Borel compares his command of Chinese with that of a 'cunning Mongolian', referring to the Chinese as 'Mongolian race.' In fact it is because of the Manchus, who invaded China in the seventeenth century and established the Qing dynasty, that Chinese men were forced to shave off the hair on the top of their heads with the rest braided into a pigtail. Therefore Borel is calling the Chinese people 'pigtailed guests' (gestaarte gasten). Finally, Borel adopts

[29] Anonymous 14 March 1908.

[30] Borel published 'Chinese Ceramics' (Chineesche Keramiek) in *Ancient Art* (Oude kunst) (II), 1916/17, pp. 281-301. A study of Borel's collection of Guanyin figurines can be found in the article 'Guanyin in Blanc de Chine' (in Dutch) in *Asian Art* (Aziatische Kunst) (3), 2004, pp. 27-31. A critical evaluation of Borel's knowledge of Chinese ceramics is included in 'The Rijksmuseum and the Collecting of Chinese Ceramics in the Nineteenth Century' (in English) in *Molds of Fire* (Vormen uit Vuur) (191/192), 2005, pp. 68-79. Both articles were written by Jan van Campen.

a line from chapter 2 of *Zhuangzi* from the famous passage in which Zhuangzi, also known as Zhuang Zhou, dreams he was a butterfly:

> When all of a sudden he awoke, he was Zhou with all his wits about him. He does not know whether he is Zhou who dreams he is a butterfly or a butterfly who dreams he is Zhou.[31]

This short passage shows how Borel's writing is permeated with Chinese cultural elements, which he does not really explain. It seems that Borel cannot write in 'normal' Dutch – meaning, without such references – to explain Chinese culture. But what the reader gets is a Borelian version of the image of China. As Wolf writes and quoted above, the image of China by Borel 'is filtered and arranged' through his own consciousness. Borel has found a connection between 'conceptualizing culture' and 'textualizing' it. In such way his texts on Chinese culture are not 'a reconstruction of some pre-existing reality' but rather 'a literary construct', in Wolf's words.[32] That is to say, Borel's translation of (the culture of) China is based on his own perception and worded into a personal and subjective Dutch version. It shows that Borel is very much affected by his attempt at 'a literary construct' of China, and aspects of Chinese culture have become a part of his way of thinking and therefore also seep into his writing. This immersion into Chinese culture can also be found in the relations that Borel has with the Chinese.

4.3 Transfer to Pontianak

There are several inter-related matters that lead up to complaints and accusations against Borel which ultimately result in another transfer. It is revealing of his positioning with a tendency towards Chinese people and against Dutch colleagues. These matters include Borel's writing in newspapers in the Dutch East Indies of which the content is considered offensive to Dutch colleagues (like earlier with van Hasselt in Riau as discussed in Chapter 3) and his increasingly intimate relationship with Chinese people. Offensive writing appears for instance in an article of 28 November 1905, published under the name 'A. M. I.' (unclear if it is an abbreviation or if it is simply the French word for friend) in *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies*, who denounces Semarang as a 'creepy death city' (griezelige doodenstad) for its inferior lifestyle and lack of facilities.[33] Among the complaints are a lack of entertainment, an inferior commuting system between Tandji in the mountains and the city of Semarang, and bad postal services. In another letter published in *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies* of 23 May 1906, A.M.I. complains about the police reorganization which he admits is in itself a good idea, but it is of no use when the staff remains inferior and corrupt.[34] According to A.M.I. the police are violent and autocratic and fail to provide

[31] Graham 2001, p. 61. Spelling of Zhuang Zhou in Graham is Chuang Chou.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Borel 28 November 1905.
[34] Borel (using pen name A. M. I.) 23 May 1906.

security and safety in the city: robberies occur day and night. To underscore the severity, A.M.I. describes how he is writing his article with a loaded gun within reach. All this writing draws the attention of Assistant Resident of Semarang L. R. Priester (1861-1909) who finds it reflecting offensively about the District Officer of Semarang J. P. Dom (1867?-1936). Therefore, Priester demands the newspaper editor divulge the true identity of the writer. This angers Borel who is of the opinion that it is his right to remain anonymous.[35]

Furthermore, Borel becomes involved in Chinese matters that go beyond the official description of his duties. Close involvement must have been the result of the fact that Borel had been invited to become patron (beschermheer) of the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan or Chinese Association (*Zhonghua huiguan* 中華會館) in 1906.[36] The main purpose of this Chinese Association that was founded in 1900, was to promote the learning of the Chinese language among Chinese people born in the Dutch East Indies, and according to an article in the *Colonial Magazine* (Koloniaal Tijdschrift) the association 'refrains from involvement in political matters and mainly focuses on education as well as customs and habits.'[37] Although patronage of the Chinese Association was government approved, Borel's close involvement with the Chinese was not well-perceived among the Dutch. In the newspaper, he is criticized for attending a meeting of Chinese associations, where he 'was the only white sheep among all the yellow ones.'[38] The anonymous writer of this report thought it was shameful. Another newspaper *The Sumatra Post* of 1 June 1907 claims that some Chinese people in Semarang had given Borel money to look after their interests in a *fengshui* matter, but there are no further details whether this concerns a conflict or a legal case. Then in *The News of the Day for the Dutch Indies* of 26 July 1906, there is a short notice about 'The Fengshui Matter in Semarang' (De Hong-Soei-quaestie te Semarang), which reports that Priester is called to Batavia to provide details about the Fengshui-case and discuss the matter with H. N. Stuart, the Official for Chinese Affairs there. Earlier an anonymous article in the *Surabaya Commerce Paper* (Soerabaijasch handelsblad) explains that there were plans to build a new residential area South-west of Semarang. In this area were Chinese graves and construction would have an impact on the *fengshui* of the graves, therefore the Chinese sought help with Borel.[39] There are no documents that can be found in the National Archives about *fengshui* matters.

Yet, there is a file 'Borel-case' in the National Archives about the suspicious relationship of Borel with Oei Tiong Ham 黃仲涵 (Huang Zhonghan) (1866-1924), a wealthy businessman involved in the sugar industry. There must be some connection, because

[35] Cited in anonymous, 9 July 1907. This refers to an earlier article of the same title in the *Surabaya Newspaper*.
[36] Kuiper 2016, p. 538.
[37] Anonymous, 1912-01, p. 672.
[38] Anonymous 13 May 1907.
[39] Anonymous 7 July 1906.

according to an article in the newspaper, it appears that the value of Oei Tiong Ham's property would gain if the aforementioned residential area would be built.[40] How Borel is involved is not clear, but there are conflicting interests. The nature of the case is so serious that eventually in May 1907 the Governor- General decides to send the Solicitor General (advocaat-generaal) August Jacob Alexander Kollman (1854-1931) to Semarang for investigation. The only thing that the newspapers disclose is that Kollman interrogates Chinese people in Semarang.[41] From the once-confidential papers in the National Archives, it appears that Borel is developing a close relationship with Oei who is offering Borel a job.[42] There is suspicion that the job offer was of an espionage nature for Japan, and made in order for Oei to obtain information about the Dutch government in the East Indies. Oei alleges he is connected with Japanese Prince Ito Hirobumi (1841-1909) and says that a British-Japanese invasion of the Dutch East Indies is imminent. In his own report, Borel claims he pretended to be interested in the job offer so that he could learn about Oei's intentions. The reason that he had not yet reported this to his superior, says Borel, is because he did not have written proof of what was going on.[43] Finally the Governor-General seeks advice from John Loudon (1866-1955), Dutch ambassador in Tokyo, whether these allegations were true. In his reply, Loudon says Prince Ito denies any recollection of meeting Oei. Loudon also spoke with the British ambassador in Japan, who also denies any secret plans of England and Japan. Loudon concludes that in his personal view whatever claims Oei made are groundless. Although it is questionable whether asking these people directly would yield reliable information, apparently the government is satisfied with Loudon's advice.

The above cases show that Borel is trying to get involved in close relationships with Chinese people. To his Dutch colleagues this behavior of going beyond the official role, bordering on being 'a defector', is highly suspicious. All this is very likely the cause for his next transfer. According to *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies* of 27 April 1908, Borel has received a transfer to Muntok, to which he expresses objection. In an anonymous article entitled 'The young boy has to go to Muntok!', which starts sarcastically with:

> We call your attention to the immortal author Henri Borel, who told the *Indies Weekly* that he stayed with a Russian princess just because he was Henri Borel, this talented Dutch lad who is also Official for Chinese affairs will be transferred to Muntok.

It is curious how the reporter puts emphasis on Borel as an author over his position as

[40] Anonymous 31 October 1906. Resident of Semarang is H. C. A. G. de Vogel (1856-1938). See short bio 'H. C. A. G. de Vogel' in *The Fatherland*. The Hague, 24-10-1938. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010018093:mpeg21:a0155

[41] Anonymous 22 June 1907.

[42] NA. NL-HaNA, Koloniën/Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nrs. 86, 100 and 101.

[43] Ibid.

Official for Chinese Affairs; he is using the title of Borel's novel *The Young Boy* to refer to Borel and ridicules Borel for self-acclaimed fame. Then the reporter expresses disbelief that Borel begs the Director of Justice to withdraw the transfer to Muntok:

> After all, Borel will be leaving the creepy death city of Semarang and he comes closer to the Great Life in the Street of Banka. (...) What change of surroundings! He disliked Priester, and Dom as well, and the whole of Semarang disliked him. Now he has the chance to move to an agreeable place, and work for a Resident who will watch over him like a father. After his daily tasks, he has the opportunity to write his masterpieces and in this way, on Banka, he can gain his retirement money. An enviable fate![44]

The ironical tone of the reporter is revealing of Borel's image in the East Indies. Apparently Borel's ideas and publications about work in the Indies, and/or his behavior in general, annoy people.

Borel's request not to be sent to Muntok is granted and he is stationed in Pontianak instead. Eventually his undiminished fascination with China leads him to studying the 'national language' of Mandarin, and in February 1909, Borel receives a subsidy from the colonial government to take lessons in Mandarin Chinese and buy textbooks.[45] Borel takes a course at the Soe Po Sia (*Shubaoshe* 書報社), or Reading Club, which offers language lessons in Mandarin Chinese.[46] Meanwhile Borel also applies for study leave to go to Beijing, which is granted in August that year. For Borel, this is a dream come true, and it gives him a new opportunity, which will be decisive for his further career. It provides him with new material to write about, which in turn reinforces his self-image of being a China expert. This has important consequences for his next position in Surabaya and for his career prospects at Leiden University, as will be described in the next chapter.

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[44] Anonymous 17 April 1908.

[45] LM. See excerpt from the Register of Decrees of the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies dated Bogor, 4 February 1909, no. 7, which stipulates that Borel will receive a monthly F50 for learning Mandarin and a sum of F50 to buy textbooks. Materials in the Borel Archives show that Borel was using *Boussole du Langage* by Henri Boucher to study Mandarin Chinese. *Boussole du Langage* is a French translation of the Japanese textbook used to learn Mandarin Chinese.

[46] Borel 1913, p. 45. Later, the Mandarin teacher Wang Fung Ting (Wang Fengting 王鳳亭 traveled with Borel to the Dutch East Indies. (Kuiper 2016, p. 190) I have not come across specific mention of Wang in Borel's written works related to China and therefore decided not to include him in the analysis.

Chapter 5: A Poetic Vision

Aware of the importance of Mandarin Chinese and of momentous change going on in China, Borel is anxious to travel to Beijing to obtain firsthand experience. In order to practice the language he requests study leave, which is granted in August 1909, and he travels to China in early September.[1] During the four months' trip to Beijing, Borel takes lessons in Mandarin Chinese, visits historical sights, and obtains news from local people and newspapers.

Borel publishes an account of his trip as *Daybreak in the East* (Het Daghet in den Oosten) in 1910. Besides travel writing, the book also contains reflections on how to improve mutual understanding between China and the West. In his translation of China, Borel goes beyond the visual, and attaches great importance to the spiritual, which he thinks other authors fail to perceive. He engages with palpably visible aspects of culture, and at the same time with what he perceives or projects as the thinking and feeling behind it. As for the ongoing socio-political reforms in China, changes in education, campaigns against opium and footbinding and so on, he describes not only the outside of things, e.g. in the construction of schools and education for women. These reforms eventually lead up to the revolution and the fall of the last imperial dynasty in 1911. Borel further elaborates on what he sees as the idea of 'the East for the East', which he thinks is essentially spiritual, and indeed mystical. In Borel's view an inward strengthening of China is taking place through wisdom and philosophy, which cannot be exterminated by the material weapons of the West.[2] As a result, he writes, 'China with her four hundred millions is now moving upward in the world's course, because in future she will work mightily towards the spiritual and intellectual progress of all humanity.'[3]

In *Daybreak in the East* the reader is offered not only an image of China, but also one of the identity of Borel and his self-portrayal. This offers another useful entry point for exploring how he undertakes cultural translation, and specifically how he represents cultural Otherness. Examples will show how Borel tries to make sense of the foreign. As Crapanzano writes, the ethnographer, like the translator:

> (...) must also communicate the very foreignness that his interpretations (the translator's translations) deny in their claim to universality. He must render the foreign familiar and preserve its very foreignness at one and the same time. The translator accomplishes this through style, the ethnographer through the coupling of a presentation that asserts the foreign and an interpretation that makes it all familiar.[4]

Such a style or presentation can be personal and subjective. In the case of Borel, this is clear

[1] LM. His departure date from Surabaya must have been on 9 September 1909, according to a first class, open return ticket to Singapore stored in the Borel Archives.
[2] Borel 1910, p. 4; English translation 1912, pp. 14-15. As discussed in Chapter 4, Borel had earlier juxtaposed weapons against the Chinese notion of *li*.
[3] Borel 1910, p. 5; English translation 1912, p. 16.
[4] Crapanzano 1986, p. 52.

in what I have identified as different levels of depth of observation, i.e the visible and what lies behind it. He also uses so-called 'persuasive devices' which as Crapanzano writes, the ethnographer must make use of 'to convince his readers of *the* truth of his message.'[5] Borel gives (partial) translations of Chinese words and texts, coupled with explanations about his own poetical vision, seemingly in anticipation of criticism by readers.

Receptions of the book are mixed, as it is praised for its account of the current situation in the Chinese capital, but criticized for its exuberant writing style and the questionable accuracy of Borel's interpretations. Nevertheless, the book is soon translated into English as *The New China: A Traveller's Impressions* by C. Thieme, whose full name is Frederik Carl David Thieme (1854-1925)[6] and published by T. F. Unwin in London in 1912, while the Dutch edition is reprinted in 1926, which indicates some degree of success.

Borel takes his ideas and attitude resulting from the China experience and the book back to his life in the Dutch East Indies, and expects recognition of his (updated) China knowledge when it comes to issues that involve the Chinese. But his arrogance and patronizing attitude eventually lead to the end of his colonial career, while his further writing on the study of Chinese causes conflicts with academics at Leiden University. His visions of China, and his disagreement with the views of others, be they tourists or professionals – including sinologists – contribute to reflection among the general public on what constitutes a China expert. Among general readers, to some extent, Borel's experience and understanding of Chinese culture elevate him to being regarded as the expert. At work and in academic circles, his attitude and ideas rub some people the wrong way, and he encounters opposition to, if not dismissal of, his views. As a result, his ongoing quest for justice and understanding of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies fails at that time, although it may have had an effect in the long run as I will explain later.

5.1 The Visual and the Spiritual

Although *Daybreak in the East* introduces a fairly standard rostrum of historical sights where all tourists visiting the Chinese capital go, the descriptions go beyond their physical appearance. By permeating life at local level, flaunting knowledge about culture and history, translating signs and texts, reflecting on China's future and offering views on how to establish mutual understanding between East and West, the book aims to be more than a

[5] Ibid, p. 53. Italics in original.

[6] Thieme lived and worked in London. The textbook *Dutch Self Taught* by Thieme, published in 1910, notes that he was 'Examiner in Dutch for the London Chamber of Commerce'. In 1917, Thieme translated *The German Fury in Belgium: experiences of a Netherland [sic] journalist during four months with the German army in Belgium* (De overweldiging van België: ervaringen, als Nederlandsch journalist opgedaan, tijdens een viermaandelijksch verblijf bij de Duitsche troepen in België) by Dutch reporter Lambertus Emanuel Mokveld (1890-1968), which notes that Thieme worked as a foreign correspondent for *The New Newspaper* (De Nieuwe Courant) in London. Thieme explains in a footnote that he used the words 'The Netherlands, Netherlander and Netherland' and not 'Dutch' to avoid confusion with Deutsch, Duits, Duts which means 'German' (p. 15).

travel report.

The overall impression left by the book is that Borel has a tendency to exoticize China– even though he makes a great effort at learning about realities of local life, by learning the language and talking to local people. It seems that Borel was intent on observing what was going on in the city, unlike the many foreigners who—and Borel stresses this—had no idea what went on outside the walls of the Legation Quarter, the area in Beijing where foreign embassies were located at the time, and made little effort to find out. Of course, not all foreigners in Beijing at the time were ignorant, and members of the legations would meet to discuss issues relating to political developments in China and the administration of the Quarter.[7] While Borel writes about his attempt at involvement in local life, he also constantly reminds the reader about China's Otherness or uniqueness, its differences in comparison with Dutch/Western culture and its spiritual side. His emphasis on his own understanding of China vs the ignorance of other visitors may give the reader the impression that China is 'distant and simply alien', in Kerr and Kuehn's words.[8]

Borel applies various devices to explain and introduce Chinese cultural phenomena, which enable the reader to better understand Chinese culture and construct an image of China. Of the sixteen chapters in *Daybreak in the East*,[9] twelve are about Borel's travel experience when visiting historical sights in Beijing such as the Forbidden City, the Lama Temple, the Yellow Temple, the Temple of Confucius, the Imperial College, the Temple of the Five Pagodas, the Summer Palace, and the Temple of Heaven. His descriptions primarily contain details of these places, the people, transportation, the weather, and his personal impressions, but often also touch upon matters that relate to the ongoing reforms and stress the contrast between old and new. The other four chapters focus on the reforms, the study of the Chinese language and the need for mutual understanding between China and the West. The many footnotes further explain historical and cultural background. Black and white photographs of temples, streets, vehicles, and people also help the reader to better visualize the sights.[10] In the following sections I will illustrate this, frequently using direct quotations and referring to some of the pictures. The English translations are from the above mentioned English version by Thieme in *The New China: A Traveller's Impressions*, with occasional slight modifications.

5.1.1 Perception of Otherness

The overall impression of the book seems to be 'a quest for the Other,' in the words of Gisli

[7] Moser and Moser 1993, p. 120.

[8] Kerr and Kuehn 2007, p. 7. As quoted more extensively in Chapter 2.

[9] Some of the essays were published before in magazines, including 'The Temple of Heaven' (De Tempel des Hemels) in *The Guide* (74), 1910, pp. 302-314, and 'The Summer Palace in Peking' (Het zomerpaleis te Peking) in *The Indies Weekly* (Weekblad voor Indië) of 1910.

[10] According to the information on the title page in my copy of the book, it is supposed to have fifty illustrations but by my count there are only forty-six.

Pálsson.[11] As Pálsson explains, the essence of human nature is the persistent tendency to separate 'us' from 'them'.[12] This distinction can further be seen, writes Pálsson 'in the desire to experience both difference and the crossing of boundaries, [which] became institutionalized in the literary genre of the travel account.'[13] In the present case of *Daybreak in the East*, I found that the perception of the difference and crossing of boundaries is experienced on multiple levels. I have identified three levels of depth of observation by Borel: the first is the visible, meaning the Chinese people and surroundings. The second is the inner substance, which, according to Borel, is semi-visible if you look beyond the outer layer: if on the surface something looks ugly and dirty, what lies beneath may actually be beautiful. The third is the mysterious and mystical: the truly invisible that can only be perceived by people who are sensitive to spiritual values – such as Borel.

An example of the first level is Borel's experience of a ride in a modern train from Tianjin to Beijing. He enjoys the modern 'train-de-luxe', and writes how it feels 'as if travelling in Europe',[14] but then reassures the reader:

> And yet this was surely no dream, for in the compartment behind me two mandarins, in spacious garments were seated, talking in the deep, throaty sounds of Pekingnese, and gesticulating regally with their graceful hands. Many Chinese were in the other compartment, smoking and sipping tea. And there spread the landscape, full of Chinese quaintness; the clay houses where plump Chinese babies were already wrapped in their autumn clothes, with here and there the droll writhing dragons over buildings where floated the yellow Chinese flag.[15]

He sets off this contrast between a modern European train and the local surroundings such as the sounds, the clothes and the manners of Chinese people, as well as the landscape 'full of Chinese quaintness'. There is an Otherness that any visitor can see, hear, and smell. The use of the word 'Chinese' four times in this short paragraph embodies the presence of 'Chineseness'.

The next, semi-visible level can be found where there are descriptions of places which are at first sight ugly. Yet, in Borel's words there is more beyond the first impression of dirt. An example of this where shapes and colors are used to hide ugliness and filth, can be found in the Ha-ta Men Street in chapter VI, 'The Lama Temple' (De Lama-Tempel), also known as the Yonghe Temple:

> It is all old and weather-beaten, moldering and frail; here and there it is on the verge of collapse; it is dirty and sordid and yet it is splendid. It is an anthem, a flame of fire, a triumphal hymn of light and color, neither smothered nor extinguished by the ages, because its material is imperishable, its essence unassailable. Amidst this wealth of fiery color Rembrandt would have been intoxicated with happiness. How deeply did I feel, during my many walks through this street and through so many streets of Beijing,

[11] Pálsson 1993, p. 4.
[12] Ibid, p. 5.
[13] Ibid, p. 6.
[14] Borel 1910, p. 11; English translation 1912a, p. 25.
[15] Borel 1910, p. 13; English translation 1912a, pp. 27-28.

> that the Chinese must love this city with a lofty and a jealous love. How hateful it is to go back from all this ancient, almost sacred, splendor of bygone ages into the vulgar, dead, featureless streets of the Legation Quarter![16]

It is an image of light and colors, which Borel enhances by referring to the great Dutch painter, to play to the imagination of his readers. Beyond the outward appearance of ugliness, the houses are still beautiful because of their material and essence, like a metaphor for inner substance and beauty. Then there are the strong contrasts as in Chinese streets vs the streets of the Legation Quarter, and the sacred vs the vulgar. In these comparisons, Borel shows his admiration for things Chinese and denounces the bleakness of the West.

Finally, I have identified a third level of observation, of mystery and mysticism that the uninitiated (mind's) eye cannot perceive. These are the instances where Borel uses the words 'mystery / mysterious' and 'mysticism / mystical'. He uses these many times throughout the book, although most occur in the chapter on the Lama Temple. In general 'mystery / mysterious' applies to the strange or difficult to understand, such as the 'mystery of life and death,'[17] while 'mysticism / mystical' inspires a sense of spiritual fascination, such as 'mystical symbolism.' However, sometimes there is no distinct difference in meaning, for example in 'like a mysterious white flower'[18] and 'like a mystical flower.'[19] An example of 'mystery'[20] can be found in chapter X, 'The Veiled Beauty' (De verborgen schoonheid), where Borel delves deeper into the symbolism of the Forbidden City:

> How often have I felt a hitherto unknown strength, an inexpressible joy, standing before those red walls, the sun shining on the splendid yellow tiles, all light and glory, thinking that all might be destroyed if only the Forbidden City kept its mystery inviolate. I believe this symbol to be the most beautiful I found in Beijing, more exalted even than the beauty of architecture, temple and monument. But all these things are only revealed to those who can feel their subtle vibrations and can respond.[21]

From descriptions such as these, it appears that besides the perception of physical appearance, Borel attaches great importance to spiritual values. Based on his knowledge of China, Borel interprets and projects these huge walls as breathing imperial power. In his view, both physical and spiritual perception are necessary for true appreciation of Beijing and to feel 'the soul' as he puts it, and he thinks only few visitors / foreigners / travelers are receptive to the mysticism and symbolism of Beijing. However, in 1923 writing by Borel was

[16] Borel 1910, p. 74; English translation 1912a, p. 97.
[17] Borel 1910, p. 78; English translation 1912a, p. 101.
[18] Borel 1910, p. 144; English translation 1912a, p. 180.
[19] Borel 1910, p. 146; English translation 1912a, p. 182.
[20] In comparison I found that in the English translation there are some cases of the use of 'mystery / mysterious' which cannot be found in the Dutch version. Examples are 'China's mysterious capital' (p. 32), which in Dutch reads 'China's wondere hoofdstad' (p. 18) and 'with a strange mysterious clink' (p. 87) for 'geheimzinnigen, vreemde klank.' (p. 65)
[21] Borel 1910, pp. 141-142; English translation 1912a, p. 174.

the cause for author and literary criticus Dirk Coster (1887-1956) to warn of misuse of the concept of mysticism.[22] In his article 'Russian Poison and Western Rationalism' (Russisch Gif en Westersch Rationalisme), Coster warns that (the abuse of) mysticism is a dangerous element, which can result in 'great self-deception'. Coster begs of contemporaries to be careful and respectful when using the concept of 'mysticism.'[23]

The frequently invoked contrast of East vs West and of mysticism vs rationality portrays Borel as understanding the mysticism of the East. Here, it is helpful to regard him, in the words of Said, as one of the '(...) European traveler[s] in the Orient [who] felt himself to be a representative westerner who had gotten beneath the films of obscurity.'[24] Borel's repeated emphasis on what others fail to see and do not know, also serves to boost his self-assigned authority, and to set him apart from other foreign visitors, professionals and tourists alike.

5.1.2 Self-Identity

There are several different ways in which the author Borel establishes an image of his own identity. This is a common feature in travel writing, as we have seen earlier in Chapter 2, where I quoted Kerr and Kuehn on how travel writing can be revealing of the authors themselves, with the places traveled serving as the background. In *Daybreak in the East*, Borel sets himself apart by exploring off-track places, preferably on his own, and experiencing local life, as he writes:

> I, a foreigner, visited neighborhoods, alone, where tourists never come on foot and very rarely in rickshaws. I walked across markets and bazaars and attended theaters—the only European present.[25]

There is a strong emphasis on Borel's being *different,* in the words 'I, a foreigner', 'alone', and 'the only European'. Borel wants the reader to know that he is not an average tourist. An example of off-track exploring is his visit to the Summer Palace, which is described in chapter XIV, 'The Summer Palace' (Het Zomer-paleis). The Summer Palace, known in Chinese as Yihe Yuan 頤和園 should not be confused with the Old Summer Palace, known in Chinese as Yuan Ming Yuan 圓明園. Work on the old imperial gardens and buildings was originally commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor 乾隆帝 (1711-1799) between 1750 and 1764, and named the Garden of Clear Ripples, Qingyi Yuan 清漪園 at the time. The destruction of the Garden (along with the Old Summer Palace) happened at the end of the Second Opium War in 1860, when the British and the French were seeking renegotiation of the treaties to expand trade with China. China rejected their demands which led to attacks by the allied

[22] See announcement of the December issue of *The Voice* (De Stem) under 'Magazines' (Tijdschriften) in *General Commerce Paper.* Amsterdam, 13-12-1923. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010658571:mpeg21:a0190

[23] Ibid.

[24] Said 1979, p. 222.

[25] Borel 1910, p. 47; English translation 1912a, p. 66.

forces. Proceeding north, Anglo-French troops in Beijing looted and destroyed many sites including the Garden of Clear Ripples, as a vengeance for the torture and killing of European prisoners and to reaffirm the terms of the 1858 Tianjin treaty to allow foreign ambassadors to live in Beijing.[26] The Garden was reconstructed by the Guangxu Emperor 光緒帝 and the Empress Dowager Cixi 慈喜太后 between 1886 and 1895, and was renamed the Summer Palace. In 1900, the Summer Palace was damaged again during the Boxer Uprising. As Jonathan Spence writes, this uprising was one of the signals of growing nationalism in China. Anti-foreign Chinese grouped themselves as 'Boxers United in Righteousness' to respond to provocations of Western missionaries and their Chinese converts. They became a growing force who moved from Shandong to the capital and killed foreigners at several locations. In Beijing, they joined with the Qing court's military forces in the attack on foreigners, but because of a lack of unified leadership, they were eventually defeated by foreign allied forces in 1900.[27]

When Borel was in Beijing, the Summer Palace was open only on two Wednesdays of each month and all visitors had to be accompanied by a Chinese official of the Foreign Affairs Office, whom Borel calls a 'mandarin'. The purpose of official guidance was to prevent foreign tourists from damaging or stealing objects. Initially a stout mandarin guides Borel, but when they chance upon a group of noisy tourists, the mandarin urges him to join them. Annoyed, Borel decides to 'risk everything' and walks away briskly. The mandarin runs after him and asks where he is going. Borel replies that he wants to walk along the lake, where it is quiet and still. He asks him for the location of 'the famous bronze ox' and the mandarin explains it is too far to walk and they will not go there today. Then Borel says he will go there alone, and he writes:

> After the usual '*Daren liubu*'(Mighty Lord, stop your steps!) I marched off at such a pace that he could not possibly keep up with me.[28]

By including the Chinese words that he spoke to the official, Borel is showing the reader his knowledge of the language. According to Borel, the Chinese expression is one of the ceremonious phrases that he learned during his language lessons. Borel portrays himself as different by violating the rules in order to explore on his own, instead of joining a group or staying with his guide. As he writes, he was aware of his own rudeness and disrespect, but 'happen what might, I wanted to wander about the Summer Palace without being disturbed.' It appears that the irritation caused by the (foreign) tourists has a negative influence on him, as he writes that 'the delicate aura of my thoughts at the silent lake was torn to pieces like a cobweb' by the noisy tourists. Of course, it must have also been his self-confidence based on

[26] Spence 1990, p. 181.
[27] Ibid, pp. 231-235.
[28] Borel 1910, p. 193; English translation 1912a, p. 235.

his knowledge of Chinese language and culture that encouraged him to venture alone. Yet, one observes that the fact that he is a sinologist does not entitle him to do as he pleases, and his behavior is in fact offensive.

The descriptions of particular sights or objects show that Borel knows what he wants to see. He notes that he had read about the bronze ox in Alicia Little's (née Alicia Ellen Neve (also spelled Neva) Bewicke 1845-1926) *Round About my Peking Garden,* which she published in 1905 under the name 'Mrs. Archibald Little'. While Borel writes that he wandered alone, in the photograph of the ox there are two Chinese men in the background. If it is Borel who took the picture, he was clearly not alone, and neither man fit the description of the guide.

Another instance of Borel venturing beyond tourist venues and showing off his knowledge, is in chapter XI, 'The Yellow Temple' (De Gele Tempel):

> All at once I remembered something I had read in some book which spoke of the dead lamas in the temples and their ashes. Would I be allowed to see the dead priests and the hall where their ashes were kept? (…) The lama smiled in astonishment. 'Most visitors do not ask that; it is not nice to look at,' he said. 'It is better not.' But although I knew not why, I felt impelled to see this hall of ashes.[29]

Again Borel goes where others do not go, and again his action is based on what he had read. He goes on to describe in detail how the lama shows him the cabinets where the dead priests were placed and the stone fireplaces where they were later cremated. In the description, Borel emphasizes that to the lamas, the corpses are 'only the bodies in which [the priests] had dwelt during one incarnation'.[30] By showing off his knowledge about Buddhist practices, Borel distinguishes himself from ordinary tourists.

An example of Borel's experience of local life can be found in chapter V, 'Street of Eternal Repose' (De straat van altijddurende rust). There he writes about his decision to move out of the luxurious Grand Hotel des Wagon-lits in the Foreign Legation Quarter into what he calls 'a miserable hotel', Hotel de Pekin in the Outer City, where he claims he 'learned to understand Beijing.'[31] He enjoys the serenity, the view of Chang'an Boulevard, talking with hotel staff and easy access to wandering outside in Chinese streets. And when he goes out on the street, he likes to travel in local cars:

> One might order a more luxurious rickshaw on rubber tyres, but as a rule I thought it better to drive as the Chinese do. So I was bumped and thumped along the Ch'ang-an Boulevard, through the beautiful Ch'ang-an Gate, towards the big artery of the Tartar City, that extremely wide boulevard running north from the Ha-ta Men through the so-called Eastern City (the Tung Ch'eng).[32]

In the descriptions, there is an emphasis on the appreciation of local life, which means

[29] Borel 1910, p. 150; English translation 1912a, pp. 185-186.
[30] Borel 1910, p. 151; English translation 1912a, p. 186.
[31] Borel 1910, p. 61; English translation 1912a, p. 83.
[32] Borel 1910, p. 73; English translation 1912a, p. 96.

serenity and beauty, but also misery in the lack of luxury. In the same vein in chapter VIII 'The Funeral of the Dowager Empress' (De begrafenis der Keizerin-weduwe), Borel also prefers to stand among the local people during the state funeral of the Empress Dowager Cixi in November 1909.

Cixi was the imperial concubine of the Xianfeng Emperor 咸豐帝. When the Emperor died in 1861, Cixi started gaining power in her capacity as regent for her then five-year old son, the Tongzhi Emperor 同治帝. When Tongzhi died in 1875, three year old Guangxu, a nephew of Cixi, was appointed to the throne and Cixi continued exerting her powers. Even when Guangxu was old enough to take up duties, Cixi did not step back. Eventually Guangxu died on 14 November 1908, one day before Cixi died on 15 November 1908. For Guangxu the funeral procession was held in May 1909,[33] while Cixi's took place six months later in November 1909. In Qing times, the period between death and interment in the palace cemetery varied and could be very long.[34] This had to do with the preparations of the many aspects of an imperial funeral, from the official announcement and the issuance of mourning regulations, to the supply of sacrificial offerings and the writing of ritual texts.[35] Of course, the event of two imperial deaths so close together was unprecedented. In the case of Cixi, another complicating factor is that in her honor and to consolidate the powers of successors, funeral regulations were altered to make her funeral equal to that of an emperor.[36]

Indeed, as Borel explains, Cixi's funeral was elaborate and preparations had been going on for months. Even though Borel is entitled to stand among media staff within the city gates, in his capacity as correspondent of the Dutch newspaper *The Telegraph* (De Telegraaf), he prefers to stand among the local people because:

> I considered that the sight of the funeral procession outside the gates would be more interesting and more characteristic, although in this case I should not see the foreign representatives walking with it, nor the Prince regent, for they would not proceed farther than the vicinity of the pavilion near the Tung-Chih Men.[37]

So he weighs the pros and cons, which he shares with his readers. These contrasts between local and foreign appear to be on his mind all the time, and from his reflection we can see that he opts for the local experience most of the time – or minimally, that he wants his readers to conclude so.

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[33] According Griessler, Guangxu was buried in a temporary resting place, to be finally entombed in 1913.
[34] Griessler 1991, p. 11.
[35] For more details, see 'The Imperial Way of Death: Ming and Ch'ing Emperors and Death Ritual' by Evelyn S. Rawski, in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, edited by James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1988, pp. 228-253.
[36] Griessler 1991, p. 29.
[37] Borel 1910, p. 116; English translation 1912a, p. 145.

An example of Borel's vision of other Westerners as ignorant can be seen in his portrayal of other visitors' lack of understanding of ancient texts when he visits the Temple of Confucius. This visit turns out to be a kind of pilgrimage for Borel, for he is carrying his own publication of the Dutch translation of the Confucian classics, saying:

> Most tourists and even most sinologists pass through this Hall of Classics, admire its architecture and pore over the texts, without the faintest idea of its great importance.[38]

This goes back to Borel's idea that sinologists have wrongly interpreted the classics, and that they have sought more meaning in these texts than there is. And as I discussed in Chapter 3, it was also one of the reasons that he did his own translation. As a result, he must be referring to the spiritual power exuding from the texts, rather than only their importance as literary classics. According to Borel, they contain the wisdom of the past but also that of the future.[39] This gives the strong indication that he reads these texts as going beyond ideas. To him, the contents of the texts are a way of living that is so ingrained in Chinese society that they are more important than just educational material, a literary canon, or mere philosophy.

In Borel's eyes, many of the foreigners are not only ignorant, some also tarnish the image of Western people in China. In chapter XIII, 'Temple of the Five Pagodas' (De Tempel der Vijf Pagodas), Borel complains about this when he goes to an antique store:

> Most, sometimes all, of the objects exhibited in the gloomy, insignificant little shops are either modern or imitations. The objectionable thing to the expert is that each Pekingese dealer thinks it a matter of course that any European or American who calls at his shop is an ignorant fool.[40]

Apparently, antique shops will frequently put fake antique in the shop windows, which dealers expect foreign visitors to buy. This implies that so-called experts fall victim to this practice. As such, Borel portrays himself as different from them, as not being just 'any European or American' who is the easy victim of deceit. At the same time, Borel stereotypes the Chinese dealers, who take advantage of tourists.

But for all his attempts at understanding the local people, it is clear from his writing that the sense of being the white man who is trespassing remains an important component of his overall experience. An example from chapter VI, 'The Lama Temple':

> There I stand by myself, a pale Westerner, strange and detached, gazing at it all, standing by a bronze praying-wheel. They must feel me to be something hostile. I have no business to be there; I am an intruder, a white barbarian; but they do not seem to notice me; and they quietly go their mysterious way.[41]

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[38] Borel 1910, p. 164; English translation 1912a, p. 201.
[39] Borel 1910, p. 165; English translation 1912a, p. 201
[40] Borel 1910, p. 176; English translation 1912a, p. 214.
[41] Borel 1910, p. 87; English translation 1912a, pp. 109-110.

This strong awareness that Borel writes about is but an inner feeling. It is Borel who feels strange and detached and hostile. There is no indication that the people around him feel the same way: the monks continue unperturbedly what they are doing, which he calls 'their mysterious way', reinforcing the picture of their Otherness. There is this conflict again between 'not belonging' (because he is white) but at the same time emphasizing that he is not like one of those 'globe trotters' or tourists, as he says his 'numerous travels have made my soul incurably cosmopolitan.'[42]

But in the end, Borel yields to his own Westerness, because after a month in the Hotel de Pekin, he confesses that he can no longer endure the 'shabby furniture and vile food,' and he moves back to the Grand Hotel des Wagons-lits in the Foreign Legation Quarter, explaining that 'we Westerners are, after all, too much in need of modern comfort (…).'[43]

In the above examples of his forays into local Chinese life, Borel represents himself as an expert, someone from the West who has access to authentic Chinese culture. For his image as writer, however, he maintains that he is writing as an artist, as a poet, in which capacity he is able to perceive what others cannot see. This idea is similar to what Pálsson calls 'an emotive-cognitive capacity that allows ethnographers to understand other people, to go "beyond words",' but which she acknowledges at the same time 'may not satisfy the public demands of the scientific community.'[44] It is clear that Borel is aware of this: he knows that the diplomats and sinologists among his readers will not appreciate his emotive-cognitive capacity, which he claims enables him to understand Chinese people beyond words. Therefore, in anticipation of the critical views by some readers, Borel takes a defensive stance in the last paragraph of chapter X, 'The Veiled Beauty':

> Therefore this book on Beijing is a lie, a pose, a dream, an affectation, a fancy that learned diplomats and sinologists will laugh at; but it is, at the same time, a revelation that Beijing bestowed upon me. Not a word in it is fiction, no view a delusion, but all is luminous clearness to those who can see by the spirit in which shines the light of truth.[45]

Borel is defending the way he translates China, and it is through this declaration that he aims to convince the reader of the validity of his writing. It is his belief that his vision is the right one, even though others will express doubt. He further justifies his writing as being the truth in chapter XVI, 'The Mutual Understanding' (Het wederzijdsch begrijpen), saying that:

> (…) the poetic vision is the only reality, that there is higher reality in the beautiful dream of one poet than in a hundred scientific researches by a hundred 'scholars'. The splendors of Beijing—the Lama Temple, the Yellow Temple, the Temple of Confucius, the Hall of the Classics, the Summer Palace, the Temple of

[42] Borel 1910, p. 25; English translation 1912a, p. 42.
[43] Borel 1910, p. 134; English translation 1912a, p. 167.
[44] Pálsson 1993, p. 24.
[45] Borel 1910, p. 142; English translation 1912a, p. 175.

> Heaven and so many others—were not built by mere scholars but by artists. These artists were at the same time philosophers: and the mysticism symbolized in these splendors escapes most sinologists. But it speaks in intimate terms to the poet, who understands it as the simple language of his Father.[46]

This use of 'Father' seems to be similar to how Borel uses this figure in 'Wu Wei: a fantasy based on Laozi's Philosophy', in the sense of a teacher. It could also be the father figure in his essay 'The Firstborn', about his teacher in Xiamen, whom he claims had become his 'spiritual father'. Either way, it appears to stand for a teacher. The justification here, according to Borel, is that in order to understand something that is created by an artist, one should write about it in the capacity of an artist. This appears to be a romantic notion if we read the words of William Blake in *Vision*: 'Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really & Unchangeably,'[47] with the truth of poetry referring to a transcendental reality. We can also find this phenomenon in Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*:

> Poetry turns all things to loveliness, it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed (…) All things exist as they are perceived, at least in relation to the percipient.'[48]

In other words, in Borel's view, without being the poet that he is, he could not have given this image of China, which he believes is the 'real China' – and the same thing holds for being knowledgeable about China. Here, he presents two conjoined perspectives—poet and academically trained expert—as giving him a unique access to China, with these identities mutually complementing, and overlapping without clashing.

5.1.3 Cultural and Linguistic Knowledge and Expertise

Borel flaunts his knowledge of Chinese history and culture by offering translations of place names, street names, and passages from Chinese texts. He balances domestication, by giving translations into Dutch and making comparisons and analogies, with foreignization, by giving romanizations of words he calls untranslatable. At the domesticating end of the scale, he provides more or less literal translations of proper names that the reader can understand, such as 'The Street of Eternal Repose' (De Straat van Altijddurende Rust) for Chang'an Street (長安街), 'Coal Hill' (Kolenheuvel) for Mei Shan (煤山), 'Bell Tower' (Klokke-toren) for Zhonglou (鐘樓). Borel also provides references from Western tradition that the reader is familiar with, like the aforementioned reference to Rembrandt and the bridge in chapter XIV, 'The Summer Palace': 'It is not like a bridge for human beings, rather for the Elysian Fields, to be trodden by none but shining angels and beautified souls.'[49] By using a term from Greek mythology, the image is interpreted as a Western cultural element, to help the reader.

[46] Borel 1910, p. 219; English translation 1912a, p. 263.
[47] As quoted in Doorman 2012, p. 104.
[48] Shelley 1840, pp. 81-82.
[49] Borel 1910, p. 195-196; English translation 1912a, p. 237.

At the same time, Borel does a great deal of foreignizing. He retains Chinese terms of concepts and objects in romanization, which he explains at first occurrence in the text and for some of which he adds a footnote or a photo. When traveling through the city for instance, the word *pailou* 牌樓 for a particular kind of arch-shaped gate[50] appears several times, and he provides a photo. In his explanation of the various means of transport in the city, Borel mentions the word *yangche* 洋車 'foreign carts' for a vehicle imported from Japan.[51] In his description of visiting temples, he mentions terms such as *menqian* 門錢 'gate money' for admission fee and *maoqian* 毛錢 for a silver ten cent coin,[52] which visitors must pay if they wish to enter the gate. Borel also explains the Chinese civil examination system and mentions the Chinese terms of the exams on local, provincial and imperial level (*xiucai*, *juren*, *jinshi*).[53] He adds that students had to memorize the *Four Books* and *Five Classics*.[54]

A few longish literary Chinese-Dutch translations also appear in the book. One example are the stone tables in the Hall of Classics, where Borel says he had 'one of the strangest and most profound literary emotions in [his] life,' which was to read 'in the midst of Beijing, in the Hall of Sublime Harmony, the texts that I had translated by lamplight in my room in far-away Java.'[55] Here he provides the translation of the first part of *The Great Learning,* which he reads on one of the stone tables. Although he does not make a specific reference, the translation that follows is a literal quotation from the first volume *Confucius* (pp. 82-83) in the series *Chinese Philosophy Annotated for Non-Sinologists*, albeit without the explanatory notes. Other examples of translation appear in chapter XV, 'The Temple of Heaven' (De Tempel des Hemels), which starts with a passage from the *Book of History* and another of the Jiaqing Emperor's prayer for rain. Through this, Borel claims to present an idea of the emotions that the emperors, or the 'Sons of Heaven', would have had when they visited the Temple of Heaven. He also notes that

> One has to go back to primeval times, to the profoundest esoteric mysticism, if one wishes to understand the symbolism of the original service on the *Tiantan* (the Altar of Heaven).[56]

By giving literary translations, Borel adds another dimension to his travel account, for which, in his view, his qualifications uniquely qualify him. An example is the description of the Bronze Ox as described above, where Borel provides the gist of the poem by the Qianlong Emperor:

[50] Borel 1910, p. 69; English translation 1912a, p. 90.
[51] Borel 1910, p. 72; English translation 1912a, p. 95.
[52] Borel 1910, p. 75; English translation 1912a, p. 98.
[53] Borel 1910, p. 162; English translation 1912a, p. 199.
[54] Borel 1910, p. 163; curiously, this line is omitted in the English translation.
[55] Borel 1910, p. 170; English translation 1912a, p. 206.
[56] Borel 1910, p. 202-203; English translation 1912a, p. 245.

> Then I saw at the back an inscription in delicate Chinese characters, 'Imperial stanzas by the inspired Artist-Emperor Qianlong.' And once more I thought how great an artist was Qianlong. With a god-like gesture he bestowed supreme art on splendid Beijing. Reverentially I read the stanzas. They relate how this bronze ox was cast after the model of Yu of Xia, centuries and centuries old. After he had curbed the giant stream by colossal irrigation works, thereby bringing agriculture to full prosperity, the emperor wrote a hymn of praise to the bronze ox, the sacred animal that protects agriculture, vanquishes dragons and monsters, and shines in the heavenly zodiac.[57]

This adds not only historical information about the Bronze Ox but also the symbolism behind it – which is, for instance, not found in *Round about My Peking Garden*. Little mentions the ox three times in her book,[58] mainly in praise of its life-like image and it being a piece of art. Again, Borel goes beyond the visible. However, in a review of *Daybreak in the East*, fellow sinologist A. G. de Bruin (1874-1947)[59] casts doubt on the accuracy of Borel's rendering of the Chinese poem. According to de Bruin:

> Most of those inscriptions and especially the verses written by the Son of Heaven personally are so obscure, so lofty and so interspersed with historical allusions that even the most eminent scholars including the late Legge, Chavannes, Giles, de Groot could not comprehend them at a glance. (…) No, truly, it seems strange that Mr. Borel can read these inscriptions so fast as if they were ads on the walls of a station. Mr Borel has a quick mind and has many years of experience, but that he could … no, c'est trop fort [it's too much].[60]

It is possible that de Bruin just does not believe that Borel understood everything while he was standing there, even though Borel could have copied the poem and interpreted it later. Yet the fact that de Bruin refers here to a study published in *T'oung Pao* shows that he is of the opinion that translation requires annotation. The article that de Bruin refers to is a study by the British scholar Edward Harper Parker (1849-1926) about a text on a Chinese vase of 538 Chinese characters, which covers 48 pages of annotated translation in *T'oung Pao*.[61] Parker was Professor of Chinese at Victoria University of Manchester at the time.

If we look at the Chinese poem written by the Qianlong Emperor, it appears that there is no mistake in Borel's description: it does indeed refer to Yu the Great and how the ox has been a symbol of taming floods. Whether a Chinese poem is comprehensible 'at a glance' depends on the poem in question. However, the purpose of de Bruin's criticism may lie deeper, in the sense that he says that Borel can never compete with 'the most eminent scholars', and implies that he is not qualified for a then vacant position at Leiden University, to which we turn below. Given Borel's experience in translation, however, it may well have

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[57] Borel 1910, p. 195; English translation 1912a, pp. 236-237.
[58] Little 1905, pp. 21, 25, and 172.
[59] De Bruin published *Introduction to Modern Chinese,* Leiden: Brill, 1914-1917 and had served as Official for Chinese Affairs in the Dutch East Indies.
[60] De Bruin 4 February 1911. Original is in Dutch with a French phrase.
[61] See 'The Ancient Chinese Bowl in the South Kensington Museum' by E. H. Parker, published in *T'oung Pao* (10:4), 1909, pp. 445-494.

been possible for him to give a quick rendering of the gist of a poem without accompanying notes. After all, the original purpose of *Daybreak in the East* is to offer an accessible text for general readers, who would not need an in-depth analysis of ancient texts.

5.1.4 References to Books and Other Experts

Another method in which Borel tries to make his work more convincing is citing works about China to support his arguments. Among the many authors that he cites, it appears that not all had knowledge of the Chinese language or had published academic writing about China. Borel quotes from first-hand reports by authors, including William Alexander Parsons Martin (1827-1916) and Putnam Weale (Pseudo of Bertram Lenox Simpson, 1877-1930). But he also quotes from works for the style of writing that conveys the same vision that he has of China, e.g. in a footnote to the last chapter 'Mutual Understanding', Borel praises the French novelist and naval officer Pierre Loti (Pseudo of Julian Viaud, 1850-1923) for his 'beautiful and poetic description of the invasion of the Forbidden City and the looting of Beijing.' Borel notes that in spite of grave errors in descriptions because of a lack of knowledge of Chinese, Loti's 'rendering of the desecration of the mysterious city is very striking.'[62]

Borel appears to invoke the references as support, but there is no evidence that he is influenced by what he reads. I found no direct traces in his representations of China, even though a title such as *The Awakening of China* by Martin seems to indicate similarities with *Daybreak in the East*. Yet the set-up of the work is completely different. The work by Martin starts with a geographical overview of China, which is an imaginary journey through all the provinces, followed by an historical overview from the very beginning of Chinese civilization to finally his view on the ongoing reforms in China. Most of Borel's descriptions are about sights in the Chinese capital, although his writing about the reforms is not limited to Beijing but also covers the rest of China. Of course Martin's vision is also shaped by his being a missionary, and he was looking forward 'with confidence to a time when China shall be found in the brotherhood of Christian nations.'[63] Martin was in Beijing during the Boxer Uprising, and must have personally experienced the anti-foreign sentiments on the part of the Chinese. He also writes about China as being a semi-civilized or uncivilized nation, an idea which Borel rejects, as I will discuss below. An effect of Martin's work on Borel, if any, could be that Borel attempts to give his own view of China, to set himself apart from Martin. For example, although not directed at Martin personally, Borel makes a point of accusing Western nations of barbarian behavior: 'I use the words 'barbarians' and 'vandals' because,

[62] Borel 1910, p. 223; English translation 1912, p. 267. Earlier Borel was dubbed 'Loti of the North' (ce Loti du Nord), in an announcement of the *Bibliothèque Universelle* under 'Arts and Sciences' (Kunst en wetenschappen) of the *General Commerce Newspaper*. Amsterdam, 02-09-1908. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010997295:mpeg21:a0134

[63] Martin 1907, p. x. For more on W. A. P. Martin, see 'Martin and Fryer: Trimming the Lamps' in *Western Advisers in China: To Change China, 1620-1960* by Jonathan D. Spence. Harmondsworth, Eng.; New York: Penguin Books. 1980, pp. 129-160.

as a servant of holy art, I cannot characterize with any other word the scandalous destruction of the Yuan Ming Yuan palace by Lord Elgin in 1860 and the looting of Beijing in 1900.'[64] From this, it appears that Borel calls for Western nations to look at their own atrocious acts before condemning China for being uncivilized.

To return to Borel's citation of other people's works: one of his purposes was to make his descriptions more accurate, based on first-hand reports by writers who had personal experience in China. For example when he explains how isolated foreigners live behind the walls of the Legation Quarter:

> Within these walls, behind these walls, on all sides surrounded by walls, with soldiers and guns between them, one finds invisible, concealed, the European, American, and Japanese ambassadors. Yes, exactly as Putnam Weale expressed it so typically in "*The Reshaping of the Far East"* and "*Indiscreet Letters from Peking",* &c., "in their Ghetto-like fortresses." No other word is so appropriate or defines the situation so correctly and concisely.[65]

Borel reinforces this concept of isolation by repeating the word 'walls' and by adding Weale's term 'ghetto'. He stresses that because of this isolation, foreigners in the capital are not aware of what is going on, at the time but also in the past.

Since Borel was not in Beijing in 1900, he can only write about the events based on witness accounts:

> (...) if one reads reliable books about it by people who went through the siege of the Legation (such as for instance Martin's *The Siege of Peking* or especially Putnam Weale's "*Indiscreet Letters from Peking*"), one is amazed that the European Legations at that time knew so little of what was going on in their immediate neighborhood, in and about the city (…),[66]

This indicates that the purpose of citing these works is to convince the reader of the ignorance of foreigners in the European Legations in Beijing, and of the fact that they made no attempt to understand local life. All throughout *Daybreak in the East* one finds mention of books that Borel read or people that he spoke to, but mostly in chapters VII, 'Reform in China' (De hervorming in China), and XVI 'Mutual Understanding'. By writing about the progress that is seen in education and building schools, the government's campaigns against opium and footbinding, and the status of women and at the same time noting that there are major problems that concern finance (tax) and corruption, Borel shows knowledge of what is going on in China. In this way, he hopes the reader will better understand the Chinese people and social progress in China. Based on this, Borel explains that the Chinese are human, selfless and patriotic - as long as you treat them as equals, without contempt.

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[64] Borel 1910, p. 224; English translation 1912a, p. 268.

[65] Borel 1910, p. 24; English translation 1912a, p. 41. Other referrals to Putnam Weale are on pp. 49, 52, and 53.

[66] Borel 1910, p. 49; English translation 1912a, p. 68. Borel mentions Martin once more on p. 110.

> What so many European merchants and even consuls and diplomats in China contend, that a Chinese is incapable of unselfish feelings from which he cannot derive any material profit, is absolutely false. Those who say this, probably in good faith, have never spoken intimately to an educated modern Chinese, as man to man, discarding all prejudice about differences in faith and race. It is very difficult indeed, and it takes a long time—sometimes years and years, before a European and a Chinese converse without suspicion or restraint.[67]

Again, Borel opposes the views of other foreigners. He tries to change the idea that many Europeans have of Chinese people, although he admits it is difficult to remove the existing barriers. Hence, it appears as if Borel presents himself as an intermediary between two cultures, because he understands both sides.

5.1.5 Reception

Reviews show that Borel's book garnered both positive and negative receptions. It is received favorably in particular for the insight into contemporary events in China; it is criticized by some readers for the writing style. Reviewer Joh. G. R. for *Elsevier Monthly* (Elsevier Maandschrift) expresses irritation over the (over)enthusiasm that emanates from the book. Although it is good to be enthusiastic, he warns of the danger of exaggeration: 'That which the writer observed in careful attention loses much of its value when it lacks a simple style and fails to give the reader a chance for digestion.'[68] However, further down, he also notes that it is good that Borel tries

> to encourage readers to develop an interest in Beijing and the Chinese people, strange as they may seem. For those who are open to his ideas, this book shall offer a pleasant and interesting reading. It proved so for the writer of this essay too, albeit for a different reason because he lived in Beijing for a long time and learned to love the place and developed an interest in what has been happening in China recently.'[69]

Moreover, the reviewer confirms that he agrees with the contents of the last chapter, in particular the idea of an 'internal power', found in Chinese wisdom and philosophy that sustained China through the ages, and he quotes an entire paragraph from it. According to this view, China is the only one that remains of all the great empires of antiquity.

An English book review by American ethnologist William Churchill (1859-1920), published in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* in 1915, starts favorably: 'This work is of deeper value than the mere travel record which is its first attraction.' Although Churchill provides the Dutch publication details of *Het Daghet in den Oosten,* he must have read the English translation. Churchill considers the theme of 'the East for the Oriental' and writes that 'Truly competent observers of the life of Asia are agreed that Asia must ever remain Oriental, its culture must continue a thing apart.' This indicates agreement with Borel who believed in the inward strengthening of China through wisdom and philosophy, a

[67] Borel 1910, p. 107; English translation 1912a, pp. 132-133.
[68] G. R. 1911, p. 388.
[69] Ibid, p. 389.

phenomenon that he calls 'The East for the East'. This implies that ultimately 'The East' will remain 'the East' without intrusion by 'the West'. What Churchill adds here is his own observation of the development of Japan and 'its unconcealed zeal for the hegemony of the Far East.' Eventually Churchill concludes his review by noting that Borel sees 'the strong groundwork of the ancestral morality of the Chinese peoples and he sees that it has endured through many superficial changes to a continuance of its ultimate triumph.'[70]

Besides the positive reception of *Daybreak in the East*, Borel is also criticized for his complacency with regard to his knowledge on China. In the period that Borel is in the Chinese capital, he sends letters to newspapers in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies for publication. Some of the letters are about his journeys by ship and train, and contain descriptions of other places such as Shanghai, Nanjing and Hankou.[71] But there are also letters which are reprinted in *Daybreak in the East*, including the one about the funeral of Cixi.[72] An anonymous reaction to one such letter appears in *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies* of 22 Nov 1909:

> "Me! I knew the China of fifteen years ago and I knew it well, if I may say so." Henri Borel is very modest in a letter from China. To know China, that vast nation with hundreds of millions of people, the China that in many aspects is still so obscure. He not only knew it but he knew it well! Didn't Socrates say: the only thing I know is that I know nothing? But Socrates was a sage.[73]

Besides sarcasm about Borel's smugness, there is also doubt about whether it is possible to really know China. The same type of irritation is displayed by a reporter who signs 'Carlo', but whose identity I have not been able to determine. After attending a talk by Borel on 'Chinese Painting' (Chineesche Schilderkunst) in December 1910, Carlo reports on how disappointing it was, because he found Borel's 'pedantic, patronizing tone irritating.' Carlo is not receptive to the symbolism of the paintings that Borel introduced:

> The legends about painters which Mr. Borel spoke about, their works that looked so real that they had to omit the eyes of the animals in the image lest the painting walked away, seem to us the argument for our view: Oriental artists tried primarily to achieve likeness just like their western counterparts. The fact that they succeeded only partially and only with some themes is a lack of knowledge on their part and their

[70] Churchill 1915, p. 710.

[71] See for example the letter dated Nanjing 21 December 1909 'From Beijing to Shanghai (overland) II. Jiujiang-Nanjing' (Van Peking naar Shanghai (Over land) II. Kiukiang-Nanking.) in *Batavian Newspaper* of 12 January 1910. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011035486:mpeg21:a0058 See also 'From Beijing to Shanghai (overland) III. (end)' (Van Peking naar Shanghai (Over land) III. (Slot.)) in *Batavian Newspaper* of 27 January 1910. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011035499:mpeg21:a0070

[72] See 'The Funeral of the Empress Dowager' (De uitvaart der keizerin-moeder) in *The Telegraph* of 26 November 1909, which contains the first part of the letter about the funeral of Cixi. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110559166:mpeg21:a0103

[73] Anonymous 22 November 1909. It must have been the article 'From Surabaya to Beijing' (Van Soerabaia naar Peking) published in the *Batavian Newspaper* of 9 November 1909 where Borel boasts of knowing China. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011035382:mpeg21:a0072

backwardness as an inferior race.[74]

The report shows that there were expectations of Borel in terms of his knowledge of Chinese art, but the way he conveys Chinese culture was pedantic, and so his audience fails to show appreciation. Whether or not provocative on purpose, Carlo is straightforward in his ideas about Asia, for he adds that it was fashionable to think that all were equal, so he was skeptical about Chinese art, or art in Asia in general. The remarks by Carlo are extremely racist, he puts the 'Oriental' squarely opposite Western artists and the talk by Borel clearly did not help to change his view: Carlo persists in regarding them as inferior.

Based on the above, it shows in the translation of China, Borel has his own style of 'rendering the foreign familiar and at the same time preserving its very foreignness', in the words of Crapanzano. This can be found in what I call the several layers of description, from the obvious to the invisible. This together with the various 'persuasive devices', in particular the attempt to become closer involved into the local scene and inclusion of his own partial translations, Borel delved deep into the source culture. The same in-depth knowledge should in Borel's view also be expected of those who are sent to work in China: they should know the Chinese language and culture. But this is not (yet) the case, and so he thinks it is wrong that 'Europe regarded each diplomat or consul who has visited China an expert.'[75] Eventually, the trip to Beijing and the overall positive response to his book results in an over-confident attitude posing as a 'connoisseur of the Orient', and leads to an inclination to engage in conflict with others, both in Surabaya and at Leiden University, which will be discussed in the next sections. I will examine how this newly found sense of being an expert led him to criticize his superiors in the Dutch East Indies, while at the same time he condemns Leiden University's sinological tradition and proposes new directions for the study of Chinese at Leiden.

5.2 Over-Confidence

The revolution in China and the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 confirm Borel's expectations of change in China. Among the many factors that led up to the fall of the Qing, Borel is mostly concerned with education and the efforts to teach Mandarin Chinese at schools. In connection with this, Borel tells an anecdote of a young pupil in the Dutch East Indies to stress the need for education of the Chinese people. This young pupil explains in his essay that 'small Japan could have defeated big China' because the Japanese are educated.[76] Japanese victory refers to the result of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, which broke out following a conflict between China and Japan over supremacy in Korea. China regarded Korea as a tributary for many centuries and Korea accepted this role. Yet, when Japan tried

[74] Carlo 14 December 1910.
[75] Borel 1913, p. 15.
[76] Borel 1910, pp. 5-6; English translation 1912a, p. 16.

to gain a foothold there, China feared that Korea would become 'independent'. Finally the conflict was resolved in the 'Treaty of Shimonoseki' in April 1895, which had China recognize independence of Korea, cede the Liaodong Peninsula and Taiwan to Japan and pay war indemnity to Japan.[77]

To return to Borel's concern with changes in China, besides the importance of education, he stresses the teaching of Mandarin Chinese 'which has become the greatest good of modern China, because of all means it is the only one, the saving measure by which unity of State and nation can be accomplished.'[78] Previously, he had observed nationalist views among Chinese in Surabaya, where he resumes his post as Official for Chinese Affairs upon his return from Beijing early 1910.

As Borel notes in the introduction of *Daybreak in the East*, the aim of the book is 'besides giving artistic impressions of Beijing, [also] to convey a foreboding of the significance for China and for the whole world of the reform caused by the Pan-Chinese movement.'[79] For Borel, it is through the understanding of Eastern wisdom and intuition, that the idea of 'the East for the East'[80] emerges. In the period prior to his departure for China, Borel had noticed an increasing interest in Chinese politics among the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies and Singapore, which he thought was a cause for vigilance:

> Europe is not yet immediately threatened by the Yellow Peril of bayonets, airships, and armored cruisers; but there is the much greater, much stronger—because spiritual and mystical—danger of the Yellow idea; indestructible and irresistible like all spiritual forces in the history of the universe, mightier than the thickest armor-plates, more far-reaching than the monsters of [cannon manufacturers] Krupp and Creusot. One can level to the ground by heavy artillery any armored fort, destroy *Dreadnoughts* by mines and torpedoes, but the spiritual idea fermenting among hundreds of millions cannot be exterminated by material weapons.[81]

According to Borel, China represents a danger to Europe, but not in the military sense. Rather a spiritual and mystical danger, because China's philosophy and ethics will render it stronger than the West. He sees what he calls 'the complete mental revolution' and refers to the meaningful symbol of rebuilding temples into schools: 'Idols are removed from the temples: modern science walks in.'[82] This mental revolution (not a material revolution) is also referred to in chapter XII, 'The Temple of Confucius and the Hall of the Classics' (De Tempel van Confucius en de Hal der Klassieken), where he claims for instance, that the wisdom of Confucius:

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[77] Spence 1990, pp. 222-223.
[78] Borel 1910, pp. 7-8; English translation 1912a, p. 18.
[79] Borel 1910, p. 4; English translation 1912a, p. 15.
[80] Borel 1910, pp. 4-5; English translation 1912a, p. 14.
[81] Borel 1910, p. 4; English translation 1912a, pp. 14-15.
[82] Borel 1910, pp. 7-8; English translation 1912a, p. 19.

> in its essence, divested of what is temporal and perishable, will be treasured by the Chinese people as its indestructible and highest good. Such will also be the case with the sublime literature, the fair form in which this wisdom is cast. This will remain the highest good for modern reformed China, not the power given by money, battleships and guns. In the ages that will dawn China will be able to take the lead of the great civilised world-powers by spiritual, but not by physical, force.[83]

Hence in order to understand the future of China, the reader should know about Chinese philosophy and wisdom. Borel claims that Europeans are ignorant of this, but that what is happening in China 'is merely the outward symptom of a single inward idea arising in Eastern Asia', and that 'any appreciation of the Young Chinese movement must start from the point of view that the idea "the East for the East" is essentially spiritual, even mystical, and will not at all carry with it only the material movements of economical and trading interests.'[84]

This identification of a failure to interpret what lay behind the external signs, coupled with a conviction that the West should understand the East 'from within,' Borel proceeded to apply to his work as an Official for Chinese Affairs in Surabaya. He was involved in and aware of what was going on within the Chinese community, in particular education. As Ming Govaars writes

> Borel found himself in a unique position because of his (government-approved) patronage of the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan. Through his knowledge of both Mandarin and the southern Chinese dialects he could mingle freely with the Chinese and was well-informed on the issues of importance to them. His memoranda and missives are of great interest and include many suggestions for government policy during the decisive years of the Chinese movement.[85]

Among Borel's suggestions for government policy is teaching Mandarin Chinese to Chinese people in the Dutch East Indies. The reason for this is, as he explains in his introduction to *Daybreak in the East*:

> Because—and here lies the central importance of the Chinese education question, wherever there are Chinese settlements—because the awakened national sentiment has discerned that unity of language is indispensable to national unity.'[86]

But as Govaars writes, 'Borel's idea of Dutch schools established for the Chinese at which several hours of instruction were dedicated to Mandarin was not even given serious consideration.'[87] In sum, based on his understanding of what is going on among the Chinese, Borel made suggestions to Dutch authorities, but these were ignored.

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[83] Borel 1910, p. 161; English translation 1912a, p. 198.
[84] Borel 1910, p. 4; English translation 1912a, p. 15.
[85] Govaars 2005, p. 78.
[86] Borel 1910, p. 7. English translation 1912a, p. 18. The English version is slightly different from the Dutch, which actually reads 'and here lies the central importance of the Chinese education question *in our colonies*.' (my italics)
[87] Govaars 2005, p. 80.

Then, in February 1912, over Chinese New Year, riots among Chinese in Batavia and Surabaya broke out. In Batavia this appeared to be because of the prohibition of flying the Republican flag, while in Surabaya it was because of the prohibition of fireworks to celebrate Chinese New Year. While the situation in Batavia soon returned to normal, the chaos in Surabaya continued for much longer. Many Chinese were arrested and a government investigation was started.[88] According to reports, police repressed the rebels with force and violence and entered the homes of Chinese people without warrant. A group of coolies avenged themselves by storming the home of a Chinese officer, while others locked up the chief superintendent. In protest, Chinese trade houses shut down for many days. Borel opined that the root of the problem was the ignorance of the Dutch authorities of what was going on in the Chinese community, and that although he tried to inform them, his advice was not taken into consideration.

In the aftermath, Johan Einthoven (1862-1913) in his capacity of Resident of Surabaya, went to Buitenzorg, now known as Bogor, on West Java in early March 1912. The purpose of the trip was to brief the Governor-General about the unrest, because Einthoven thought telegrams and written accounts were insufficient. From his letter of 9 October 1912, it appears that Einthoven was preparing for the meeting about the riots on 3 March and eventually filed a report, dated 1-4 March 1912.[89] In this report, which he prepared with the help of the Assistant Resident and Chinese Officers, he covers up the actual course of events to protect the police against public scandal.[90] Clearly, Einthoven thought he and his officials were better informed than Borel, so that the latter need not be consulted nor shown the report about the riots. According to Einthoven, Borel told him that he had the intention to write his own version of events, and Einthoven replied that this was unnecessary, but that if Borel was going to do it, he should show it to Einthoven first. Three weeks later, on 23 March Borel submits his version of events in a report directly to the Director of Justice, without having shown it to Einthoven or sending him a copy. Reporting to the Director of Justice in itself was correct, but according to regulations, a copy should have been sent to Einthoven.

Documents in the National Archives show that several issues led to Borel's decision to by-pass Einthoven.[91] Apparently, the work relation between Einthoven and Borel was problematic from the start. Borel was appointed at Surabaya in the summer of 1909, just before he departed for Beijing and as Einthoven recalls, during that first meeting he had to

[88] For more details, see 'Official report about the Chinese riots in Batavia and Surabaya' (Officieel relaas van de Chineesche opstootjes te Batavia en Soerabaja), in *Colonial Magazine*, 1912-01-II, p. 601.

[89] NA. NL-HaNA, Koloniën/Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 148.

[90] In 'The Dirty Work of Empire: Modern Policing and Public Order in Surabaya: 1911-1919', Marieke Bloembergen explains: 'Although a lie, the resident's declaration was understandable: it would have been hard to imagine a more humiliating, damaging event for the colonial powers than the detention of the chief superintendent by local "rebels", and therefore the story had to be covered up.' Bloembergen 2007, pp. 138-139.

[91] NA, NL-HaNA, Koloniën/Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51.

relay a warning to Borel from the Government Secretary, that Borel should keep his promise to refrain from publishing any 'offensive writing in newspapers'.[92] According to Einthoven, Borel denied any 'offensive writing' or any promise made. In the period after Borel returned from Beijing to Surabaya, there was little communication between Borel and Einthoven. Both appear to have borne grudges: Borel complains that Einthoven never consults or informs him of events or issues concerning Chinese people, while Einthoven complains that Borel often reports directly to the Director of Justice or the Government without informing him first.

Of course, Einthoven's reliance on the Assistant Resident and the Chinese Officers, made Borel (feel) redundant. In fact, the position of 'Official for Chinese Affairs' was generally undervalued, and since Residents were used to working with Chinese Officers they did not know how to or were reluctant to involve Dutch advisors, which is what Fromberg also wrote in his article 'The Chinese Movement and the *Colonial Magazine'* (Chineesche beweging en het "Koloniaal Tijdschrift") dated 8 August 1912:

> Officials for Chinese Affairs confirmed that the Statute Book of the Dutch East Indies 1896, no. 96, which set out their scope of work remained 'a dead letter.' After all, their services were seldom used nor made to good use.[93]

This indicates that not only Borel's advice was not taken into consideration, but others experienced the same, although Borel was probably only one of the few who made an attempt to assert his professional authority. Later, in a letter of 15 November 1912 to the Director of Justice, Borel defends himself in response to accusations that he is unreliable and that he sympathizes with the Chinese movement in excess. In Borel's view the Resident ignores him, and Borel argues that the archives of his predecessor led him to believe that in the past too there was this misunderstanding that Officials for Chinese Affairs could be ignored when it came to Chinese affairs in Surabaya.[94] Given that these Dutch Officials for Chinese Affairs were highly educated people who had gone through a rigid selection process and professional training, it must have been frustrating and demoralizing for someone like Borel to be ignored. As for sympathy with the Chinese movement, Borel agrees that he does sympathize but not to excess.

It is also possible that Einthoven felt he could not trust Borel and Borel's report on the Chinese riots was the final straw.[95] A few months earlier there had been a similar incident,

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[92] Ibid.

[93] See Fromberg 1926, pp. 475-490.

[94] NA. NL-HaNA, Koloniën/Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51.

[95] It is likely that the sudden death of Assistant Resident Hermanus Johannes Waleson (1862-1912) also had an impact on Einthoven. Waleson, who died of heart failure on 5 March 1912, was said to have been someone 'who was clearheaded, strong willed and his actions presented a powerful individuality', see death announcement 'Striking Bereavement' (Treffend sterfgeval) in *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies* of 6 March 1912. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015,

when Borel was not informed of the gondola procession, held in honor of the Governor-General. In Borel's view, he should have been asked to monitor the preparations so that he could have advised against inappropriate texts displayed on the gondolas and the presence of prostitutes there. It is not clear how Borel got hold of the Chinese text of rhyming couplets (*duilian* 對聯) displayed on the gondolas, nor why he showed his translation of these texts at the reception the same day to the Governor-General without informing Einthoven. According to Borel, he obtained the texts at a late hour and there was not enough time to show them to Einthoven (although he did give them to him later), but Einthoven argues that Borel could never have done the translations so quickly and that Borel had ignored Einthoven on purpose to retaliate for not having been invited to the dinner party on 5 October at the residency.

According to the letter of 9 October 1912 quoted above, Einthoven had already advised the Government by letter of 8 April to dismiss Borel from service for his misconduct in contributing to newspaper reports on the riots, and for filing his report without notifying Einthoven. Apparently the Government did not find the arguments offered by Einthoven sufficient to execute immediate dismissal, and instead they arranged for Borel to be transferred to Makassar. It seems this was done as a disciplinary measure, but perhaps also because it was the only way to solve the conflict with Einthoven. When in October, Einthoven again urged the Government to dismiss Borel, Einthoven was promoted to the post of Director of the Department of Home Affairs. At the same time as a promotion, this was arguably a tacid acknowledgement that there was something wrong with the functioning of the Official for Chinese Affairs in Surabaya, and as such, Einthoven's transfer indicated that it was not only Borel as an individual who was responsible for what happened between him and Einthoven.

One of the local newspapers in the Dutch East Indies that discusses the transfer of Borel claims that Borel is 'the victim of his truthfulness,'[96] and that Borel's transfer was:

> for political reasons, since it is not good for a government official who deals with an important issue that his advisor is on the side of the people rather than the government; hence it was imperative that Borel left Surabaya, regardless of whether the Resident stayed or not.[97]

As mentioned above, there was also the belief that Borel sympathized with the Chinese movement, and therefore they thought that he was unable to judge objectively. A later article also touches on the issue of trust, and notes that Einthoven had allegedly complained about Borel that 'it was difficult to know if he could trust the official as he seldom expressed positive views and he did not provide constructive advice, whereas his criticism was always

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http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010135617:mpeg21:a0041

[96] Anonymous 5 June 1912.

[97] Anonymous 5 July 1912.

sharp and over the top.'[98]

In an interview published in *The Telegraph*, Henri van Kol (1852-1925), former hydraulic engineer in the East Indies and former socialist member of parliament in The Hague, explains that it is difficult to find out what had happened exactly during and after the riots, but knowing both men, he states that he is confident that Einthoven is reliable and trustworthy, whereas:

> Mr. Borel is a somewhat troublesome and sensitive person who undoubtedly was more knowledgeable about Chinese affairs than the Resident, but we should not forget, that the Resident had to consider the political side of the issue.[99]

Given that Borel is transferred to Makassar, it can be concluded that Borel's quest for justice and equality, recognition and authority fails at the time. Yet, Borel's actions did have some effect later on. One of the changes, as can be read in the *Encyclopedia of the Dutch East Indies* under the entry 'Official for Chinese Affairs' is the creation of an office for Chinese affairs in Batavia. The purpose of this office is to act as a central point for dissemination of information and supervision over all.[100] In brackets it is added that this office, formerly under the Department of Justice, had already been transferred to that of Home Affairs. According to the list of authors, Borel contributed to this edition of the encyclopedia and he is the only one with the title of 'former Official for Chinese Affairs'. It is likely that he wrote the entry on Chinese affairs in the Dutch East Indies. According to newspaper reports, back in 1913 Willem Jacob Oudendijk (1874-1953) was called in to head the office, because he had diplomatic experience in Beijing. However, some people questioned his qualification, because he had no experience in colonial government of the Dutch East Indies.

After moving to Makassar, Borel fulfilled the requirement of seven years' service to be entitled to nine months' leave. Upon return to the Netherlands in early 1913, Borel explains in articles and talks about the situation in China and the Dutch East Indies in an attempt to justify his reasoning behind his actions in Surabaya. In his lecture on the Chinese movement in the Dutch East Indies held in April 1913 at the Indies Association, he stresses that 'Dutch rule over the Indo-Chinese should be based on wisdom and justice,'[101] implying this was not the case back then. About a decade later, on 11 September 1923, an article appears in *The Fatherland* about corruption on Java, to which Borel responds a day later, expressing satisfaction over the fact that scandals are no longer covered up:

> (…) when I served as Advisor for Chinese Affairs—the Government was some kind of fetish, which had to remain holy at all cost, worse still: an honest, truth-loving official who divulged scandals was regarded as

[98] Anonymous 11 November 1912.
[99] LM. Document in the file 'House of Representatives' (Tweede Kamer), in the Borel Archives.
[100] Paulus 1917, p. 478.
[101] Anonymous 16 April 1913.

troublesome and was transferred or forced to resign.[102]

Thus, Borel's colonial career ends in disillusion, with his authority unrecognized. Perhaps it was also frustrating to see his colleagues, the ones who were once his classmates, steadily get promoted to posts at more important locations. Van Wettum is appointed Official for Chinese Affairs in Batavia on 17 August 1909. When he dies of dysentery almost five years later,[103] Ezerman succeeds him on 1 October 1914.[104]

Borel's departure from the Dutch East Indies is mentioned in the newspaper, which is telling of his image there. Appreciation by the Chinese is shown in the fact that Borel is treated to a farewell dinner in Surabaya by the Chinese Association of Commerce (Chineesche Handelsvereeniging) and the Soe Po Sia.[105] This is in great contrast with how his Dutch colleagues see Borel's departure:

Uitgeleide.

Met het Stoomschip *Tawaboro* zal heden-middag met verlof naar Nederland vertrekken, de Heer Henri Borel, Ambtenaar voor Chineesche Zaken.

Wij hooren dat dit vertrek niet onopgemerkt zal voorbijgaan. Eene betooging is voorbereid, die zich passend zal aansluiten aan de „bestrijding" welke de Heer Borel in de laatste maanden mocht ondervinden van de zijde dergenen die hij onaangename waarheden had gezegd, dan wel van hunne woordvoerders.

Een zóór hooggeplaatst ambtenaar van het Departement B. B. zal den Heer Borel het Heilige Kruis na-houden; een aantal personen zal hem uitjouwen, — achter zijn rug natuurlijk, en aan zulke lui is in Indië nooit gebrek, — terwijl de Heer J. E. Stokvis, Hoofdredacteur van de *Locomotief*, naar wij vernemen in hoogst eigen persoon den geurigen inhoud zal behandelen van het kistje, door onzen teekenaar voldoende duidelijk aangegeven.

Het zal een demonstratie zijn, de geschiedenis der laatste maanden waardig.

'Farewell' (Uitgeleide), *The News of the Day for East Indies.* Batavia, 16-01-1913. Accessed on Delpher on 29-10-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010167294:mpeg21:a0015

[102] Borel 12 September 1923.
[103] See obituary in *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies* of 8 August 1914.
[104] *Government Almanac for the Dutch East Indies,* 1910.
[105] Anonymous 10 January 1913.

Borel is portrayed in this sketch fleeing the stairs to board the ship, with Dutch people at the quay jeering at him. The accompanying text explains that the person waiving the holy cross meaning 'good riddance' (het heilige kruis nageven) represents the Director of Home Affairs (i.e. Einthoven), another person who is carrying a box with the words 'telor boesoek' (rotten eggs) depicts the editor of the *Locomotive* (i.e. J. E. Stokvis),[106] and then there are some other people who have come simply to hoot.[107]

It seems fair to say that Borel's return to the Netherlands early 1913 is a turning point in his life. As an obituary for Borel would later aptly state: 'Henri Borel was not a man—or perhaps not a human being—to work happily as a government official. He felt independent and detected things that others preferred to keep hidden (...).'[108] Moreover, the obituary continues, for Borel in connection with his friend Karel Wijbrands (1863-1929), director and chief editor of *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies*, it was 'this merciless action against and detection of injustice, chaos and corruption which united these two critical minds.'[109] Back in the Netherlands, Borel writes articles on a wide range of topics, many about China, which continues to fascinate him, in addition to his critical reviews of drama performances as editor of the *Fatherland*.

5.3 Criticizing Dutch Sinology

The China experience leads Borel to publish his ideas on how to improve mutual understanding between East and West. In his view the West should do more to understand China, and he thinks sinology has a responsibility to help. He stresses the importance of the study of contemporary China, and not only ancient China. With these ideas he starts criticizing Dutch sinology, which rouses anger but also causes change at Leiden University. Borel sets out these ideas in two of his most important articles on Dutch sinology: 'New Directions of Dutch Sinology' (De nieuwe banen der sinologie), and 'Dutch Sinology' (De Nederlandsche sinologie) which is a review of de Groot's *The Religious System of China*. In hindsight, it is possible that the ultimate aim of Borel to study Mandarin and publish about sinology is to become eligible for the Chair of Chinese at the University of Leiden, which becomes vacant when de Groot leaves for Berlin in 1912. The announcement that de Groot accepts the appointment at the University of Berlin is published in several newspapers in the autumn of 1911.[110] We know that Borel has an interest in the Chair at Leiden University. In

[106] For details about the case Van Geuns vs Stokvis, see 'The Nasty Side of Journalism in the East Indies' (De ploertigheid in de Indische journalistiek) in the *New Rotterdam Newspaper* (Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant) of 24 December 1912, it is about conflicting reports in the newspapers about the Surabaya riots. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010032572:mpeg21:a0172

[107] Anonymous 16 January 1913.

[108] Anonymous 31 August 1933b.

[109] Ibid.

[110] See announcement 'Prof. J. J. M. de Groot' in *The Telegraph* of 3 November 1911 (which says de Groot will depart at Christmas), accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110560974:mpeg21:a0132 See also 'Prof. de Groot' in *The News of the*

'Henri Borel at Sixty', where he looks back on his career, he writes:

> Due to circumstances which had nothing to do with my knowledge of Chinese, I was not given a chance to devote myself completely to the study of Chinese upon my return from the Indies, and why not be honest about it, this was the greatest disappointment of my life. I was destined for it. It would have been the true fulfillment of my life. What I do now, I do with all my heart, but I know it was not my destiny.'[111]

Back then the expression 'to devote myself to the study of Chinese' stands for an appointment at Leiden University. De Bruin uses the same expression and he was vying for the same position too.[112] The writer of the short news item 'Professor Borel' in *News for the Day of Dutch East Indies* of 6 January 1912, cites the writer Johan de Meester (1860-1931) saying that Borel is a potential candidate. De Meester wonders if Borel's article 'New Directions of Sinology' is a public letter of application,[113] but another newspaper claims that Borel has denied this.[114] The efforts of Borel to show his competence for the Chair in Leiden fail, but there is an obvious break with tradition of training students for an appointment in the Dutch East Indies. Eventually J. J. L. Duyvendak (1889-1954) who had worked as an interpreter in Beijing and not in the Dutch East Indies, was appointed in 1919. Below I will set out what Borel's ideas were, how people responded and what the consequences for Borel were.

Borel's early ideas about sinology can be found in chapter XVI, 'Mutual Understanding', of *Daybreak in the East*, Borel feels particularly strong about how much more should be done for a better understanding between Chinese and Western people. Borel condemns England for having introduced opium, 'the pernicious drug that would poison and enervate the whole Chinese nation.'[115] In the case of the Boxer Uprising, Borel condemns the violation by Western soldiers of the profound mystery of the Forbidden City.[116] In Borel's view, hatred of foreigners in China is caused by Western aggression, but also by a lack of mutual understanding. Moreover, he wrote 'The Chinese are now trying to assimilate Western ideas and Western science. An astonishing number of works on European economics, sociology, philosophy, are now being translated into Chinese and read in China.'[117]

Hence, in his view the Chinese were doing their part, and now it was time for the West

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Day for the Dutch East Indies of 11 October 1911, accessed on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010136141:mpeg21:a0011 See also 'Prof. de Groot' in the *New Rotterdam Newspaper* of 10 September 1911, accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010031761:mpeg21:a0089

[111] Borel 23 November 1929.

[112] More details can be found in *An Unclarified Matter and an Angry Professor* (Een onopgehelderd geval en een verbolgen hoogleeraar) by A. G. de Bruin, published in 1920.

[113] Anonymous 6 January 1912.

[114] Anonymous 16 January 1912.

[115] Borel 1910, p. 224; English translation 1912a, pp. 268-269.

[116] Borel 1910, p. 227; English translation 1912a, p. 273.

[117] Borel 1910, p. 226; English translation 1912a, p. 270.

to try and understand China. His conclusion, in the final paragraph of *Daybreak in the East*:

> The Westerner must try to get to the bottom of the mystery of the Chinese national mind; sinology must be encouraged in the West at all universities. And a superior body of future diplomats and consuls must be formed who will go to China, and especially to Beijing, not as strangers but as reliable experts who have knowledge of the Chinese country, people, and language.[118]
> Only then will mutual understanding become possible.[119]

There is a clear stance in Borel's belief that the West should be more active towards China, also because this will prevent future conflicts. The stress is primarily on the study of Chinese and the training of experts. Secondly, only those experts should be appointed diplomats in Beijing for without this knowledge of China, so Borel claims: 'all relations, all negotiations with China are impossible'. Borel also thinks that the West needs to learn from the East. In the last paragraph of chapter VII, 'Reform in China', he writes:

> The only important thing for me is that this [i.e. China's development and modernization] will come about, although perhaps unexpected catastrophes, revolutions, debacles will shake the political conditions of the world to their foundations. It will happen because such future is already germinating in the entire Chinese nation, and the Western nations unconsciously need to be imbued with Eastern ideas, for their own unassisted intellect leaves them empty and dissatisfied.[120]

This indicates that Borel is seeking in China what he feels is missing from his own Western background and education. He is convinced that the way ahead is to modernize the study of Chinese in the West and improve relations between East and West.

As a follow-up to his ideas in *Daybreak in the East*, Borel stresses this point again in 'New Directions of Dutch Sinology' which he publishes in *The Guide* in 1911. Borel reiterates that the West needs to improve its understanding of the East. Therefore, in Borel's view, sinology should not only focus on China's ancient literature and culture, but also on the study of the spiritual aspirations of modern China in relation to the rest of the world. Borel's ideas conflict with those of de Bruin, who thinks that forecasting the future of China has nothing to do with sinology as a science. De Bruin writes:

> Whatever Borel may suggest, in case sinology is not exercised from a pure linguistic angle, it has no other purpose to than dig out and present the spiritual gems that are concealed in Chinese literature and history, and to make them accessible and explain them to those who do not understand Chinese.[121]

It sounds as if de Bruin writes in support of de Groot, who held a similar view. This exchange

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[118] Borel's footnote in original: 'Putnam Weale also noted this and said "only the most capable and brilliant diplomatic officials—men whose intelligence will help to shape events and not to be led by them, and who will not with utter firmness when the time for such action comes—should be assigned to such a difficult post as Beijing."'

[119] Borel 1910, p. 228; English translation 1912a, pp. 272-273.

[120] Borel 1910, p. 109; English translation 1912a, p. 135.

[121] De Bruin 20 December 1911.

of views influenced the considerations of finding a successor of de Groot and eventually had an impact on the decision of appointing someone new, from a different generation, as will be shown below.

In Borel's view, however, there is in fact a need for understanding present-day events in modern China and a need for learning the official, 'national' language (Mandarin) which has become so important and which he says neither Schlegel nor de Groot had ever mastered to speak.[122] In his view the program at Leiden University should include learning Mandarin. This trend to modernize sinology was seen earlier in other European institutions. For example, Norman J. Girardot in his biography of Legge refers to a meeting held in London in 1873, explaining: 'What is important here is not just the temporary eclipse of the Parisian sinological tradition, but the demise of the old *sinologie de chambre* methodology in favor of practical field experience in the Orient and an ability to speak the living languages of China.'[123]

In 1912, Borel publishes 'Dutch sinology' which is a review of de Groot's *The Religious System of China.* The last volume that de Groot would complete in the series came out in 1910, the same year as Borel's *Daybreak in the East*. In this review, Borel writes that de Groot lacks spiritual insight and philosophical intuition, and his book would cause contempt and misunderstanding among readers.

Among Borel's complaints is that de Groot refers to the Chinese as 'barbarous and semi-civilized people', that he fails to differentiate between soul and spirit, and that he thinks the Chinese are so stupid that after 'accumulated experiences of ages' they still don't have 'a notion of the reality of death.'[124] Borel supports his arguments with quotations from letters and a review. An example of a quote from a letter which Borel claims was written by one of his Chinese literary friends, who attended the Races Congress (Rassencongres) in London,[125] wrote about de Groot: 'His voluminous works are padded with a lot of rubbish.' At the end of the article Borel also quotes a recent letter from one of his colleagues, without identifying who it is, who wrote that de Groot's work is 'hopelessly out of date.'[126]

Another critical point Borel has of de Groot's book is that he finds the title in conflict with de Groot's remark in the General Preface to *The Religious System of China*: 'This book is intended less as a scientific production than as a store-house of facts, carefully gleaned from the literary relics of bygone ages.'[127] According to Borel de Groot's 'store-house' only contains information about some external phenomena of a religion but nothing about the mystic inner being, which is a typical comment in a time of the rise of the phenomenology of

[122] Anonymous 3 September 1915.
[123] Girardot 2002, p. 147.
[124] Borel 1912b, pp. 264-265.
[125] This must be the First Universal Races Congress held in London in 1911.
[126] Borel 1912b, p. 274.
[127] Ibid, p. 267.

religion. Therefore, says Borel, it may have some ethnographical value, but from a philosophical and religious point of view it is 'a junk room' (een rommelkamer). Borel goes so far as to call the work 'unscientific' in many places, for 'the scoffing and arrogant disparagement with which de Groot constantly describes Chinese rituals and sacraments and customs'.[128]

According to Werblowsky, de Groot experienced a turning point in his attitude to China in 1889.[129] At the time de Groot was in China conducting research into the 'linguistics, geography and ethnology of China in general', which resulted in many publications, most importantly the volumes of *The Religious System of China*. Besides his scholarly research, de Groot was also requested to look into recruitment of coolies directly from China, because of problems with the existing supply via labor brokers in Singapore.[130] Werblowsky cites de Groot's diary where de Groot complains of the filth, the weather, the food and hostility towards foreigners in China: 'The net result is that one becomes filled with an unsurmountable repugnance against the population.'[131] This may have influenced the condescending tone with which de Groot writes about the Chinese, something which Borel opposes. Borel and de Groot obviously have different perceptions of China, both in terms of their purpose in physically going to China, as well as their experience of living in Chinese society. Of course, de Groot completed four years (1886-1890) of fieldwork in China, which is a long period of time by any standard then and now.

In this context, de Bruin makes a point in his comments on Borel's review of de Groot's work. In questioning whether Borel is qualified to give an evaluation of China, de Bruin blames Borel as someone 'who more often responds to intuition on the spur of the moment, rather than listen to the voice of common sense.'[132] By way of comparison, de Bruin imagines how de Groot's depiction of an ancient temple would differ from Borel's:

> When prof. de Groot looks at an old dilapidated temple, where lepers drowsy of opium perform rites, he sees nothing but the filth and the repulsive, then his judgment is probably too shallow when he speaks of a barbarian state. Yet when Mr. Borel portrays in elegant words how the temple is a miracle of architectural beauty made of impeccable marble, and tries to make us believe that he listened with bated breath to the superb wisdom of the priests, or that he kneeled down in pure devotion for the divine grace of the lepers, we are even worse off.[133]

De Bruin is actually criticizing both, de Groot for being superficial and cool, and Borel for exaltedness and exaggeration. Furthermore, de Bruin refers to what he calls 'Borelian exaggeration' in a footnote about Borel's reference to his tutor in China, who had been de

[128] Ibid, p. 266.
[129] Werblowsky 2002, p. 24.
[130] Blussé 1989, p. 347.
[131] Werblowsky 2002, p.25.
[132] De Bruin 10 September 1912.
[133] Ibid.

Groot's teacher as well. In the original article, Borel writes: 'Tio-Siao-Hun [Zhao Shaoxun], the old Chinese tutor of Professor de Groot who was also my old tutor for many years.' De Bruin corrects this because Borel was in Xiamen for only eighteen months. This is not quite accurate either, for in fact it was almost two years. Moreover, de Bruin notes that de Groot once said to him

> If Mr. Borel spends one night reading a translation from Sanskrit, he would write the next day, and with a brazen face, about 'the language and wisdom of Ancient India, which I studied day and night for several decades' …[134]

While his fellow sinologists accuse Borel of bragging and discrediting Dutch sinology, Borel in his turn accuses his teachers of building storehouses of facts without 'deep, spiritual vision.' As Leonard Blussé notes, Borel's

> harsh remarks on the scholarly practice of his teachers were of course not justifiable, yet they did result in the long vacancy of the Chair of Sinology after de Groot accepted a chair in Berlin in 1912. It was difficult to draw up a profile for a successor.'[135]

Hence, Borel's ideas and criticism did not result in him being appointed at Leiden University. Yet it did contribute to changes in the direction of sinology at Leiden University. The appointment eventually in 1919 of Duyvendak[136] is evidence of this: more emphasis on the study of both ancient and modern China and Mandarin Chinese, and less on the training of Dutch interpreters in the Dutch East Indies.

When Duyvendak took over, sinology in the Netherlands entered a new era. Duyvendak set up a Sinological Institute in 1931, after receiving funds from the Boxer Indemnity payments,[137] possibly as an attempt to keep Duyvendak in the Netherlands. Duyvendak had taught at Columbia University and was considering an offer by Columbia,[138] but declined the offer when he was granted the subsidy. This was an important development after a relatively quiet period in the 1910s. Apart from Borel's works, not many new titles related to China were published in Dutch in this period: a new Dutch version of the *Daodejing* (Tao Teh King) translated by J. A. Blok (1867-1955) in 1910, and a *Hakka Dictionary* (Hakka woordenboek) compiled by Peter Adriaan van de Stadt (1876-1940) in 1912.

Ironically, while sinology went forward into the future, Borel started looking back into the past. It took a while for Borel to settle until he was appointed editor at *The Fatherland* in

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[134] Ibid.

[135] Blussé 2008, p. 157.

[136] For more details, see Barend ter Haar's 'Between the Dutch East Indies and Philology (1919-1974)' in Idema 2014.

[137] Ter Haar 2014, p. 77. According to *The Fatherland* (Anonymous 11 December 1929), Duyvendak declined the offer by Columbia University, because the Minister of Education had granted a subsidy to found an institution of Chinese studies.

[138] Anonymous 12 June 1929.

1916. Since his return in the Netherlands early 1913, he had started rereading his translations of Confucian texts but also started publishing new translations of Chinese literature. The latter include short stories and Daoist anecdotes, most of which were first introduced to him in the early 1890s by Schlegel at Leiden University. In these works, his prominent presence as the translator/author results in mistakes as the final two chapters will show.

PART III: REEVALUATING CHINA (1916–1933)

Chapter 6: A Chinese Spirit

In publications from the final period of his life, Borel is often looking to the past to write in the present. He reflects on his earlier work about Chinese philosophy and focuses on key concepts to explain 'the spirit of China' in an eponymous book, *The Spirit of China* (De geest van China). He physically returns to China and writes up an idealized image of China in *The Beautiful Island, A Second Book on Wisdom and Beauty from China* (Het Schoone eiland, een tweede boek van wijsheid en schoonheid uit China) (hereafter *The Beautiful Island*). He turns to texts that Schlegel introduced during their studies in Leiden in the early 1890s, and publishes literary translations of Chinese fiction and Daoist stories, and finally returns to his series of Chinese philosophy, to complete the third and last volume of his translation of the *Four Books*. Overall, Borel's translation of China is based on mystique and sentiment, represented in a more confident style than before, sometimes crossing into the pedantic. Borel portrays himself as knowing everything about China, and to know better than other writers, including active academics. Yet, similar to what Said writes about Richard Burton, 'we are never *given* the Orient; everything about it is presented to us by way of Burton's knowledgeable (and often prurient) interventions (...).'[1] In this last part I will show how Borel too, in a similar way as Burton, presents China 'by way of his knowledgeable interventions' to his Dutch readers.

Upon return to the Netherlands from the Dutch East Indies in early 1913, Borel is on sick leave and has to report to the Ministry of Colonies every six months. It takes time to settle, to digest the experience of a failed career in the East Indies, and to find a new status in the Netherlands. In the period between his return to the Netherlands in early 1913 until his appointment at *The Fatherland* in autumn 1916, Borel is looking back on events in Asia, at the same time as trying to find new employment.

Soon after his return Borel starts giving talks on what is going on in China and the Dutch East Indies at various venues, including the Chinese Society and the Dutch East Indies Association.[2] Remarkably, he applies for training for the post of Advisor for Japanese Affairs in the Dutch East Indies in autumn 1914, but his request is rejected by the Minister of Colonies.[3] In 1915, Borel was drama reviewer at *The Amsterdammer* for a short stint, a position arranged by van Eeden who was editor of *The Amsterdammer* at the time. Then in

[1] Said 1995, p. 196.

[2] See reports on his talks in newspapers, such as 'Henri Borel on the Chinese Republic' (Henri Borel over de Chineesche republiek) in *The Telegraph* of 6 April 1913, accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015 http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110547143:mpeg21:a0117 See also 'Lecture Henri Borel' (Voordracht Henri Borel) in *The News of the Day for Dutch East Indies* of 7 April 1913, accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010167356:mpeg21:a0048. A printed version of his talk on the Chinese Republic was published in 1913.

[3] LM. letter from the Minister of Colonies dated 25 January 1915, which refers to the request by Borel of 25 September 1914, in the Borel Archives.

the summer of 1915, there are newspaper reports that Borel has an accident to one of his eyes.[4] The public concern for the well-being of Borel shows he is a well-known figure, for his work and contributions as author and reporter, and as an officer in the Dutch East Indies. The news is published in newspapers both in the Netherlands and in the Dutch East Indies. In November 1915, the Department of Colonies decides to release Borel from service, and by Royal Decree of 7 February 1916, he receives 'honorable discharge on the grounds of physical disability and [is] granted a pension.'[5] I have found no further details about his physical condition, but Elsa Kaiser notes that it is the accident to his eye that officially led to his honorable discharge.[6]

It seems that Borel finally finds stability when he is appointed editor of the Drama and Literature section of *The Fatherland* on 1 November 1916. It must have been his interest in the arts and writing combined with his experience at *The Amsterdammer* that led to this appointment. For writing the reviews, Borel frequently attends performances, as Kaiser writes:

> Who does not know him? Henri Borel? People point at him in theatres: 'Look there is Henri Borel, critic at the *Fatherland*.'
> He is one of *the* figures of The Hague. A comedy performance without him seems empty, the hall is 'unfinished'. The audience, the actors ask each other: 'Where is Borel?'[7]

He is known for his critical reviews, which he publishes not only in *The Fatherland* but also in journals such as the *Chronicle* (Kroniek), *The Dutch Revue* (De Hollandsche Revue), and the *Women Chronicle* (Vrouwenkroniek). As W. H. ten Hoet Parson (fl. 1929-1940) writes in memory of Borel:

> His sharp, pungent criticisms were often huge disappointments for the artists: but they were beneficial for drama in general, and when they contained praise they were so exuberant, so extremely appreciative that one would know for sure that they came from the bottom of his heart and that they were indeed the highest praise and the best reward for the artists.[8]

This evaluation of Borel's reviews shows him in positive and negative extremes, ranging from the sharpness of his critical faculties to his penchant for exaltation. It is also revealing of his freedom in developing and publishing his views, unlike in the Dutch East Indies where he had to be careful in discussing some topics for fear of the consequences they might have for

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[4] See 'Henri Borel' in *The News of the Day* of 1 June 1915 and 11 June 1915. See Delpher.
[5] LM. See documents in the Borel Archives.
[6] Kaiser 1927, p. 142.
[7] Ibid, p. 136. Further evidence of his attendance is seen in a short note in the *General Commerce Paper* of 15 November 1931, which explains that the doctor diagnosed 'mild nicotine poisoning' and therefore Borel had to be escorted home. The fact that this had to be explained shows that people were concerned about Borel's absence. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015,
http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010661794:mpeg21:a0131
[8] Parson 1933, p. 133.

his career. Besides drama reviews, Borel also writes book reviews and other articles on literature and theater.

Meanwhile Borel also continues to write about China. In the period under scrutiny here, his most important publications for assessing his translation of China are *The Spirit of China* and *The Beautiful Island*.

Section 6.1 discusses *The Spirit of China*. It shows how Borel returns to the Chinese philosophical works that he translated before, and reflects on his experience over the years with the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies and in China. The examples show that Borel continues to invoke intuition and spiritual insight as indispensable for understanding China. But he undermines his self-assigned authority by praising and quoting secondary sources – for which there would really be no need if the matter was merely one of intuition and spiritual insight. This shows how Borel presents China 'by way of his knowledgeable interventions', in Said's words. Ultimately, the image of China in Borel's works is covered in a haze of mystique.

Section 6.2, 'Idealizing China', shows that in *The Beautiful Island,* there is a strong sense of revisiting the past. Borel also mentions changes that have happened in China in times whose turbulence is often associated with the country's negotiation of globalization and modernity. Borel's emphasis on the contrast between East and West results in an idealized image of China. As seen before in Chapter 4, this demarcation of East and West, in Said's words 'polarize[s] the distinction—the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western—and limit[s] the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies.'[9] In the case of Borel, it seems to make the distance between the reader and China even greater. On the other hand, Borel's works also show that his translation of China is 'not only a matter of transfer "between cultures" but that it is also a place where cultures merge and create new spaces,' in the words of Wolf.[10] His pro-Chinese attitude mixed with his Dutch background, 'creates new spaces'. By negotiating the cultural differences in his publications, Borel makes Chinese culture accessible to his readers. This is after all his professed agenda: the nature of his work is supposed to be 'somewhat popular' and written for non-sinologists, as he writes in *The Spirit of China*,[11] and which has been the aim of his writing all along.

6.1 Intuitions

The Spirit of China is a book published in 1916 that, according to Borel, was inspired by the Dutch translation *De Geest van Japan* of the English work *The Japanese Spirit,* although his methods are different. *The Japanese Spirit* was written by Yoshisaburo Okakura (1868-1939),

[9] Said 1995, p. 46.
[10] Wolf 2002, p. 186.
[11] Borel 1916, p. 70.

and based on lectures he gave at the University of London in 1905. A difference in set up is that *The Japanese Spirit* is one long text, while Borel has divided his into chapters, with illustrations and a selected bibliography.

As regards content, *The Spirit of China* looks like an expanded version of Borel's *The Religions of Ancient China* (De godsdiensten van het oude China), published in 1911.[12] In reviewing these two books, I will not analyze *The Religions of Ancient China* separately, but rather refer to it in comparison with *The Spirit of China*. Many of the topics overlap, but the lengthier *The Spirit of China* has a clearer theme and purpose.

Both *The Religions of Ancient China* and *The Spirit of China* contain the chapters 'Confucius' (Confucius), 'Mencius' (Mencius), '*Yijing*' (De 'Yih king') (i.e. *The Book of Changes*), 'Laozi and the *Daodejing*' (Lao Tsz' en de Tao Teh King), 'Zhuangzi' (Chuang Tsz') and 'Ancestor Worship' (De voorvaderen-dienst). *The Spirit of China* does not include the chapter 'Buddhism', but includes new chapters called 'The spirit of China' (De geest van China), 'The language of China' (De taal van China), 'The future dream of Confucius' (De toekomstdroom van Confucius), and 'Chinese art' (Chineesche kunst). Besides the topics of spirit, language and art, which give a more comprehensive image of Chinese culture and beliefs, in 'The future dream of Confucius' Borel explores the idea that the ultimate objective of Confucius is world peace. Borel derives this idea from *The Economic Principles of Confucius and His School* by Chen Huanzhang 陳煥章 (1880-1933), who introduces three stages of evolution of humanity to attain world peace.

The Religions of Ancient China seems to have been put together hastily or it is possibly a result of editorial guidelines:[13] it has no introduction or explanation of the central concepts of religion or philosophy. In contrast, *The Spirit of China* has a clearer approach to its central topic, i.e. Chinese thought. Borel uses the expression 'spirit' repeatedly throughout the book, well over a hundred times in less than two hundred pages, from introduction to epilogue.[14] According to Borel this spirit can be felt in the natural environment, historical sites, architecture, gestures, human bodies (naked coolies), the Chinese sea, religious sculpture (Guanyin), etc. It runs through the book like a red thread, with each chapter aiming to illustrate the presence of this spirit within various aspects of Chinese culture, including literature and philosophy. His assertion of his own understanding of this spirit implies his professional and indeed his moral authority in writing about China, and his identification with the Chinese. It is, as he says, 'the Spirit of China, that turned me—a Dutchman—into a Chinese.'[15]

Throughout the book, there is a tension in the positioning of Borel as the expert vs the

[12] On the cover it says *The Religion of Ancient China*, but inside on the title page the plural form *The Religions of Ancient China* is printed. According to the catalogue of the National Library it is also plural.
[13] Borel also writes a few times that he cannot elaborate because of length restrictions.
[14] There are translations of quotes and a selected bibliography after the epilogue, but I did not count these in.
[15] Borel 1916, p. 4.

poet. Lay people think he is the expert, while to sinologists he is the outsider. There is an awareness of the idea that 'expertise' and 'intuition' don't go together. This reminds one of 'the rift between poetry and scholarship', that Lucas Klein writes about. 'Poets and sinologists have presented poetry and sinology as if they were locked in eternal conflict', according to Klein.[16] In this article, Klein writes how Burton Watson is able to reconcile this perceived rift. This tension in the positioning of Borel indicates that he too felt this rift and sought a way to accommodate expertise and intuition in his work.

It is especially Borel's notion of 'spirit' which turns China into something that is mysterious – and as such, inexplicable, and untranslatable. Borel argues that in Chinese culture, 'the mind is intuitive, philosophical, poetical and even metaphysical in core and being,'[17] and he criticizes others for using 'Western scientific' methods to study China. He is referring to other writers, including European sinologists but does not mention any names, except for de Groot. As such, Borel expects the reader to read Chinese philosophy in what he calls 'the Eastern way', for example in the way he explains the spirit in *Dao*, as in the *Daodejing*, for which he copies excerpts from his earlier publication. Borel stresses that if one lacks intuition, one will not be able to understand *Dao* in *Daodejing*:

> Laozi did not write for scholars but for sensitive intuitives. He says himself: 'Those who know Dao are not learned, and those who are learned do not know Dao.'[18]

In this explanation, Borel quotes from the authoritative source, accessible to the specialists only, that is the *Daodejing.* Here, he poses as both scholar and intuitive, which results in the impression that for the lay reader he is the expert (sinologist), while for the sinologist he is the outsider. To enhance the idea that he understands, that he is the authority, Borel further complicates the notion of *Dao*. He writes that *Dao* cannot be expressed in words, and elaborates on the interpretation of *Dao* by referring to Legge's translation of *Dao* as 'the Way, the Path'[19] and the explanation of the character *Dao* by Chavannes.[20] Borel argues that the translation of *Dao* as 'the Way, the Path' by Legge does not cover all, and that we should look further into the symbolism of the character *Dao*. Therefore he refers to Chavannes who draws attention to the separate parts of the character *Dao*. This according to Borel can have 'great mystical meaning', but he refrains from explaining: 'I cannot go further into that here.'[21] Finally he stresses that for understanding Chinese philosophy the symbolism of Chinese characters is very important and that there was *Dao* before Daoism. Of the latter he notes that even Legge had discovered this. There Borel stops, and gives excerpts from his

[16] Klein 2014.
[17] Borel 1916, p. IV.
[18] Ibid, p. 92.
[19] Ibid, p. 94.
[20] Ibid, p. 95.
[21] Ibid, p. 95.

own translations of the *Daodejing*.

The excerpts are taken from seventeen chapters, which vary in length and have in common their discourse on the topic of *Dao* and *wu wei*, for example, the entry from chapter XLIII:

> 天下之至柔，馳騁天下之至堅。無有入無間，吾是以知無為之有益。 *Tianxia zhi zhi rou, chicheng tianxia zhi jian. Wu you ru wujian, wu shi yi zhi wu wei zhi youyi.* (The softest in the world will gallop past the toughest. Non-being enters into non-space. Therefore I know the benefit of non-action.)

> XLIII: 1. *Het allerzachtste in de wereld overwint het allerhardste.* (The softest in the world will vanquish the toughest.)
> 2. *Het Niet-Zijn dringt binnen in waar geen opening is.* (Non-being penetrates to where there is no opening.)
> 3. *Vandaar dat ik het nut weet van wu wei.* (Hence I know the use / usefulness of *wu wei*.)[22]

These excerpts serve the purpose of conveying the notion of the 'spirit of China' to the reader. The translation is exactly the same as the 1897 version, except for the second line of chapter XLIII which reads 'Het immaterieele dringt binnen in het ondoordringbare' (The immaterial penetrates the impenetrable), while the literal 'Het Niet-Zijn dringt binnen in waar geen opening is' (The Non-being penetrates to where there is no opening) is relegated to a footnote. In *The Spirit of China*, Borel uses the latter, literal translation in the main text. This seems to indicate that he has returned to the source text, which reflects his approach to translation, i.e. staying close to the source text in word choice. This in itself is contradictory because in his earlier chapter on the language of China, he claims that 'so-called literal translation from the Chinese is absurd'.[23] His reasoning for this is that Chinese characters (and their symbolism as discussed above) are different from the alphabet. Here Borel quotes Legge, now in agreement with the latter:

> In a study of Chinese classical books there is not so much an interpretation of the characters employed by the writer as a participation of the thoughts; there is the seeing mind to mind.[24]

This 'seeing mind to mind' is also the reason why different interpretations exist in translation, according to Borel. The complicating matter there is that the translator should also perceive the unwritten meaning and intention of the author, as Borel writes:

> The most important when doing translations is: to come into direct contact with the mind and the line of thought of the author.
> It may sound strange but it is true: the invisible thoughts of the writer are more important than the visible script-signs.[25]

[22] Ibid, p. 102.
[23] Ibid, p. 14.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid, p. 15.

This awareness of the importance of 'seeing mind to mind' gives the impression that Borel thinks he is qualified for the role of a translator from the Chinese. This notion that the translator should feel a special bond with the author has existed since at least the seventeenth century, according to Venuti, who calls this phenomenon *'simpatico*'. He illustrates this with quotes, among which is Alexander Tytler's (1747-1813) who 'asserted that if the translator's aim is fluency, "he must adopt the very soul of his author"'.[26] Venuti gives examples of his own experience as a translator which show his *simpatico* with the poet he translates, and writes:

> When *simpatico* is present, the translation process can be seen as a veritable recapitulation of the creative process by which the original came into existence; and when the translator is assumed to participate vicariously in the author's thoughts and feelings, the translated text is read as the transparent expression of authorial psychology or meaning. The voice that the reader hears in any translation made on the basis of *simpatico* is always recognized as the author's, never as a translator's, nor even as some hybrid of the two.'[27]

In Venuti's view, the translator should not completely remove dissimilarities but retain a sense of cultural Otherness in translation so as to show the reader the gains and losses in translation:

> In contrast, the notion of *simpatico*, by placing a premium on transparency and demanding a narrowly conceived fluent strategy, can be viewed as a cultural narcissism: it seeks an identity, a self-recognition, and finds only the same culture in foreign writing, only the same self in the cultural other. For the translator becomes aware of his intimate sympathy with the foreign writer only when he recognizes his own voice in the foreign text.[28]

Based on this, we notice *simpatico* in Borel with the foreign author, and he shows an awareness of it by raising issues of translation, including untranslatability. For the purpose of retaining a sense of cultural Otherness in translation, it seems justifiable for Borel to have some untranslatable notions. For example, the notion of *qi* 氣, or 'mystical cosmic fluid' in the chapter on the *The Book of Changes* and 'Chinese Art', which he explains and then retains in romanization.

Now that Borel has clarified his views on the role of the translator, he also has similar ideas for the reader. Besides the prerequisite of intuition, Borel also recommends reading 'in a Chinese way'. In general, Borel adds few comments to the excerpts, because he thinks that 'too much reasoning would only take us farther away from *Dao,*'[29] and those who are unable to sense it in a Chinese way, intuitively and suggestively, will never be able to understand it. The spirit of China can never merely be understood intellectually, 'without the

[26] Quoted in Venuti 2008, p. 238.
[27] Venuti 2008, p. 238.
[28] Ibid, p. 264.
[29] Borel 1916, p. 93.

reliable intuitive senses which represent knowing.'[30]

To further clarify this, Borel also adopts what he sees as a Western perspective. For example, he comments on the excerpts from the *Daodejing* that the sequence of the entries is not in accordance with Western logic. He explains that the texts are the result of deep meditation by the original author, but that they should also be the object of deep contemplation by the reader,[31] and that the study of such texts must be undertaken in 'an eastern, meditative way.' Finally, he concludes the chapter on *Daodejing* by lamenting how sinologists have written volumes about the so-called degeneration of Daoism, while being blind to the pure and original wisdom of China as this continues to exist. As such, Borel asserts that the excerpts from literary and philosophical sources exude the notion of the 'spirit' that is accessible only to readers who possess intuition and spiritual insight and who have substantial personal China experience. By putting it this way, it is almost as if all explanation is in vain, because if the reader lacks intuition and is unable to think in an eastern way, then why bother writing about it?

In a way, Borel's approach to China in 'the Chinese way' is similar to that of the German sinologist Wilhelm Grube (1855-1908), as described by Daniel Leese in a study about the works of four German sinologists: Georg von der Gabelentz (1840-1893), Grube, August Conrady (1864-1925) and Otto Franke (1863-1946). As Leese explains, Grube expresses the will 'to penetrate into the spirit' of Chinese poetry, and to take the standpoint of the Chinese. Grube also believed that 'having mastered the Chinese language had thus provided him with the "key" to the soul of Chinese people.'[32] One of the conclusions that Leese draws is that all four sinologists that he studied in this article believed they had 'penetrated Chinese-ness itself' and were therefore able 'to advise and judge from an insider's perspective.'[33] The idea that specialists obtain 'insider' knowledge is also one of Borel's, although he goes one step further in saying that those lacking intuition will not be able to understand.

Besides showing expertise through explaining the 'spirit' and giving excerpts from primary works, we can detect an attempt by Borel to display his professional qualifications and his authority in writing about China. This shows in how Borel emphasizes his years of study of China, and also in the admission of past mistakes. According to Borel, *The Spirit of China* provides a more mature understanding of his study of China than before, as he indicates in his review of *The Soul and Life of a Nation: The Netherlands in the World* (L'Ame et la Vie d'un Peuple. La Hollande dans le Monde) by French author Henry Asselin (1884-?). Borel criticizes the author for his poor understanding of the Netherlands, because Asselin had only lived in The Hague for three years and had no knowledge of the Dutch language. In comparison Borel explains:

[30] Ibid, pp. 93-94.
[31] Ibid, p. 104.
[32] Leese 2004, p. 26.
[33] Ibid, p. 33.

> In the same manner, I wrote many unpleasant things about the Chinese people twenty-five years ago, in my book *Wisdom and Beauty from China,* [when] I knew [them] only insufficiently. I made up for it twenty-two years later when I published *The Spirit of China*. There is a book that is very popular with foreigners entitled *Chinese Characteristics*, by a certain Rev. Smith. Back then I also enjoyed reading it, but since I have come to know China and the Chinese better, I can see its unjustified and improper sides. A writer, who lived in a foreign country for 3 to 4 years without knowledge of the language, does not have the right to claim that the people 'lack passion, ideal, and imagination', and yet Mr. Asselin writes this down unthinkingly.[34]

It is true that limited knowledge and understanding will limit one's representation of a foreign culture, but 'writing unpleasant things' does not necessarily point to limited knowledge and understanding. In fact, one could argue that early views may be more sensitive and unbiased as compared to those after several years in a foreign country, when the visitor may actually become less aware of foreign habits and customs.

Be that as it may, Borel presents proficiency in Chinese (or other relevant languages) and the personal experience of living in China/Asia as requirements for writing responsibly and credibly about China/Asia. By doing so, Borel stresses the differences between Chinese /Asian and Dutch/Western cultures. This is, for instance, also the point he makes in his review of Couperus' works *The String of Compassion* (Het Snoer der Ontferming) (1924) and *Nippon* (Nippon) (1925), both about his travel to Japan. Couperus undertook the journey to Asia in 1921 sponsored by *The Hague Post* (De Haagsche Post) in return for travel letters. The itinerary included the Dutch East Indies, China and Japan.[35] According to Borel, Couperus's 'essentially Roman' soul did not belong in the East, because Couperus never devoted himself to the study of Asia, and only traveled there for a few months. Couperus also admits that, because he was unfamiliar with the languages of China and Japan, he often felt at a loss. As a result, Couperus thought that the difference between 'the Western and Eastern soul' was 'almost an unbridgeable abyss'.[36] Again, we encounter the East-West dichotomy, which, as Said writes, tends to 'polarize the distinction', as quoted in Chapter 4. Couperus, who spent several years in the Dutch East Indies in his youth, also emphasizes the differences. In turn, Borel's view of Couperus' writing reiterates and reaffirms Borel's own position. That is: only people like himself, who have studied and lived in Asia for many years, are sufficiently equipped with the knowledge to write about Asia. A period of a few months or a few years is not enough.

Along with what Borel perceives as his own more mature understanding also comes the sense that he is seeing things in a different light. In *The Spirit of China*, Borel admits to past mistakes, although he puts this in such a way as to suggest that these are common mistakes,

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[34] Borel 5 June 1921.

[35] In another publication *Eastward* (Oostwaarts), Couperus writes about his trip to Asia which also includes his experiences in Indonesia and Hong Kong. He mentions that he is using the 'Guide Officiel' for China, which Borel had given him. Couperus 1971, p. 260.

[36] Borel 24 May 1925.

implying that the reader cannot take him personally to task for them, and indeed suggesting that it is precisely his revisiting of former views that demonstrates his now much more profound understanding of China. An example is his idea of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, which records the history of the State of Lu.

> In the past, including the period when I published my Dutch work about Confucius fifteen years ago, I used to think that this book *Chunqiu* [Spring and Autumn Annals] was exclusively historical in nature, and therefore not of much importance to his philosophy. Many other European sinologists were of the same view. However, my Chinese intellectual friends have convinced me that this is incorrect. In their view, it is not purely historical.[37]

As such, Borel's new-found position that the *Spring and Autumn Annals* are historical-philosophical has come about under the influence of Chinese scholars, albeit this is in itself a traditional view. The process of his repositioning also occurs on the level of individual concepts, such as what he presents as the misinterpretation of *xiaoren* 小人, or 'petty man', which Borel explains:

> Most sinologists, including myself, used to interpret this in the sense of despicable man, but according to modern Confucianists it means the less or not yet developed man, the man who is poor because he only thinks about his food and worries, and therefore does not know anything about the higher ethical life. In this sense, it sounds more like what is called the proletarian in the European class system.[38]

It is not clear to which other sinologists Borel is referring. In his introduction to the translation of Volume I on Confucius, Borel indeed notes that *xiaoren* is 'small man,' in the sense of 'mean, despicable' and that examples of *xiaoren* serve as a deterrent, and are presented in contrast to the *junzi* 'gentleman' in Confucian works.[39] He translates *xiaoren* literally as 'the small man' (de kleine mensch). It is not Legge, because Legge writes that *xiaoren* 'a small, mean man' as the opposite of *junzi,* whom he explains to be 'a man of complete virtue';[40] and Legge appears to see *xiaoren* as an average man, but not a despicable man. Who could he be referring to? In all, Borel gives the impression of being sincere in his admission of mistakes, but downplays their gravity by claiming others committed the same mistakes.

Another way in which Borel asserts authority is through praising and criticizing other experts, showing that he is well read. Although quoting from the work of other experts may in some cases reinforce the point he is making, as we have seen above in the quote from Legge about Chinese language, it undermines his authority at other times. The reason is that some of the texts that he quotes from are written by authors who were not regarded experts on China and did not know Chinese. Yet, the works that he criticizes include

[37] Borel 1916, p. 27.
[38] Ibid, p. 42.
[39] Borel 1895, p. 4.
[40] Legge 1971, p. 138.

scholarship by de Groot, who was at the time professor of Chinese at the University of Berlin. We will turn to that below.

Among the authors whose works Borel quotes from are the aforementioned Samuel Johnson, Austrian philosopher and essayist Martin Buber (1878-1965), Ku Hung Ming, German-born philologist and Orientalist Max Müller (1823-1900), Italian art critic and scholar Raphaël Petrucci (1872-1917), and American art historian and professor of philosophy Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908). By quoting these experts, Borel invokes their authority vis-á-vis his readers. Some among them, however, had no knowledge of Chinese and worked with secondary sources (in English, German and French) or with an intermediary. By citing less knowledgeable authors, Borel weakens his qualifications as expert. He could have checked first hand material, or works by recognized scholars on the subject.

For example Borel often refers to and cites from Johnson's *Oriental Religions and their Relation to Universal Religion. China* (1877). The book on China is the second volume in the series, which also include *India* (1872) and *Persia* (1885). Johnson is described as a 'radical American evolutionary transcendentalist thinker' by Girardot, who praises the volume on China as 'the masterful synthesis of nineteenth-century sinological scholarship.[41] However, Carl T. Jackson blames the poor reception of Johnson's *Oriental Religions* on failing to find the right audience: too scholarly for the general reader, it was not sufficiently so for professionals.[42] *The Spirit of China* contains at least a dozen references to Johnson, also in the chapter on the Chinese language. As explained above, Borel shows how different the Chinese language is from European languages, and cites from Johnson's work on China translated into Dutch. Here are Borel's words with the relevant paragraph from the original English by Johnson:

> The American scholar Samuel Johnson rightly says: 'It is a great mistake to hold these picture-signs, thus converted into alphabetic phrases, responsible for a pompous verbiage utterly opposed to the genius of the Chinese, whose specialty is terse, and even elliptical, expression. This latter style is not only the result of the practical qualities of the national mind, but proceeds directly from the nature of the signs, whose relations to one another must be largely supplied by inference and common understanding, like the conversation of friends.'[43]

The meaning of this quote does not add much value to Borel's argument about Chinese characters and their symbolism, which he already elaborated with a quote from Legge and an example offered by himself, as discussed above. But the fact that Borel quotes from a work which was written by a scholar who does not know Chinese, also decreases its validity. Johnson relied entirely on Western material and as a matter of fact, he put a footnote to the first sentence of the quote, referring to Samuel Wells Williams (1812-1884), but Borel omits

[41] Girardot 2002, p. 211.
[42] Ibid, p.134.
[43] Borel 1916, pp. 15-16. See Johnson 1877, p. 432. English original is available in the online archive.

this. As Jackson writes, 'the only American Sinologist of note in the whole [nineteenth] century was Samuel Wells Williams.'[44] Why did Borel not cite directly from Williams? He does so in two other instances. Since Borel has all along attached such great importance to knowledge of the Chinese language, citing Johnson goes against his own expectations and principles for writing about China.

In a contrastive manner, Borel also mentions a couple of times how some writers are unable to grasp the notion of the spirit of China. This is possibly an attempt to enhance his own expertise. Among them are also sinologists who, according to Borel, work only with 'dry learning and philology', and lack intuition and spiritual insight.[45] He does not give names, except for his foremost example of de Groot, whom he accuses, yet again, of writing how the Chinese race 'is stamped forever with the total incapacity to rise to a higher level of mental culture'[46] in his *Religious System of China*. In the introduction to *The Spirit of China*, and in the chapter on art and the epilogue, Borel blames de Groot for writing about the Chinese people as 'half barbarous and semi-civilised', and criticizes him for his lack of aptitude for philosophy and intuition for metaphysics.[47]

Duyvendak condemns this recurrent criticizing of de Groot as one of Borel's 'hobby horses', in a review of *The Beautiful Island.*[48] Borel's criticism of de Groot conceals 'fatal venom' and is 'inappropriate and unfair', according to Duyvendak. I have found no evidence of a reaction by Borel, nor have I seen reviews by Borel of Duyvendak's works. There is only the occasional comment on individual issues, for instance in Borel's article 'Explaining Poetry' (Uitleggen van Poëzie). Borel follows up on a discussion in *The Fatherland* in 1928 about poetry started by classicist Dr. K. H. E. de Jong (1872-1960), who asked for an explanation of how to interpret a poem by Dutch poet P. C. Boutens (1870-1953). Amused by the discussion, Borel offers his opinion on poetry, which he says cannot be explained. He gives various examples and quotes liberally from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Herman Gorter, Yone Noguchi, Laurence Binyon, and Percy Shelley, in order to explain that it is silence and rhythm that constitute poetry and give it meaning. In order to reinforce his point, he concludes the article with the proposition that the *Daodejing* has inspired great works of art which to the lay person are just vague and obscure, and goes on:

> Well then, years ago an intellectual-sinologist such as Giles and a few months ago again Duyvendak, Reader at Leiden [University], [the latter] in the *New Rotterdam Newspaper*, criticized Laozi with contempt for his inadequate, obscure, incompetent language, and the incompetency of the Chinese

[44] Jackson 1981, p. 195.
[45] Borel 1916, pp. 126-127.
[46] Ibid, pp. V-VI and 170.
[47] Ibid, p. 170.
[48] Duyvendak 26 August 1922. Borel's criticism: ('Prof. de Groot once wrote, that the Chinese had no idea of sculpture as art when he described the Ming tombs while he had just walked past the magnificent monoliths of the so-called Ghost Alley!') Borel, 1922, pp. 107-108; brackets in original.

language in general.[49]

Borel only mentions Duyvendak to make his point about the reason why intellectuals fail to understand art. But since he obviously knows Duyvendak's work – it would have been difficult not to – and given the fact that he reviews many works to do with China, and he does not shy away from polemics, it appears that Borel deliberately desists from entering into discussion with Duyvendak. The reason for this is unclear. Borel thinks Duyvendak is 'a sinologist from the school of de Groot, and still working in his tradition (…).'[50] Duyvendak, for his part, does review Borel's work, including *The Beautiful Island* and *Mencius*. Although his comments are sharp and critical, they do not stir Borel to react and defend himself. It is possible that Duyvendak's position at Leiden University intimidated Borel and therefore he did not dare oppose Duyvendak. Moreover, Duvyendak had all the knowledge and experience that Borel thought necessary in a China expert.

Still, *The Spirit of China* comes out in a period in which there are no other prominent Dutch sinologists writing in Dutch about China.[51] As noted before, the position at Leiden University is vacant from 1912 until 1919. For general readers who may not have access to works in other languages on China, Borel is recognized as the expert. It does seem there is still an interest in the Netherlands in works from Asia. Van Eeden for example, in his review of *The Spirit of China,* does take Borel's critique of de Groot seriously, and warns against the belief that the Chinese and other Asians are semi-barbarians: 'It is therefore that our nation badly needs books such as *The Spirit of China*, if we want to retain a respectable place among other nations (...)'[52] Since Borel's return from the East Indies, he and van Eeden meet on a regular basis and influence each other, even though they do have their disagreements now and then. An example of influence on Borel is his involvement in the Forte Circle (Forte Kreis), a project initiated by van Eeden. Forte Circle is an international circle of intellectuals and writers, who aspire to attain world peace and who have their first meeting in Potsdam, Germany, in June 1914.[53] From among the people in Fort Circle, it is Buber in particular whose works have an impact on Borel, in the ideas that he develops in terms of unity in Daoist stories and the decision to translate stories by Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715) (as discussed in Chapter 7).

Van Eeden also approaches Borel for the former's project of translating the Bengali poet Rabrindranath Tagore (1861-1941). According to van Eeden's biographer, this is 'an attempt to unite East and West,' and van Eeden approaches Borel as 'the specialist of the

[49] Borel 9 December 1928.
[50] Borel 3 October 1928. Borel's reply to a letter sent by de Kock (not yet further identified).
[51] De Bruin reports from Beijing in newspapers, but he is not publishing books. See 'Impressions of China' (Indrukken uit China) in *The Sumatra Post* of 30 June 1916, accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010366688:mpeg21:a0001
[52] Eeden 11 August 1917.
[53] Fontijn 1996, pp. 345-354.

East.'[54] Van Eeden publishes nine of Tagore's English-language collections between 1914 en 1923, most of which he translates himself, although some are done by others under his supervision. Borel translates Tagore's play *The Post Office* (1914), which he publishes as *The Letter of the King* (De brief van den koning) in 1916. Borel may have been influenced by van Eeden to bring more Asian literature to the Netherlands, for in 1918 Borel publishes his translation of *King Suryakanta: A Hindu Love story* (Koning Soeryakanta: een Hindoesche liefdesgeschiedenis). This is based on *A Digit of the Moon* (1890), believed to have been translated into English by British writer Francis William Bain (1863-1940) from an anonymous Sanskrit manuscript. This and other titles in the series eventually turned out to be fiction created by Bain.[55]

There is no evidence of a reprint of *The Spirit of China*, yet with this book Borel firmly reasserts his ideas of an understanding of China. As shown in examples, these ideas are rather subjective and China is presented 'by way of knowledgeable intervention', in the words of Said quoted above. These interventions come in the form of Borel's own comments, and by quoting and at times criticizing other authors. Hence, the readers 'are never *given*' China. But this book and his other publications, including articles in the newspapers and a short work *On Chinese Temples* (Iets over Chineesche tempels) in 1919, show that Borel remains involved and interested in China. Therefore, it does not come unexpected that Borel is developing plans to travel again to the East.

6.2 Idealizing China

After making an arrangement with *The Fatherland* to write weekly travel letters for publication, Borel sets off on his trip to Asia in January 1920.[56] It must have been mostly his writing about this trip to China in 1920 that gave him the image of someone who 'glorified China'.[57] Indeed, the way he writes about China and how he describes his experiences, does give one the impression that he is idealizing China. The word 'idealization' here is used in the sense that by adding much sentiment and admiration, Borel actively constructs a vision of China as an ideal civilization, especially in comparison with Europe.

Borel publishes his letters as 'Travel Letters of Henri Borel' (Reisbrieven van Henri Borel) in *The Fatherland* from January to September 1920, and partial reprints in *The Beautiful Island*, in 1922. Both editions are sentimental, although the letters contain more comments

[54] Ibid, p. 314.

[55] According to a note to this title in the library catalogue of the National Library, Bain was the author of the work. M. K. Naik in 'Guru-land and Disciple: An Aspect of Anglo-Indian Fiction' writes: 'In his own thirteen Indian tales from *A Digit of the Moon* (1890) to *The Substance of a Dream* (1919), Bain himself has captured the spirit, mood, tone, technique and even style of the ancient Indian story so well that he was actually able to pass them off as translations from Sanskrit originals.' In *Literature East and West: Essays Presented to R. K. Dasgupta* edited by G. R. Taneja and Vinod Sena. New Delhi: Allied Publishers. 1995: p. 242.

[56] His early letter written in transit in Southampton is dated 21 January 1920 and printed in *The Fatherland* of 28 January 1920. Borel notes that the route is via Port-Said and Colombo to the Dutch East Indies.

[57] Pos 2008, p. 178.

on current affairs than does the book. The publication of the travel letters in the newspaper roughly covers the period from January till September 1920, because he also spent some time in the Dutch East Indies and Singapore. Borel's physical stay in China is from 17 March till 5 June 1920,[58] where he spends most of his time in Xiamen and Gulangyu, and travels to places in the south including Fuzhou, Zhangzhou, Shantou and Guangzhou. He revisits the places that he had been to when he first travelled to China for his studies in Xiamen in 1892. Borel mentions several times that he has an introduction letter to meet Nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 (1866-1925) in Shanghai, but eventually cancels original plans for traveling to the north. Borel blames the high exchange rate which means he could not afford to go on trips because he got less for his money than he anticipated.

As Borel explains in the newspaper, his letters would describe the economic and political situation in addition to offering his impressions of the natural environment.[59] Borel reports, for example, on the military government in Guangzhou which has separated itself from the Central Government after warlord Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859-1916) gained power in 1915.[60] (After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912, China experienced fragmentation of authority under Yuan Shikai[61] and while the communists were in the early stages of establishing the Communist Party, Sun Yat-sen tried to seek unification from his base in the south.) Besides current affairs, Borel also dwells on Chinese art, opera and temples in considerable detail.

Below, I will show how this image of China becomes sentimental and idealized, especially in repetitive contrasts between China and Europe. In his work, Borel not only reports facts, but also writes about his personal experiences. One example is his arrival in Sabang, Indonesia (*en route* to China), after thirty-five days on a ship.

> Another wonderful emotion was to speak and hear the Chinese language again. I walked from one Chinese store into the next, just to hear Chinese, and just like in the past, enjoy the childlike surprise of the Chinese to hear a European speak their language.[62]

Such exclamations express personal feelings. They contain no direct information about China, and only emphasize the fact that Borel knows the Chinese language. That the Chinese don't expect him to speak Chinese highlights the contrast between Chinese and European. The way he writes about their response as their 'childlike surprise' shows his paternalizing, colonial views. Borel's affinity with the language and his interest in talking to local people does give him a sense of knowing what is going on 'on the ground'. For example, in

[58] Based on his letter of 16 March 1920, which notes that Borel is leaving for Xiamen the next day. In his letter of 5 June 1920, he writes that this will be the last letter from China because he is leaving in the afternoon directly to the port of Batavia.
[59] Borel's letter of 16 March 1920, published in *The Fatherland* of 29 April 1920.
[60] Borel's letter of 12 April 1920, published in *The Fatherland* of 11 June 1920.
[61] For details see chapters 13 and 14 in Spence 1990, pp. 300-360.
[62] Borel's letter of 24 February 1920, published in *The Fatherland* of 8 April 1920.

Singapore he talks to Chinese rickshaw coolies and hears of their strike to demand pay rise,[63] and in China he talks to students and learns how a temple is re-used for education purposes.[64] Although his descriptions show genuine interest in the people, one detects a feeling of superiority, for instance in what he writes about rickshaw coolies:

> It seems inhuman if you have never seen it, but it is really not so bad. In such human-power-cart [a literal translation of the Chinese term for rickshaw] I rode from the pier to Singapore, together with some other passengers. As soon as I addressed the Chinese who pulled my cart in his own language, he reacted as happy and expansive as a child and started to tell me, quite up to date, of their successful strike, which had resulted in a doubling of the fees for rickshaw coolies and gharry riders.[65]

Again, as in the previous example, there is a racist portrayal of the Chinese people as children. Borel tries to convince the reader that pulling rickshaws is normal practice, and that because a Chinese coolie is happy to talk with Borel in Chinese, it is not so bad. His views appear to stem from the idea that coolies are somehow inherently a part of Chinese culture. As Said explains, such terms (to describe the Oriental as childlike, different) were used to express the (cultural) relation, and 'knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense *creates* the Orient, the Oriental, and his world.'[66] In this sense, Borel's descriptions create the image of China and show his position in that relation, which affects superiority and is pedantic.

On the other hand, the many comparisons between China and the West also emphasize Western perspectives on China. From nature and city architecture to antiques and art works, Borel appears to find China superior to the West. Here is an example of the difference in the appreciation of the sea:

> Oh! How well do the Chinese understand that rest and meditation fit the quietness of the sea, whereas us Westerners, barbarians upon seeing the sea, we can only associate its boundless beauty with the pitiful, vulgar antics of the Kurhaus [a hotel, seaside resort and famous site of festivities near The Hague] and noisy entertainment. (…) I now know that nothing is more barbarian than the way we in the West desecrate the splendor by our impure, noisy seaside antics.[67]

This stresses the differences between Chinese and Dutch connotations of the sea. Borel prefers the Chinese way of appreciating the seaside. The differences are emphasized by contrasting opposites, including Chinese vs Westerners, quietness vs loud noise, meditation vs vulgar antics. In each of these contrasts, the image of China comes out more positively than that of the West. Besides an awareness of differences, Borel has a predilection for

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Borel's letter of 22 May 1920, published in *The Fatherland* of 30 July 1920. See also *The Beautiful Island*, p. 133. For more on this phenomenon, see *The Religious Question in Modern China* by Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

[65] Borel's letter of 24 February 1920, published in *The Fatherland* of 8 April 1920.

[66] Said 1995, p. 40.

[67] Borel 1922, pp. 49-50.

imagining things like going back to nature, back to antiquity, back to a primeval past. This can also be found in his description of old bridges in Fuzhou:

> Although the road is hard to ride, I think a bridge as old as this cannot be compared with any of the modern bridges of Europe. What style it possesses, and what respectable antiquity it exudes, and how much in harmony it is with the river view![68]

Borel's comparison of bridges in Fuzhou, which he says date from 1297 in the Yuan Dynasty, with modern bridges in Europe projects his sentiment of antiquity and his search for the past. Again, the image of Chinese bridges is more positive than that of the European counterparts. But perhaps it is also the repetition of contrasts that makes his writing sentimental. The constant reminder that China is different and better, even if these sights in China in themselves are indeed impressive, idealizes the image of China. Finally, a last example of contrast between China and the West is where Borel describes his admiration for jade:

> What a respected gem is jade! The precious stone of the West, the diamond, sparkles and shines conspicuously; that of the Far East is sober and soft and contains its concealed beauty inside.[69]

This comparison between precious stones can also be taken as a metaphor for the 'East' and the 'West' at large. It represents Borel's contrast between East and West where the differences in the qualities of the gems stand for the differences in qualities of the cultures/people from the East and the West. Especially the idea of the inner beauty of jade reminds one of Borel's professed ability to see beyond the surface, and of the intuition that is allegedly needed to understand China.

Yet, there is something contradictory about his claim of identity. On the one hand, he presents himself as the China expert, on the other he cannot hide his identity of a European tourist. It is possible to be both expert and tourist at the same time, but Borel shows disdain for the 'sightseeing globe-trotter' who can only appreciate the visual, such as the pagoda and the flowers in the garden. According to Borel, such a traveler 'guilelessly passes by a rich treasure of symbols' within the pagoda.[70] Here, Borel clearly poses as an expert and tries to distance himself from 'those globe trotters', like he did before in Beijing (as discussed in Chapter 5).

But that he is a tourist all the same shows specifically in his practical worries described in the travel letters, where Borel appears to be very much concerned about the high currency exchange rate, the fully-booked and expensive hotels and less frequent boat schedule,[71] probably because these things affect him personally. That he is a tourist also

[68] Ibid, p. 103.
[69] Ibid, p. 109.
[70] Ibid, p. 163.
[71] Borel's letter of 24 February 1920, published in *The Fatherland* of 8 April 1920.

shows in his description of his experience on a crowded boat on the first leg of his trip from Xiamen to Zhangzhou. Borel complains about sweaty people smoking cigarettes and the horrible smell of cooked food, and writes in *The Beautiful Island*:

> I like the Chinese very much, but those of the common people can be smelly. They do take baths, but because of their awful food their bodies and breath emit a foul smell, especially of onions, garlic and rancid grease.[72]

In his travel letter in *The Fatherland*, he puts it slightly differently:

> By the way, I am in love with the old Chinese culture and worship Chinese philosophy, but I abhor the lack of cleanliness of most of the Chinese.[73]

This shows Borel's position in understanding and appreciating China. He only takes it at the intellectual and spiritual level (a form of essentialism), not in everyday life among the common people. The same phenomenon we also saw in *Daybreak in the East,* where he moves out of the modern hotel in the Beijing Legation Quarter to stay at a simple hotel in a more Chinese environment. Although it was there that he claims to have got to know the capital of China, yet after a month he was back in the Foreign Legation. A similar incident in *The Beautiful Island* is for example that he goes for lunch in the Victoria Hotel in Guangzhou.[74] He dislikes Chinese food and fears what he perceives as the Chinese lack of hygiene. So Borel's identity as an expert, his role as a travel writer, and his position towards China, affect the way he writes about China. It shows that he identifies with indigenous values in traditional Chinese philosophy and culture, and he conveys these to his readers. This is a case of where his rendering of China is a place where 'cultures merge and create new spaces' (Wolf's words quoted above).

As mentioned above, *The Beautiful Island* is more sentimental than the letters in their original form. This is mainly caused by the fact that some of the factual information about China is omitted in the book. Therefore, in *The Beautiful Island* in particular, Borel has a very prominent presence as the author, of how he personally experiences China, as distinct from the more 'report'-like features of the letters as they were published in *The Fatherland*. One of the reviewers of *The Beautiful Island*, Martinus Nijhoff (1894-1953), notes that the subject of the book is actually not China – but Borel.

> China is, in a manner of speaking, not coming to us with all her virtues and vices, but we are going to China with Borel and all his virtues and vices.[75]

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[72] Borel 1922, p. 123.
[73] Borel's letter of 11 March, published in *The Fatherland* of 27 April 1920.
[74] Borel's letter of 3 June, published in *The Fatherland* of 3 August 1920.
[75] Nijhoff 1982, p. 162.

Nijhoff criticizes Borel for offering a view of China that is very subjective, through the eyes of Borel, and for telling the reader more about himself than about China. This reminds one of what Kerr and Kuen say about how the foreign country is the background for the author's portrait. If we take a closer look at Borel's role in *The Beautiful Island*, we notice how Borel, and 'his actual Self', positions himself toward China, or more precisely toward Xiamen and the island of Gulangyu. His 'inner self' thinks he belongs in China, and he relates this to the notion of *xiaoyao* 'float freely', which seems to affect him directly and emotionally. It is this sense of belonging in China that makes him enjoy his return there, but he explains that in fact, it felt like that from the start, during a previous visit. In the description of his arrival on Gulangyu in *The Beautiful Island*, he writes:

> At last, at last I was back, just like I had been 'back' when once—how long ago—I first set foot on [this] sacred soil. Everything was new to me back then, never before had I seen such majestic primal formation of rocks, never had I seen what a Chinese 'mountain-and-waterscape' looked like, for I only knew Dutch landscapes, and yet it all seemed so intimately familiar, as if when I saw it first, I had found back for the first time my safe haven.[76]

The Chinese compound term *shanshui* 山水, which literally means 'mountains and waters', is the word for 'landscape, scenery', and closely associated with traditional painting. Borel uses this many times throughout the book. Words like 'sacred' and 'majestic' reinforce his idealization of China, as do his feelings of China being 'intimately familiar' and his 'safe haven'. During this return visit in 1920, Borel claims that the first time he set foot in China, he felt a sort of homecoming. He has the same feeling when he visits again, as he describes in *The Beautiful Island*:

> Here I am at home in between these grand rocks, I belong to this emerald and purple and violet sea, here, in the wide solitude, where I can float away, in a cosmic dream of *xiaoyao*, here my actual Self, that is being tormented and abused in the barbaric West, and that hides miserably behind a pale smile and semi-proud appearance, guileless toward the outside, and recognizes myself in the fraternal Nature (…)[77]

Borel positions himself between East and West and engages in this 'floating freely', which he claims is but a poor translation.[78] This shows the haze of mystique invoked in his story of understanding China.

According to Nijhoff, Borel went to China out of sheer love of this country, and what he writes about it is worth reading. There is indeed much information about China in his writing, both in terms of what Borel recognizes from before, and in terms of what has changed in the places that he visits. For example, in the chapter on 'Zhangzhou, the New and the Old' (Tsjiang Tsioe, het nieuwe en het oude), Borel explains what changes have taken place, such

[76] Borel 1922, p. 10.
[77] Ibid, p. 146.
[78] Ibid, p. 45 and 143.

as the installation of electric street lights, repaving of roads and rebuilding of houses.[79]

Moreover, his writing is filled with Chinese concepts and proper names. He writes terms such as *wu wo* 無我 'the absence of an I' and *nian jing* 念經 'chanting sutras' in romanization, and gives explanations. The characters *wu wo* were written above a door inside a Guanyin temple, according to Borel.[80] This Buddhist notion means 'to empty the mind' and reach a state of just 'being' or 'no self'. *Nian jing* describe song and prayer in the Guanyin temple, which Borel compares with the Christian mass.[81] The names of boats, mountains, cities, and historical sites are also given in romanization, usually with a translation. Examples are the boat Hailong 海龍 'sea dragon', Huangshan 黃山 'The Yellow Mountain', Fuzhou 福州 'City of happiness', and Huata 花塔 'flower pagoda'. Again, this displays Borel's knowledge of Chinese language and culture – and his desire to retain, rather than 'merely' translate, China, or to translate it precisely by retaining snatches from its original language – in whatever sense, however literal or figurative.

Another critical evaluation is that, according to Nijhoff, Borel 'pursued emotion for emotion's sake, to use a variant of l'art pour l'art.'[82] This seems to be characteristic of Borel's writing at large, and of a penchant for exaltation that was fundamental to his character, and not specifically symptomatic of the period he was writing in. Duyvendak, for example, takes a much more sober and objective approach in his articles on China published in the magazines *The Guide* and *China*, six of which were collected in his book called *China against the Western Horizon* (China tegen de Westerkim) in 1927. It is not surprising therefore, that Duyvendak is critical in his review of *The Beautiful Island* for its repetitions:

> Even worse is the image that the writer has found for a pagoda, which rises out of the mountains 'like a flower'. Excellent, a truly wonderful image. But is it necessary to repeat it again and again, whenever the word pagoda appears 'like a flower'? And yet we read it on page 159, 162, and again on page 166…. No, repetition will ruin [the tale], even for the most striking expressions.[83]

Some of the (other) repetitions were probably acceptable or necessary in the newspaper publication of the travel letters, if they were informative; but they are redundant in the book.

The more sober and objective approach by Duyvendak is appreciated by reviewers. Dirk van Holland praises the book, in his article 'A Detour to the Netherlands, in South China. What do we know about it?—Borel, Couperus and Duyvendak—a chaotic society—Guangzhou a grand market—city on the river' (Langs een Omweg naar Nederland, in Zuid-China. Wat weten wij ervan?—Borel, Couperus en Duyvendak—een chaotische

[79] Ibid, p. 103.
[80] Ibid, p. 31.
[81] Ibid, p. 38.
[82] Nijhoff 1982, p. 163.
[83] Duyvendak 26 August 1922.

samenleving—Canton een groote pasar—de stad op de rivier):

> Let us juxtapose with Borel and Couperus the clear, lucid work of J. J. L. Duyvendak, Reader [at Leiden University]: *China against the Western Horizon*. Truthful and yet permeated with honest affection for the Chinese people, this book offers information to the reader about many things Chinese, and the current situation in China.[84]

Duyvendak's work is appreciated for his down-to-earth approach, as another, anonymous reviewer also notes:

> It is not often that the Dutch write about China; even less often do they write concisely about it—we refer here to Mr. Borel and a certain doctor Schotman as deterrent examples—joyful it is when one is handed a book that is not devoid of the spirit of sobermindedness, which the Dutch are surely known for.[85]

This is exactly the approach that Borel warns against: experiencing China from what he sees as a Western point of view, with 'the spirit of sobermindedness'. Borel maintains that if one experiences China in a sober fashion, then one will miss many things. It is this intuitive, emotional, and one might say 'exaltable' state of mind that may explain why Borel came to believe that he had 'become Chinese'. For example in *The Beautiful Island* Borel writes: 'When I was sitting there, dreaming and floating, I felt like a real Chinese'[86] and 'I don't feel like a foreigner, it feels as if I am in my hometown, where I belong.'[87] These remarks are typical of his idealized representation of China.

One last example of this emotional state of 'being Chinese' can be found in the final chapter 'How I departed' (Hoe ik heenging) of *The Beautiful Island*, Borel writes how on his last day in China, he dreaded his return to the Netherlands.

> That day I walked around with an impulse to dress as a Chinese and if need be to rent myself out as a rickshaw coolie, anything better than going back again…[88]

The idea to stay in China and dress like a Chinese coolie is quite dramatic, even if it is hardly very credible. It is a personification of Borel as a Chinese person. It also portrays him as preferring life in China over that in the Netherlands. His state of mind seems to represent a so-called 'Chinese mindset', which he carries along on his return to the Netherlands. This sentiment or mindset of 'being Chinese' translates into his essays published in 1923

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[84] Holland 23 June 1930.

[85] Anonymous, *Batavian Newspaper* 19 January 1928. The reviewer also writes: 'Of course we do not agree with all the views of the writer, for example we think he attaches too much importance to the so-called literary renaissance of China while too little to the powers of atavism. Yet we do appreciate the work as a whole. It gives the impression of complete honesty and it has the advantage that most of the events that are described were personal experiences of the writer.'

[86] Borel 1922, p. 49.

[87] Ibid, p. 76.

[88] Ibid, p. 168.

collected in *Karma*. In this collection, many of the eleven essays are autobiographical, with many memories of the past. This collection falls outside the scope of my study inasmuch as *Karma* is not about China. But the impact of his China trip is so prominent in some of the essays, that they may serve as examples of this so-called 'Chinese mindset'. This can be perceived in events from his life in the Dutch East Indies, and incidents from his youth.

A connection with China can for example be found in the poetic description of a Chinese performer in the essay 'The Beautiful Illusion' (De schoone illusie). In the essay, Borel recollects a former colleague's admiration of Chinese opera and his infatuation with the leading performer, in the Dutch East Indies back in the 1890s. As Borel writes, the performer had eyes 'just like the Chinese poet says, "mystical like still water on an autumn night", the brows were "as gentle as the contours of mountains in the far distance", and the face was "as soft as a peach blossom".'[89] Borel does not mention the name of the poet but the lines may have been taken from a novella of the anthology *Wonders Old and New*. From this we see that Borel tries to write about a Chinese performer according to Chinese literary conventions. Furthermore, Borel describes the role of the performer as 'a spirit from very far, mystic regions, reincarnated into a human being.'[90] The use of 'spirit' and 'mystic' makes it sound as if the performer is not a human being. This depiction of the Chinese performer shows that Borel is immersed in Chinese culture and is connected with China in his writing.

In another story, Borel's so-called 'Chinese mindset is reflected in a seemingly minor incident from his youth that is converted into a 'sign' of previous lives that awakens him. In 'The Little Sparrow' (Het Muschje), he describes his emotions as a fourteen-year-old, when shooting a sparrow with a catapult. Back then boys would all carry catapults in their pockets and shoot down birds, he writes. Yet Borel was afraid to use it. This fear to kill, he realizes 'must have been a memory from previous lives.'[91] Still he forces himself to overcome his fear and with 'an old, slumbering hunting instinct—of how many lives ago, from what faraway times?—awoke inside me', he finally kills one. Borel takes the bird home and just like they did in natural history class, he starts to dissect it with a knife in his room, until he starts feeling dizzy and throws away the knife. It was not until many years later, that he realizes, that this incident was a 'sign' given by the sparrow.[92] As such, Borel takes Buddhist concepts about previous lives and being reborn to explain and understand the meaning of certain past events. Of course, all this links to the title of the book, *Karma*, and reincarnation as a subject fascinated Borel. As van Eeden notes in his diary in 1921, he observed in Borel an 'inclination toward Catholicism but [Borel] didn't want to forsake his belief in reincarnation.'[93] Incidentally, Borel did turn to Catholicism on his deathbed.[94]

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[89] Borel 1923, p. 155.
[90] Ibid, p. 156.
[91] Ibid, p. 93.
[92] Ibid, p. 104.
[93] Van Eeden, diary entry of 6 April 1921. See DBNL.

The image that Borel tries to give is to set himself apart as someone who understands China differently from other writers who write about China. This is central to *The Spirit of China* but also present in *The Beautiful Island*. To reinforce this position, he stresses that in China, literary people are also engaged in Chinese painting. Borel links Chinese painting with calligraphy, which in China is an art in itself, with Chinese characters in calligraphy containing the beauty of the object that they represent.

> A literary person is always also a kind of painter. In the past, painting was not a profession in itself, any developed person would paint. It was regarded as the highest refinement in China to be able to express emotions in poetry and with brush on silk. Learning how to draw [for the Chinese] was the same as us learning how to write.[95]

Here, Borel tries to make the point that since literary people in China were artistic, their literary work should be read with an artistic mind, and that only few (non-Chinese) people are able to do that. And perhaps that is the way he saw himself: as a Chinese literatus.

From his work, it appears that he is increasingly making more contrasts between East and West, writing more positively about the East and negatively about the West. His more pedantic writing from this period appears to become idealized compared to his early writing in *Beauty and Wisdom from China* in 1895. Not all readers appreciate this style of writing, all the more because now they are offered more concise and objective writing by authors such as Duyvendak, who also writes in Dutch. Perhaps it is because of this criticism of Borel's overly sentimental style in his own writing *on* China that he increasingly turns to *translating* Chinese literature in the last years of his life.

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[94] There is controversy about his intentions of turning Catholic. According to 'His deathbed conversion to Catholicism' (Op zijn sterfbed overgegaan tot het katholicisme) in the *General Commerce Paper* of 1 September 1933, Borel was considering it for many years, accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015 http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010663611:mpeg21:a0051 *The Fatherland*, however, thinks that there were no signs that Borel had plans to turn Catholic. See 'Memory of Henri Borel, a small mosaic' (In memoriam Henri Borel, een kleine mozaïek) in *The Fatherland* of 10 September 1933, accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010014945:mpeg21:a0194 In the study *There is still poetry, color and warmth: Catholic Converts and Modernity in the Netherlands, 1880-1960* (Daar is nog poëzie, nog kleur, nog warmte, Katholieke bekeerlingen en moderniteit in Nederland, 1880-1960), Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2007, Paul Luykx claims that there is a relation between conversion to Catholicism and a specific form of anti-Western cultural criticism that he found in Borel. Based on his findings, Luykx shows that Borel had intentions to convert to Catholicism for many years, but that fear of losing his work at *The Fatherland* (known for being progressive and liberal) was the cause for postponement until deathbed.

[95] Borel 1916, p. 129.

Chapter 7: Sinicizing Chinese Literature

In his quest to popularize Chinese culture, Borel embarks on a number of literary translation projects, many of which are published in literary magazines and newspapers. Relatively few of his works related to China come out in book form, exceptions being the collection of Daoist stories entitled *Of Life and Death* in 1925 and his translation of the philosophical work the *Mencius* in 1931. From announcements in newspapers, it appears that Borel continues to speak in public about China, mostly about art, literature and Buddhism, and some magazines publish his essays on things Chinese. Yet his modest output of books strikes Joannes Henri François (1884-1948), the reviewer of *Of Life and Death*, who remarks that readers who don't read *The Fatherland* (where Borel is editor and publishes articles regularly), must sometimes wonder whether Borel is still alive. According to François, 'It cannot be denied, that Borel has almost outlived his fame—or rather his being well-known.'[1]

For this period, in terms of translating China, the most important are Borel's translations of Chinese literature, in the conventional sense of interlingual translation. Many of the stories that he translates introduce fictional and supernatural elements of Chinese literature, in which the unreal becomes real and the unattainable can be achieved, for instance by invoking a special talent that only poets have, and contact with the dead. Fairy tales had always fascinated Borel, as shown in his translation of excerpts from *Journey to the West* in 1897 to introduce Chinese beliefs and stories about the underworld to his readers. He did not limit himself to China: in 1922, he published an adaptation of *A Thousand and One Nights: Arabian Tales* (Duizend en één nacht: Arabische vertellingen) from an unknown source,[2] and in 1925, *Giovanni Casanova's Love Affairs* (Giovanni Casanova's Liefdes-avonturen) translated from the French.[3]

In his translations, Borel is very much present. The visibility of the translator's presence in literary translation can vary a great deal, and has a direct bearing on the representation of that which is translated, however narrowly or broadly this is defined – e.g. 'a poem', or 'China'. As Theo Hermans writes, 'translated narrative discourse always contains a "second voice",' and the visibility of the translator's presence depends on the translation strategy, and on the consistency with which this has been carried through.[4] He also notes that nowadays, a widely held view is that translators are 'good translators if and when they have

[1] François 17 July 1926.
[2] The introduction to the book does not mention the source that the translation is based on.
[3] There is another work in 1926: *The Love Affairs of Mr. Nicolas, or the Human Heart Unveiled* (De liefdes-avonturen van Mr. Nicolas, of Het menschelijk hart ontsluierd) by Nicolas Anne Edmé Restif de la Bretonne (1734-1806) believed to be translated by Borel. He denies this, and explains that he only wrote the introduction, see 'Incorrect impressions' (Onjuiste voorstellingen) in letters to the editor (Ingezonden Stukken) in *The Fatherland* of 1 May 1928. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010011535:mpeg21:a0288
[4] Hermans 2010, p. 198.

become transparent, invisible, when they have spirited themselves away.'[5] I would argue that Borel never tried to be 'invisible'. He was prominently present in various ways, possibly because at the time, the idea of the translator's invisibility had not taken root, or possibly because Borel believed that the translations in themselves were not sufficient. Besides including paratextual elements (including introductions and footnotes) and retaining some Chinese notions in romanization, Borel also tried to make the stories more Chinese by adding Chinese words and phrases that are not in the source text, which I call 'sinicizing Chinese literature'. These are evidence of a phenomenon that Carbonell calls

> Cultural translation as a superior level of interaction[, which] takes place whenever an alien experience is internalized and rewritten in the culture where that experience is received.[6]

This is particularly prominent in Borel's translations of Daoist texts where the difference between translating and authoring becomes hard to define. But the same can also be detected in his other literary translations. In the following four sections, I will show how Borel's translation strategy affects the visibility of his presence as the translator, based on translations of texts from: *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (*Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異), *Wonders Old and New*, *Of Life and Death* and the *Mencius*.

7.1 *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*

From his earlier work, it appears that Borel craves recognition as the expert and expects his readers' trust of his knowledge of China. In light of this, it is surprising that his translations of stories from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* appear to be relay translations. The Netherlands has a tradition of relay translations from Chinese through other Western languages into Dutch,[7] and relay translation was not unusual in the 1920s in itself. The total number of direct translations overtook that of relay translation only in the 1990s.[8] One reason for doing relay translation was the scarcity of qualified translators; another, writes James St. André, was '[the] belief in the equivalence of European languages (versus Chinese)'.[9] As St. André concludes, the fact that relay is still common practice in the twentieth century when 'there is no longer a dearth of trained specialists, confirms that Sino-European translation is still perceived as being somehow different from intra-European relaying.'[10] Yet, according to St. André, relay translation today is seen 'as a necessary evil, and the assumption is that it is always preferable to translate from the original, just as it is

[5] Ibid, p. 210.
[6] Carbonell 1996, p. 81.
[7] Idema 2003.
[8] Heijns 2003.
[9] St. André 2003, p. 63.
[10] Ibid.

always preferable to read the original rather than a translation.'[11]

Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio is a collection of nearly five hundred short stories in the classical language and brief notes on unusual matters written by Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715). As Idema and Haft explain, the stories 'describe contacts between this world and that of fox spirits, ghosts, flower fairies, monsters or demons. Many are love stories; some are plainly satirical.'[12] Pu Songling was a literatus, who failed to pass the higher levels of the imperial examinations and therefore never attained an official function, but worked as a private teacher. During his lifetime, handwritten copies of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* circulated among scholar friends and literati, and it was only in 1766 that part of the manuscript was published in book form.[13] As mentioned earlier, in Chinese literary tradition, fiction was not recognized as literature 'proper' so Pu's stories also fell outside this scope. In the last few decades a number of studies on *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* have come out, which tend to focus on the supernatural elements in the stories, such as ghosts and fox spirits. However, as Judith Zeitlin stresses, it is also important to look at three important themes which:

> were of keen interest in sixteenth- and seventeenth literati-culture, themes not usually associated with the collection in either the popular or the scholarly imagination. These three themes, all of which involve the crossing of fundamental boundaries in human experience, are obsession (subject/object), dislocations in gender (male/female), and the dream (illusion/reality).[14]

Probably the best-known early translation into a Western language was Herbert A. Giles' (1845-1935) *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, first published in 1880, which was for years 'the standard selection in English', according to John Minford.[15] Giles was a British diplomat in China before he became professor of Chinese at the University of Cambridge in 1897. Among his many publications are translations of Chinese literature, textbooks on Chinese language learning and a Chinese-English dictionary.

The German translation on which the Dutch version appears to have been based was done by Martin Buber in 1911. As Buber explains, he was studying the treatment of demons in myth when he 'became acquainted, first through translations, then under the kind tutelage of Mr. Wang Qingdao, with the Chinese anthologies of ghost stories, especially the classic *Liaozhai zhiyi* [Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio].'[16] This resulted in a collection of sixteen stories from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* entitled *Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten*, or *Chinese Ghost and Love Stories*. This German translation by Buber and his work on Zhuangzi were translated into English by Alex Page in 1991. Both were

[11] St. André 2009, p. 230.
[12] Idema and Haft 1997, p. 189.
[13] Zeitlin 1993, pp. 25-26.
[14] Ibid, pp. 11-12.
[15] Minford 2006, p. 493.
[16] Buber 1911, in Page's translation 1991, p. 111.

combined and published as *Chinese Tales: Zhuangzi Sayings and Parables and Chinese Ghost and Love Stories*. According to Irene Eber, in her introduction to this English collection, Buber's work received enthusiastic reviews in the German-language press.[17] However, Birgit Linder does not mention Buber in her 'China in German Translation: Literary Perceptions, Canonical Texts, and the History of German Sinology.' Instead, she writes that the first German translation of stories from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* was done by Erich Schmitt in 1924.[18] Linder explains that she did not know about Buber's translation at the time of writing the article, and her 'focus was supposed to be on transmitted texts, direct translations and their influences.'[19] Still, the absence of Buber's translation from her article does seem to indicate that *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* by Buber is not as well known in the Germanophone world as Giles's is in the Anglophone world.

Although Borel does not tell us what source(s) he used, a remark added in brackets to each story does call for caution: 'Vrij naar het Chineesch' (Freely [rendered] after the Chinese), 'Naar een Chineesche vertelling van Pu Sung Ling' (After a Chinese story of Pu Songling) and 'Een Chineesch sprookje, vrij naar Lioa [sic] Tsai' (A Chinese story, freely [rendered] after the *Liaozhai*).

Whether Borel knew the stories from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* before he read Buber is unclear: there is no mention by Borel about the work, neither in the translations nor in his other works, but it is likely that he did, because the English translation by Giles was widely known.[20] It is possible that he read Schaalje's Dutch translation of 'Fox Lady' (hunü 狐女) as 'The Fox in Female Appearance' (De vos in vrouwengedaante) which is included in his article 'The Small Feet of Women in China' (De kleine voeten der vrouwen in China) in the *Magazine for the Language, Nation and Ethnology of the Indies* (Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde) in 1873. Moreover, de Groot also gives (partial) translations in English of some of the tales to illustrate Chinese supernatural phenomena in his magnum opus *The Religious System of China*, the work which Borel reviewed in *The Guide* in 1912.

The four stories from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* that Borel translated and published are:

1. 'Bookworm' (*Shuchi* 書癡) as 'Bookworm (A Chinese story, freely [rendered] after *Liaozhai*)', (Boekenwurm (Een Chineesch Sprookje, vrij naar Lioa [sic] Tsai)' in *The Chronicle* of November 1921;
2. 'Princess Lotus' (*Lianhua gongzhu* 蓮花公主) as 'The dream (Freely [rendered] after the Chinese) (De droom (Vrij naar het Chineesch)'), in *Leeuwarder Newspaper* of 18 April

[17] Buber 1991, p. ix.
[18] Linder 2003, p. 260.
[19] Personal communication, November 2013.
[20] From Borel's letters to van Eeden of 12 April and 11 November 1895, we know that Borel read Giles's translation of the *Daodejing*.

1924;

3. *'*Huanniang' (宦娘) as 'The Other Thing. A Story. (Freely [rendered] after the Chinese) (Het andere ding. Een Sprookje. (Vrij naar het Chineesch)), in *Leeuwarder Newspaper* of 7 April 1925; and
4. 'Abao' (阿寶) as 'The Girl and the Parrot (After a Chinese story by Pu Songling) (Het meisje en de papegaai (Naar een Chineesche vertelling van Pu Sung Ling)) in *Leeuwarder Newspaper* of 20 February 1926.

There may be a fifth story as I found a reference to a Chinese work entitled 'The Laughing Girl' (Het lachende meisje) by Borel published in 1928.[21] It is likely that this is the story '*Yingning'* (嬰寧) from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, which Giles translates as 'Miss Ying-ning; or, the Laughing Girl' and Buber as 'Das Lachenden Mädchen' (The Laughing Girl). However, I have not been able to find the Dutch translated text, so this story is not included in the analysis here.

Interestingly, Borel changes all but one of the German titles. He keeps the title of story 2, 'Der Traum' (The Dream), as 'De droom' but changes story 1, 'Der Närrische Student' (The Foolish Student), into 'Boekenwurm,' story 3, 'Musik' (Music), into 'Het andere ding' and story 4, 'Die Wege des Liebenden' (Ways of a Lover), into 'Het meisje en de papegaai.' It seems that Borel invented these titles based on the contents of the story, and although the change of the title of the first story into 'Bookworm' does make sense, there is no evidence that they are attempts to convey the source text title.

The stories chosen by Borel all share the theme of romantic relations, and contain supernatural elements. None of them present the violence and horrors displayed in some of the other stories from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* translated by Buber and de Groot. In 'Bookworm' the protagonist Lang and his book fairy represent the theme of 'obsession' as identified by Zeitlin. Lang is so obsessed with books that he believes that the contents of an essay that his father had copied would come true. And miraculously it did, most importantly in the materialization of a beautiful girl. The book fairy appears alive out of a book and has an intimate relation with Lang as if they are a married couple. Meanwhile people grow suspicious of the girl, and eventually the district magistrate gives orders to arrest Lang and the girl. Lang refuses to speak upon interrogation and the girl has disappeared. The magistrate realizes there are too many books in Lang's library to find the girl, so he orders the library to be burnt down. In 'Princess Lotus' the protagonist Dou can enter the world of bees through his dreams. He is invited to a palace of a King who arranges for him to marry his daughter. There are two worlds: one of dreaming and one of awakening,

[21] There is an announcement in *The Dutch Revue* 1928, 33:2 under 'Various Magazines' (Diverse tijdschriften) on page 1133, that Borel published 'an interesting Chinese novella "The Laughing Girl"' in two parts in the issues of 10 and 17 November 1928 of the magazine *Private Hearth* (Eigen haard). Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=dts:8102:mpeg21

where Dou goes from one into the other and both overlap. In 'Huanniang' the themes are contact with the dead, the role of a go-between and obsession with musical instruments. The spirit of Huanniang acts as a marriage mediator between Wen and Liang, arranging an exchange of poems and flowers. In 'Abao' the theme is separation of body and soul. While the soul of the protagonist Sun Zichu accompanies the girl Abao to her room, his body remains at home. Sun persists in following the girl and in the end they get married.

All four stories that Borel translated are in Buber's collection. As noted above, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* contains almost five hundred stories, and selections usually differ according to translator. Giles's selection contains only two of the four: story 2, which Giles translates as 'The Princess Lily', and story 4, which he translates as 'Miss A-Pao; or, Perseverance Rewarded.' Denis C. and Victor H. Mair's *Strange Tales from Make-Do Studio* (1989) contains three of the four stories Borel translated: story 1, which they translate as 'A Fool for Books'; story 2, as 'Princess Lotus'; and story 4, as 'Precious'. The recent collection *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (2006) translated by Minford only has one of the four stories, story 2, which he translates as 'Princess Lotus'. None of these translators selected story 3 'Huanniang' in their collection. This shows that there is diversity among translators from different periods when it comes to the choice of stories. Most translators opt to translate a selection of stories, but there are also complete translations in Italian and German.[22]

Buber and Borel were acquainted: they had met in Potsdam, Germany, in June 1914, at a meeting to set up the Forte Circle initiated by van Eeden. Buber and Borel also exchanged letters[23] and Borel himself praises Buber's *Sayings and Parables of Zhuangzi* (Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-tse) in *The Chinese Spirit,* as 'the best that has ever been published on this philosophy, in terms of sound understanding and complete "Verständnis" [appreciation] (...)'.[24] In other words, in all likelihood, Borel had a copy of Buber's translation of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*. As such, translation from the German would have been easily within reach in practical terms.

My findings show that compared to his earlier work, Borel is consistent in his translation strategy. He sticks close to the source text and adds explanations of Chinese culture in notes and between brackets. Notably, the language use and sentence structure show that he is working from German and not from Chinese. Evidence of relay translation can be identified in three categories. First, there is the apparent influence of linguistic features of the mediating language. Second, there is the transfer into the target language of misinterpretation of the original in the mediating language. Third, there are translational interventions, which reveal that the translator did not work from the source text. Below I

[22] Minford 2000, p. 1124.
[23] See references in *L. E. J. Brouwer—Topologist, Intuitionist, Philosopher: How Mathematics is Rooted in Life* by Dirk van Dalen (2012); *The Hebrew Humanism of Martin Buber* by Grete Schaeder (1973).
[24] Borel 1916, p. 115.

will give examples, and reconstruct the process from source text (ST) via mediating text (MT) into target text (TT). The English translations in brackets are mine, except for Buber's where I use the afore-mentioned English translation (with occasional modification).

The deviations between the Dutch and the Chinese are undoubtedly also caused by the fact that the mediating text was not a direct translation from the Chinese. Buber, who had no knowledge of Chinese, relied on his Chinese collaborator Wang Qingdao 王慶道, who was a lecturer, or Chinese-language instructor, at the Berlin seminar for Oriental Languages, Friedrich-Wilhelms-University, in 1907.[25] Buber also had Giles at hand, as he explains in the preface:

> Some tales from the *Liaozhai* have been translated into European languages. A substantial selection was given by Herbert A. Giles (*Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, new edition London, 1909). Following English custom, he unfortunately omitted or paraphrased all passages that seemed to him indecorous. With the assistance of Mr. Wang, I have rendered several tales contained in Giles's work in a now-complete and faithful translation, as well as some hitherto untranslated tales. Apart from some that I did not want to exclude for other reasons, I have chosen the most beautiful and most curious tales about love between human beings and spirits.[26]

Hence Buber's aim was to give a more 'complete and faithful' (vollständig und getreu) translation than Giles. The question, however, is how Buber knew if Wang was as faithful as Buber wished to be.[27] As the examples below show, there are indeed places where Wang has made changes if compared to Giles but there are also instances where he fails to correct Giles. In a footnote to the German preface (which is omitted in the 1991 English translation), Buber mentions that a Mr Gustav Gast had showed him his translations of some of the stories. Gustav Gast (1867-?) was a teacher and writer, whose translation entitled *Chinese Novels* (Chinesische Novellen) by Pu-Ssung-ling (Pu Songling), undertaken together with Li-te-shun, appeared in 1901 (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut), according to the catalogue of the German National Library. Buber expresses gratitude to Gast, but writes that although he did compare his own translations with Gast's, he did not use them in any other way.[28] Apparently, Buber was confident that his translations were fine.

7.1.1 German linguistic influence and interpretation

Below I will show that there are words and phrases that are neither characteristic of the target language nor of the source language, and must derive from the mediating language. An example of literal translation from the German occurs in the story 'Bookworm', where the protagonist Lang tells his friends about the lessons in love he had and came home:

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[25] Buber 1991, p. x. For more on Wang Qingdao, see Jonathan R. Herman's 'The Mysterious Mr. Wang: The Search for Martin Buber's Confucian Ghostwriter', in *Journal of Chinese Religions* (37), 2009, pp. 73-91.

[26] Buber 1911, in Page's translation 1991, p. 113.

[27] In footnote 24, Eber also makes a remark about Buber's statement about completeness. The example of an omission she gives is the final message in 'The Mural' that remains untranslated. Eber, 1991, p. xxii.

[28] Buber 1916, p. XV.

(ST) 女知而責之，郎曰："鑽穴逾隙者始不可以告人，天倫之樂人所皆有，何諱焉？" *Nü zhi er ze zhi, lang yue: 'Zuanxue yuxi zhe shi bu keyi gao ren, tianlun zhi le ren suo jie you, he hui yan?'* (When she heard about it, she scolded him. Lang said: One cannot tell people about secretive misdeeds, but the joy of a heavenly relationship is shared by all. Why is it a taboo?)

(MT) *Sie hörte davon und verwies es ihm, indem sie sagte: "Über heimliches Wesen spricht man nicht." Er widerte: "Das Glück dieses himmlischen Zusammenseins kennt doch jeder Mann, was ist da zu verheimlichen?"* (She heard about it and reproached him, while saying: "One should not speak about secret things." He replied: "But everyone knows about the joy of this heavenly being together, why be so secretive about it?")[29]

(TT) *Zij hoorde daarvan en verweet het hem, terwijl zij zeide: "Over heimelijke dingen spreekt men niet." Hij antwoordde: "Het geluk van dit hemelsche samenzijn kent toch iedere man, wat valt er dan te verheimelijken?"* (She heard about it and reproached him, while saying: "One should not speak about secret things." He replied: "But everyone knows about the joy of this heavenly being together, why be so secretive about it?")[30]

It appears that Borel follows the German translation quite closely. In Chinese, for example, there is no direct speech by the book fairy as inserted in the German and Dutch. The words *heimelijke dingen* and *verheimelijken* indicate German linguistic influence. If Borel had worked directly from the Chinese, I would have expected him to translate the expression *zuanxue yuxi* 鑽穴逾隙 more literally instead of using 'secret things', perhaps more like Mair and Mair's translation 'Tunneling through walls and squirming through crannies.'[31] So in terms of interpretation and word choice, German influence can be detected.

Another example is from '*Huanniang*' where near the end of the story, the spirit of Zhao Huanniang explains that she is the daughter of a prefect and that she died a hundred years ago. When she hears Wen's music, she has a great yearning for him, and says:

(ST)又恨以異物不能奉衣裳 *You hen yi yiwu bu neng feng yishang* (I regret that I have died and could not be your wife)

(MT) *da ich aber ein anderes Ding bin, konnte ich nicht bei Ihnen bleiben.* (since I am another thing, I could not stay with you.)[32]

(TT) *Daar ik echter 'een ander Ding' ben, kon ik niet blijven.* (Since I am 'another Thing', I could not stay.)[33]

Borel takes the notion of 'ein anderes Ding' (another Thing) literally into Dutch. Here what is meant is that the girl is not from the human world and therefore she could not marry him. Borel adds quotation marks and keeps the capital letter for 'Ding', which is normally not necessary for nouns in Dutch. Borel apparently thinks 'another Thing' is the key element in

[29] Buber 1916, p. 95.
[30] Borel 1921.
[31] Mair and Mair 1989, p. 394.
[32] Buber 1916, p. 158.
[33] Borel 7 April 1925.

the story, because he even decides to make it the story's title.

Another symptom is the interpretation of certain words that are different from the source text, but do appear in the mediating text. An example in *'Abao'* is the question of the marital status of the protagonist. In the source text it says *shili* 失儷, meaning 'bereaved of one's spouse', which Giles translates as 'lost his wife'[34] and Mair and Mair translate as 'bereaved of his wife.'[35] However, according to both the Dutch and the German, the protagonist had not yet been married when he 'had lost his bride through death' (hatte seine Braut durch den Tod verloren)[36] for which the Dutch has: 'lost his fianceé through death' (zijn verloofde door den dood verloren).

In the story 'Bookworm' there is mention of the *Hanshu* (漢書), the *Book of the Han* which is the classical history of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE). Buber transcribes it as *Hau*, possibly mistaken 'n' for 'u', a title that Borel does not recognize and therefore follows literally. Another example is the word 'honey-colored dress' (honingkleurig kleed)[37] in 'Princess Lotus' for *heyi* 褐衣, translated as 'serge clothes' by Giles and 'rough servant's clothing' by Minford.[38] This can be found in the German version as 'honey-colored dress' (honigfarbenen Kleide).'[39]

7.1.2 Interpretation carried over from Giles

Since Buber also used Giles it is interesting to see how much of Giles has been transported into the Dutch translation. There is no indication that Borel himself had a copy of Giles's translation. According to Eber, out of the 164 stories that Giles had translated, 'Buber (probably) translated 10, whereas the remaining 6 are original translations from the Chinese.'[40] After comparing the English, German and Dutch versions of 'Abao' and 'Princess Lotus' (the two stories that all three translated), it appears there are cases where (mis)interpretations have been carried over from the English by Giles (MT1), and then via the German (MT2) into Dutch. An example in 'Princess Lotus' is the inclusion of lemon trees in the description of the walk to the palace:

> (ST) 從之而出.轉過牆屋,異至一處,疊閣重樓,萬椽相接,曲折而行. *Cong zhi er chu zhuan guo qiang wu, yi zhi yi chu, die ge chonglou, wan chuan xiangjie, quzhe er xing.* (So the two of them set off. After turning a corner, they came to a place where pavilion rose above storeyed pavilion in a succession of elaborately roofed buildings, they wound their way through this unending maze)
>
> (MT1) so away they went together, and after some time came to a place where there were innumerable

[34] Giles 1909, p. 11.
[35] Mair and Mair 1989, p. 116.
[36] Buber 1916, p. 60.
[37] Borel 18 April 1924.
[38] Minford 2006, p. 348.
[39] Buber 1916, p. 141.
[40] Eber 1991, p. xii.

white houses rising one above the other, and shaded by dense groves of lemon-trees.[41]

(MT2) *So gingen sie zusammen, und nach einiger Zeit kamen sie an einen Platz, auf dem unzählige weiße Gebäude sich eines über dem andern erhoben, von dichten Zitronenhainen beschattet.* (So away they went together, and after some time came to a place where there were innumerable white houses rising one above the other, and shaded by dense groves of lemon-trees.)[42]

(TT) *Toen gingen ze samen op stap, en na korten tijd kwamen zij op een plein, waarlangs tallooze geel-witte gebouwen, het een boven 't andere, zich verhieven, in de schaduw van citroenboomen.* (So away they went together, and after some time came to a square where there were innumerable yellow-white houses rising one above the other, and shaded by dense groves of lemon-trees.)[43]

In comparison, besides the omission of 'after turning a corner,' the word 'lemon-trees' cannot be found in the Chinese text, nor is it there in later English translations such as Mair and Mair and Minford's. It is possible that Giles mistook the character *chuan* 椽 (beam, rafters) for *yuan* 橼 (citrus) and Buber copied it, while his collaborator Wang did not detect the mistake. This error is carried over into the Dutch version. A difference here is the color of the building, which Borel translates into 'yellow-white'.

The fact that there are differences between Giles's translation and that of Minford, apart from editing 'indecorous' parts of the text as indicated by Buber mentioned above, could be due to different editions of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*. There were indeed various manuscripts in circulation, but versions mostly differ in number, order and titles of the stories.[44] In the introduction to the 1880 edition of his English translation, Giles states that he based his translation on Dan Minglun's 但明倫 (1782-1853) 1842 edition of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, collated with that of Yu Ji 余集 (1739-1832) of 1766, which he claimed was 'an excellent edition in sixteen octavo volumes of about 160 pages each.'[45] As Tong Man shows in her PhD thesis *Whose Strange Stories? A Study of Herbert Giles' (1845-1935), translation of P'u Sung-ling's (1640-1715) Liao-chai Chih-I,* the 1842 edition was unpunctuated.[46] But content-wise I found that the Chinese characters in the stories are the same as in the punctuated versions now available. If the source text is the same, any deviations must be the result of the interpretation by the translator. This was also investigated by Tong Man, who shows how Giles changed the story of 'Lianxiang' 蓮香, concluding that 'it will become clear that the translator, through the changes, omissions and simplifications that he has introduced, has profoundly changed the intention of the original.'[47]

Furthermore, Minford and Tong Man, in their article 'Whose strange stories? P'u

[41] Giles 1909, p. 299.
[42] Buber 1916, p. 141.
[43] Borel 18 April 1924.
[44] For more details, see Alan Barr's 'The Textual Transmission of *Liaozhai zhiyi*'. In *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (44:2), 1984, pp. 515-562.
[45] Giles 1880, pp. xxiv-xxv.
[46] Tong Man 2001, p. 97.
[47] Ibid, p. 125.

Sung-Ling (1640-1715), Herbert Giles (1845-1935), and the *Liao-chai chi-i*', also write that Giles's translations of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio:*

> have been at best quietly tolerated, more often derided, and dismissed as orientalist bowdlerisations of P'u Sung-ling.'[48]

And they write that Giles, like Pu Songling:

> also had a way with words himself. He brought to bear on the material his own skills as a late nineteenth-century reader and translator, and sought to fashion it into something that would bring pleasure to his readers, sometimes creating strange narratives of his own.[49]

Hence, it seems likely that deviations are caused by Giles's own intentions and misinterpretations, not different versions of the Chinese source text. Some of the problems to do with interpretation are undoubtedly also the result of the fact that the Chinese text is, quite simply, difficult. As Minford writes in his introduction:

> Pu Songling's original language is somewhat daunting. Many a Chinese reader today has a hard time making sense of it. Pu Songling was writing not for the masses but for his fellow scholar- gentlemen, in their secluded libraries or studies. He could have chosen to write in the vernacular, but he did not. His prose is extraordinarily elegant and extremely demanding.[50]

The fact that today there are modern vernacular Chinese versions of the stories, and picture books for easier readability, is an indication that *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* in its original form is written in quite difficult classical Chinese. We should also bear in mind that Giles could not draw on the array of dictionaries available to us today, which made it more difficult to have an accurate interpretation, although there were commentaries, which may have been helpful to the translators.

7.1.3 Editorial intervention

Besides influence of the German and English versions, there are also places where Borel himself appears to have tampered with the stories. Editorial intervention, proposed by Martin Ringmar is that 'a translator may (un)consciously take more liberties with an MT than h/she would with an ST.'[51] Borel indeed makes changes to sentences and endings to the stories, possibly also to stay within the length that the newspaper or magazine had given him. Each translated story is more or less 2,000 words in Dutch, whereas the stories in Chinese (and German, for that matter) vary in length. Moreover, there is evidence that Borel

[48] Minford and Tong 1999, p. 1. Lydia Chiang describes this as 'post-Saidian evaluation', see *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China.* Leiden; Boston: Brill. 2005, p. 72.
[49] Ibid, pp. 10-11.
[50] Minford 2006, p. xvii.
[51] Ringmar 2007, p. 11.

tried to make the stories more 'Chinese', or sinicizing Chinese literature. There are details in Dutch about Chinese culture and language, that are not found in the Chinese or in the German versions. These come in the form of additional information, but also distortion of the original meaning, as I will show below.

As we have seen before, Borel likes to show off his knowledge of Chinese culture and supports his writing with quotes from Chinese works and Western studies of China. He does the same thing in his translations of stories from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*. He adds the occasional remark about Chinese culture in the text, to explain, for example, the phenomenon of marriage go-betweens and fox spirits in China; these remarks are not there in the ST or MT. Some are helpful to the reader, but others are problematic. An example is the scene in 'Princess Lotus,' where the protagonist Dou attends a banquet. In accordance with the literati custom of composing verses, the King invites his courtiers to respond to his line of verse *cairen deng guifu* 才人登桂府 'A genius enters the Cassia Palace.' While all the courtiers are thinking hard, Dou responds quickly with the line *junzi ai lianhua* 君子愛蓮花 'A gentleman loves the lotus flower.'[52] Borel follows the mediating language of the first line 'A beautiful spirit visits the Cassia court' (Schöner Geist sucht den Kassiahof) into 'De Schoone Geest zoekt den Cassia-Hof,' but he changes 'A noble mind loves the Lotus flower' (Edler Sinn liebt den Lotoskelch) in 'The noble Dao loves the Lotus flower' (De edele Tao bemint de Lotos-kelk) and adds a footnote: 'here Tau alludes to his name, which sounds more like Tao, the Divine or the principle of the Cosmos.'[53]

This footnote shows that Borel had doubts about the German translation and therefore changed it into 'Tao' (Dao) based on his knowledge of Chinese culture. But if Borel had known that the sentence in Chinese contained the word *junzi*, chances are that he would have elaborated on *junzi* instead and would have referred to his earlier work on Confucianism. As noted before, *junzi* is an important concept in Confucianism, usually translated as 'gentleman,' or 'superior man,' a (male) role model of proper conduct and ritual propriety. The other thing is that Borel obviously does not know that the protagonist's surname is 'Dou' 竇 which he transliterates as 'Tau' (even though the German has 'Tou') and therefore mixes it up with 'Tao' 道, or 'Dao' in present-day romanization, in the meaning of 'way' or 'path.' In fact, the pronunciation of these two characters is very different. The change of the name enabled to bring in Dao, and show his knowledge of things Chinese. Regardless, these changes, both the transliteration of the name and interpretation of the antithesis with the footnote, show that Borel did not work from the Chinese.

[52] Mair and Mair have a footnote about the source of the verse: 'This sentence is adapted from the essay "On Loving Lotuses" by Zhou Dunyi, a Neo-Confucian of the Song dynasty (960-1278).' (1989: 188)
[53] Borel 18 April 1924.

The above analysis reconfirms that relay translation, even if this is done by an expert—meaning, someone with a good command of the language of the source text—will likely reveal that it is not a direct translation. It would have been possible for Borel to minimize the German linguistic influence, but he would have had no way of preventing the misinterpretations transported from Giles's translation into the Dutch version if he did not work from the source text. He then took considerable risks by guessing at Chinese expressions which are not in the source text. This approach, of sticking closely to the (mediating) text to be translated, while at the same time trying to introduce Chinese cultural concepts, is typical of Borel. It is part of his personality that he thinks of himself as omniscient. As Cay Dollerup notes:

> In literary translation, relay translation […] implies that the sender, the original author, recedes into the background. The communicational chain is not complete. Fidelity and loyalty to the author become weakened, not out of ill will, but for practical reasons—the translator will not always be in a position to have the author elucidate obscure points.[54]

If Borel did not work from the Chinese source text, then Pu Songling had receded into the background. It would also make it easier for Borel to step forward and add his own knowledge and views in the texts, which was his normal practice. Some of his interventions violate ethics of the translation profession as these are widely observed today.

As for the reasons why Borel decided to do relay translation, it could be that he had no easy access to the source text. At the time, it was more difficult to get hold of Chinese texts in the Netherlands than it is today. Still, it would have been possible.[55] Borel could have obtained them from China, either during his trip in 1920 or via friends with whom he maintained correspondence. He could also have made a trip to the library of Leiden University, to copy the stories (by hand, if necessary). It is possible that he was reluctant to request access to the library since he published articles critical of Dutch sinology, which may have soured his relation with Leiden. Another, very real possibility is that he was pressed for time because of commitment to the newspaper and magazine, either on a regular basis or as a follow up on talks he gave on China-related topics. Since Borel had already made a name for himself, it is unlikely that anyone would have cast doubt on his translation skills, or suspect that he was not working from the Chinese source text.

As noted, although relay translation by an expert may help to retain the cultural aspects

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[54] Dollerup 2000, p. 23.

[55] Last, who was inspired by Borel to study Chinese as mentioned in Chapter 3, published 'A Chinese Story' (Een Chineesch verhaal) in the monthly *The Socialist Guide* (De Socialistische Gids) in 1928. This is a Dutch translation of the story 'Coral' (*Shanhu* 珊瑚) from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*. According to the preface to the translation, Last translated directly from the Chinese into Dutch. However, it is not clear how Last obtained his copy of the Chinese text. He did have contact with Leiden University because he mentions in the preface that J. J. L. Duyvendak, then Reader at Leiden University, had read and corrected his translation. See Last 1928.

of the original, it does not necessarily help the translation improve in accuracy. It seems that in Borel's day, he was certainly not the only translator who focused on the target text and considering his readers. As David Pollard notes in his 'H. A. Giles and His Translations', there is the primacy of reader orientation in Giles's concept of translation.[56] Like Giles, Borel had to create an interest among the readers, and apparently he did so to the detriment of faithfulness to the source text, even if faithfulness is a notoriously tricky notion in translation studies.

In spite of the problems discussed above, it is beyond doubt that Borel's translations from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* are important in the sense that they provide an entry point into the Chinese literary tradition, and an introduction to *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* for general readers. The stories translated by Borel are entertaining to read, retain the plot of the original and convey Chinese concepts and beliefs. Moreover, they achieve the aim Borel had in popularizing Chinese culture for a wide audience, something which he continued to do in his time.

7.2 *Wonders Old and New*

Borel also published translations of stories from *Wonders Old and New* which he was first introduced to when he was studying Chinese at Leiden University in 1888-1892 under Schlegel. Borel was not only fascinated by the novellas during his studies. An article he published in *The Java Post* of 21 May 1895 shows him emphasizing their literary quality. In the article, Borel is upset that someone signing with the initials P. M., whom I have identified as Pieter Meeter (1844-1901), writes negatively about *Wonders Old and New*. Meeter, who had studied under Schlegel's predecessor Hoffmann, had also served as a Chinese interpreter in the Dutch East Indies. Borel takes issue with Meeter:

> (...) he [P. M.] calls the novellas translated by Schlegel 'obscene novels'. I regard these novellas from the famous collection *Jingu qiguan* as high literature. Some of them are equal to the best 'Tales' [in English and quotation marks in original] by Poe. It is true that some contain less decent matters, but one can find them in Boccaccio and Rabelais and Cervantes too. One of the most successful stories by Schlegel, *Le Vendeur d'huile*, is a novella of very moral contents written by an author whose soul revealed the most sublime ideas of love. It is the story of how, by way of the simple and great love of a poor oil vendor, a sinful girl from a brothel becomes aware of her value as a woman. One sees how the girl gradually becomes conscious of love, all of her sins glide away like black clouds from the mountains, and completely purified she rises with her lover in the brightness of a new, higher life. We must give credit where credit is due. Prof Schlegel has done a good work with the translation of that novella.[57]

To reinforce his point Borel compares *Wonders Old and New* with Western literature by putting it on a par with tales by 'Poe'. The name Poe most probably refers to the American writer Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), because of the mention of the English word 'Tales' in

[56] Pollard 2013, p. 265.
[57] Borel 21 May 1895.

the Dutch text and the comparison with other Western writers Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), François Rabelais (1494?-1553) and Miguel de Cervantes (1547?-1616) in the following sentence. It seems unlikely that 'Poe' here is a Dutch-based romanization referring to Pu Songling. Most important to Borel is the theme of morals and values in the Chinese stories of *Wonders Old and New* and the development towards purification of the protagonist. This indicates that in selecting these stories from *Wonders Old and New* for translation, his goal is to inform Dutch readers of morals and values in Chinese culture.

Although Borel may have been influenced by his teachers in Leiden and Xiamen, the choice of texts from *Wonders Old and New* was his own. Besides Schlegel's translation, other translations into French, German and English were available in Borel's time,[58] including the French collection *Stories et Novels* (Contes et Nouvelles) translated by Theodore Pavie (1839), the German collection *Chinese Novels* (Chinesische Novellen) translated by Eduard Grisebach (1884), and the English *Chinese Stories* translated by Robert K. Douglas (1893). No Dutch translations have been identified. By claiming that the novellas are high literature, Borel sets out to convince the reader of the literary quality of the text by explaining cultural aspects, and at the same time retaining the foreignness of the source culture through the foregrounding of Chinese concepts.

The three novellas from *Wonders Old and New* that Borel translated and published are:

1. 'The Spirit of the Courtesan' (De geest van de courtisane). Partial translation of *A Female Scholar Who Grafts One Twig on Another* (*Nü xiucai yihua jiemu* 女秀才移花接木), in *The Netherlands* in 1924;
2. 'The Poet Li Taibai' (De dichter Li Th'ai Peh). Complete translation of *How Li, the Banished Immortal Spirit, While Intoxicated, Wrote the Letter That Frightened the Barbarians* (*Li zhexian zui cao xia manshu* 李謫仙醉草嚇蠻書) in *Six Stories* (Zes verhalen), in 1925; and
3. 'The Broken Lute' (De gebroken luit). Abbreviated translation of *Yu Boya Breaks his Qin in Gratitude to his Close Friend* (*Yu Boya shuai qin xie zhiyin* 俞伯牙摔琴謝知音), in the *Leeuwarder Newspaper* of 22 June 1925.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Borel starts with the story that Schlegel includes in his introduction to his translation of 'The Oil Vendor'. It must have been one of the stories Borel was most familiar with. He calls it 'The Spirit of the Courtesan', which is only a part of the longer novella. In the endnote to the story, he writes that he used the Chinese text included with Schlegel's French translation of 'The Oil Vendor' and consulted Schlegel's French version of the story, but says he deviates from Schlegel's reading where he 'could not agree

[58] See Henri Cordier's *Bibliotheca Sinica: dictionnaire bibliographique des ouvrages relatifs a l'Empire chinois*, Vol. 3, pp. 1761-1769. See also *The Colloquial Short Story in China: A Study of the San-Yen Collections* by John Lyman Bishop.

with' him.[59] Clearly, he is confident enough to differ with his teacher. So what are the differences between Schlegel's French version and Borel's Dutch version?

As it turns out, these are mainly caused by a different approach to translation, and in some cases a different interpretation. As his previous translations show, Borel usually tries to stick closely to the text that he translates and, where necessary, he adds an explanation or comments in brackets or footnotes. This is different from Schlegel, whose translation often incorporates an explanation and therefore tends to be wordier in some places. Examples here show passages from the Chinese source text (ST), the French translation (TT1) and the Dutch translation (TT2). There are places where Borel's rendering sticks so closely to the Chinese text that it is incomprehensible and at times incorrect, whereas Schlegel's is still readable and accessible. An example is the scene where Mengyi returns home after a final visit to his lover. He is talking to himself:

> (ST)「他說永別之言，只是怕風聲敗露，我便耐守幾時再去走動，或者還可相會。」 *'Ta shuo yongbie zhi yan, zhi shi pa fengsheng bailu, wo bian naishou jishi zai qu zoudong, huozhe hai ke xianghui.'*
> (She speaks of farewell, because she is afraid of tarnishing her reputation. I will restrain myself for a while before I go back, maybe we can still meet each other again.)
>
> (TT1) --*Elle a parlé d'une séparation éternelle; mais c'est certainement parce qu'elle craint de ternir sa réputation. Je me contraindrai pendant quelque temps, mais aprés j'y retournerai, et alors peut-être je la rencontrerai encore.* (She spoke of eternal separation, but it must be because she believes that it will tarnish her reputation. I will restrain myself for a while, but thereafter I will go back and then maybe I will be able to meet her again.)[60]
>
> (TT2) *'Zij sprak van een eeuwige scheiding, maar dat is natuurlijk alleen maar, omdat zij vreest, dat het geluid van den wind den weg zal bederven, ik zal tegen wil en dank mij er een tijdje bij neerleggen, maar later zal ik terugkomen en haar misschien weer ontmoeten.'* (She spoke of eternal separation, but of course that is because she is afraid that the sound of the wind will ruin the road, I will reluctantly restrain myself for a while but later I will return and maybe see her again.)[61]

Here Borel translates the expression *fengsheng bailu* 風聲敗露 word for word as 'the sound of the wind will ruin the road.' Actually the character for *lu* here is not 'road' 路 but *lu* 露 the verb 'reveal'. In combination with *bai* 敗 it means 'to fall through and stand exposed.' So Borel's translation is incorrect, whereas Schlegel gives the right interpretation of the Chinese expression.

Although Schlegel's version is generally easier to understand, he does tend to overtranslate. He adds details or repeats words from previous lines or paragraphs, which are not in the source text. For example in the following lines:

> (ST) 到了二月花朝日，孟沂要歸省父母。主人送他節儀二兩，孟沂藏在袖子裡了，步行回去。 *Daole eryue hua zhaori, Mengyi yao gui sheng fumu. Zhuren song ta jieyi erliang, Mengyi cangzai xiuzi li le,*

[59] Borel 1924, p. 1030.
[60] Schlegel 1877a, p. 13.
[61] Borel 1924, p. 1028.

buxing huiqu. (By the time it was the second lunar month and the flower festival started, Mengyi wished to return to his parents. His patron gave him two taels which Mengyi put in his sleeve. Then he embarked on his trip home.)

(TT1) *Lorsque la Fête-des fleurs approchait, Ming-i éprouva le désir d'aller voir ses parents, et demanda permission à M. Tchang d'aller leur rendre visite. Celui-ci lui donna non-seulement la permission d'y aller, mais il lui fit présent en outre de deux onces d'argent. Ming-i, ayant mis ces deux pièces dans la manche de son habit, se mit en route.* (By the time the flower festival approached, Mengyi expressed his wish to see his parents, and so asked for permission with Mr. Zhang to visit them. He not only gave permission to go but he also gave him two ounces of money. Mengyi who put the two pieces into the sleeve of his dress, embarked on his trip.)[62]

(TT2) *Toen twee maanden verloopen waren, en het Bloemenfeest aanbrak, wilde Ming Ie gaarne naar de hoofdstad terugkeeren om zijn ouders te bezoeken. Zijn meester, Chang, gaf hem daartoe twee taels, mede, die hij in zijn mouw borg, waarna hij heen stapte op de terugreis.* (After two months' time when the Flower festival started, Mengyi wanted to return to the capital to visit his parents. His master Zhang gave him two taels which he put into his sleeve after which he embarked on his journey home.)[63]

Here Schlegel adds 'permission' twice while there is no such word in the Chinese original. He also repeats the word 'two' for the amount of money, which Mengyi puts 'in the sleeve of his dress.' Schlegel adds 'of his dress', while in Chinese and Dutch there is only 'in his sleeve' for it is generally understood that sleeves are part of a dress. But it is possible that Schlegel wanted to make sure that his readers would not mistakenly think that *la manche* here would mean 'the sea.' Perhaps it is also because Schlegel is translating into a language that is not his mother tongue. Where Borel goes wrong is translating *daole eryue* 到了二月 into 'After two months passed', where in fact it says 'By [the time it was] the second [lunar] month'. Schlegel omits this. But both add footnotes to explain about the Flower festival, which in itself is a time indication of Chinese New Year.

The above examples show that Borel's version is not necessarily an improvement over Schlegel's in terms of translation quality and interpretation of the Chinese. In fact, the mistakes show that Borel's knowledge of the Chinese language was not as good as Schlegel's. Still, Borel felt confident enough to disagree with Schlegel's translation.

The same translation strategy of sticking close to the source text and providing notes to explain Chinese culture is retained in the two other novellas. In 'The Poet Li Taibai', the story about the famous Chinese poet Li Bai 李白 (701-762): for 36 pages in Dutch translation, Borel provides two and a half pages of introduction and forty footnotes, giving the readers rich cultural context and historical background. As he explains in the introduction, he selects this story because it gives a striking image of Li Bai's talent, his fame and his character. Moreover, Borel also notes in the introduction:

In the legend about the undecipherable barbarian letter, which no one else could translate, some people see a popularized, hidden meaning: poets understand strange things that no one else can understand.[64]

[62] Schlegel 1877a, p. 5.
[63] Borel 1924, p. 1021.
[64] Borel 1925a, p. 180.

This statement reveals the way Borel identifies with Li Bai: poets possess a unique ability. As shown in Chapter 5, Borel felt that he was able perceive more and better understand Chinese culture than other writers about China, because he was a poet. In an article in *The Fatherland* of 18 February 1930, there is a report about a talk by Borel on Chinese poetry, with a special focus on Li Bai. The author explains how Borel argued that Chinese poems are untranslatable because of the pictorial value of the Chinese characters painted with a brush and the terseness of the Chinese poems: what is not there is more important than what is there.[65] While Borel's poethood originates in European Romanticism, he was also profoundly influenced by Chinese poetics, as explained in Chapter 2. In fact, as Hein von Essen writes in *Oedaya*, '[n]oble and again nonwestern is Borel's attitude of mind about Poetry'.[66] This also explains why Borel thinks he is the right person –expert and poet – to introduce Chinese culture and why he feels superior to others.

In addition to his remarks on Li Bai as a poet and poetry in China in general, Borel also makes comments about the Emperor and imperial court, historical events and figures etc. For example, in a footnote, Borel explains that Chang'an was the capital at the time and located in the present-day province of Shanxi.[67] In the translation, Borel sticks rather close to the original text. An example can be found in the passage where Li Bai is brought in front of the Emperor:

> (ST) 天子一見李白，如貧得福，如暗得燈，如饑得食，如旱得雲，開金口，動玉音道：「今有番國賚書無人能曉，特宣卿至，為朕分憂。」 *Tianzi yi jian Li Bai, ru pin de fu, ru an de deng, ru e de shi, ru han de yun, kai jinkou, dong yuyin dao: 'Jin you fanguo jishu wuren neng xiao, te xuan qing zhi, wei zhen fenyou.'* (When the Emperor saw Li Bai, it was as if poverty/a poor man obtained wealth, as if darkness received light, as if hunger received food, as if drought received clouds of rain. [The emperor] opened his golden mouth, and said in his jade voice: 'We have received a letter from a foreign nation which no-one can read. Therefore, we have sent especially for you, noble Sir, to relieve us from this worry.')
>
> (TT) *Toen de Keizer Li Peh zag, was dat alsof armoede rijkdom verkreeg, alsof het donker het licht ontving, de honger het voedsel, de droogte regenwolken. Hij opende zijn gouden mond, en zeide, met zijn jade stem: "Wij hebben een schrijven ontvangen van een vreemde staat, dat niemand begrijpen kan, wij hebben daarom speciaal naar u gezonden, edele Heer, om ons van deze zorg te bevrijden."* (When the Emperor saw Li Bai, it was as if poverty obtained wealth, as if darkness received light, hunger received food, drought received clouds of rain. [The emperor] opened his golden mouth, and said in his jade voice: 'We have received a letter from a foreign nation which no-one can read. Therefore, we have sent especially for you, noble Sir, to relieve us from this worry.')[68]

In the respectful descriptions of the Emperor, Borel literally translates idioms such as 'golden

[65] Anonymous 18 February 1930.
[66] Von Essen 1926, p. 146.
[67] Borel 1925a, p. 187.
[68] Ibid, p. 192.

mouth' and 'jade voice'. Compare the translation of the same passage by Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang:

> At the sight of Li Bai, the emperor was as delighted as a poor man who acquires some treasure, as a dark room that is given light, as a hungry man who finds food, and as a drought-ravaged place that sees clouds. Moving his royal lips, he said in his august voice, 'There is a letter from a foreign country that no one is able to read. So we have summoned you, to relieve us of this vexation.'[69]

These translators de-metaphorize and de-idiomize, and hence de-localize, the epithets of the Emperor, and add words in the description of the Emperor's feelings ('as delighted as') upon seeing Li Bai. Borel's version stays closer to the source text and has the effect of foreignization in the sense of enrichment of the language. But the idiom of *jinkou* 金口 and *yuyin* 玉音 in Chinese will not be uncommon in Chinese and therefore will not have the exoticizing effect that 'golden mouth' and 'jade voice' in Dutch has. Because of this foreignization, the reader is reminded of the fact that it is a translation.

Another way of reminding the reader that this is a translation occurs in 'The Broken Lute'. Borel cuts the length of the text, but then he adds new words in the text, to explain but also to embellish and make it 'more Chinese'. He cuts part of the conversation between Boya and the woodcutter, e.g. the history of the lute, and quotes from the *Book of Songs*. But he also adds explanatory words in the text, e.g. about friendship 'which in China is equal to brotherhood.' An example of how these changes work, from the beginning of the story:

> 伯牙在船艙中，獨坐無聊，命童子焚香爐內：「待我撫琴一操，以遣情懷。」童子焚香罷，捧琴囊置於案間。伯牙開囊取琴，調弦轉軫，彈出一曲。曲猶未終，指下“刮剌”的一聲響，琴弦斷了一根。 *Boya zai chuancang zhong, du zuo wuliao, ming tongzi fenxiang lunei: 'Dai wo fuqin yi cao, yi qian qinghuai.' Tongzi fenxiang ba, feng qin nang zhiyu anjian. Boya kainang quqin, tiaoxian zhuanzhen, tanchu yi qu. Qu you wei zhong, zhi xia 'guala' de yi shengxiang, qinxian duanle yi gen.* (Boya sat in his cabin, alone and bored, he ordered his servants to light incense in the burner: "I am going to play my *qin* to express my feelings." The servant lit the incense and put the *qin* case on the table. Boya opened the case and took out the *qin*, tuned it and began to play. Before he had finished a tune, a string broke with a sharp twang.)
>
> *Boya, die alleen, melancholiek en verveeld, in zijn rijke kajuit had gezeten, liet de venster er van openzetten, gaf zijn dienaren order, fijne wierook in zijn wierookvat te branden en zijn groote luit uit het kostbare etui te halen. Hij was namelijk een beroemde musicus en niemand in het land kon zoo als hij de "ch'in", de Chineesche luit, bespelen. Nauwelijks echter had hij even het eerste couplet van een bekend lied doen opklinken, of opeens brak een der snaren van zijn zeldzaam schoone instrument af, nadat de muziek op een zoo smartelijken toon had geklonken, als hij nooit in dit lied had gehoord.* (Boya who was seated alone in his rich cabin was feeling melancholic and bored, he had the window opened and asked his servants to light fine incense in the incense burner and retrieve the big lute from the precious lute case. For he was a well-known musician and he played the *qin*, the Chinese lute, better than anyone else in China. Yet, he had hardly played the first part of a famous tune, when suddenly one of the strings of his uniquely beautiful instrument broke, after the tune resounded such a sad tone he had never heard before.)[70]

[69] Yang and Yang 2005, p. 128.
[70] Borel 22 June 1925.

This long quote shows how Borel expanded these three sentences in Chinese, for which he used 104 words in Dutch, but which can be translated in 70 words in English as shown here. Some words are added in Borel's rendering to describe Boya's mood ('melancholic'), the cabin ('rich'), and incense ('fine'). But there are also explanations such as that the *qin* is a Chinese lute, and a sentence to explain that Boya was a well-known musician and played the *qin* better than anyone else in China. This shows again Borel's presence in the text, as the translator's voice which changes the story. Although Borel cut the length of the story, he made the sentences wordier and richer in meaning. It is possible that he thought it would make it easier for the reader to imagine the scene and people in the story, but all this is of course Borel's personal imagination of the scene and the people. At the end of 'The Broken Lute', Borel concludes, in his own words, as a highly present translator: 'Such is the story of the Broken Lute, which every Chinese is familiar with, in the same way the old Greeks know the story of Orestes and Pylades.'

Still, by publishing Dutch translations of these novellas, Borel made the texts available to Dutch readers, who would otherwise probably not have known about them.[71] From the reception of *Six Stories*, in which the novella about Li Bai was included, it appears that the story of Li Bai was generally perceived as the odd one out in the anthology. Possibly because of the foreignizing quality of the translation, but also for its place among contemporaneous works translated from the Italian, the Spanish, the Hungarian, the Greek and the Yiddish, most of which were by living authors.[72] In 'A Spanish Multatuli[73] and his Dutch publisher' (Een Spaanse Multatuli en zijn Nederlandse uitgever), Charlotte de Cloet writes that the publisher had asked the translator of the Spanish story, G. J. Geers, for 'a short novella which would be representative of modern Spanish literature to be included in a collection of novellas translated from various other languages.'[74] I have not found a letter from the publisher seeking Borel's contribution, but it seems likely that he was also asked to select a short novella that was representative of *modern* Chinese literature. It is possible that he thought that since *Wonders Old and New* was still popular in China, it qualified. The reviewer in the *General Commerce Paper* of 1 April 1926 cast the story aside with a brief,

[71] There is another story in *The Leeuwarder Newspaper* of 5 July 1924: 'Plum blossom. Freely [rendered] after Chinese and English sources' (Pruimebloesem. Vrij naar Chineesche en Engelsche bron). I have been unable to identify the original source text(s). Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010603131:mpeg21:a0110

[72] 'Sun and Shadow' (Zon en schaduw) by Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) translated from the Italian by Mary Robbers, 'The Marquis of Lumbria' (De Markies van Lumbria) by Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo (1864-1936) translated from the Spanish by Dr. G. J. Geers, 'The bagpiper' (De Doedelzakspeler) by Kalman Mikszath (1847-1910) translated from the Hungarian by H. A. C. Beets-Damsté, 'Papa Parthenis Legend' (De legende van Pope Parthénis) by Pavlos Nirvanas (1866-1937) translated from the Greek by Prof. Dr. D. C. Hesseling, and 'Dumb Souls' (Stomme Zielen) by I. L. Peretz (1852-1915) translated from the Yiddish by C. J. Hildesheim.

[73] Multatuli, pen name of Eduard Douwes Dekker (1820-1887), was a Dutch writer known for his work *Max Havelaar* (1860) in which he expresses critical views on Dutch colonial rule in the Dutch East Indies.

[74] De Cloet 1994, pp. 126-127.

parenthesized remark: 'we place the Chinese legend of the poet Li Bai *hors concours*'.[75] A review in the *Rotterdam Newspaper* of 7 May 1926 also singled out the story, but was very positive about it:

> (...) Added onto this is a less modern story by an unknown Chinese writer, of already more than four centuries ago, which is still as popular among the Chinese now as it was for their ancestors. Now in translation by Henri Borel, many Westerners will find this story of Li Bai, the famous poet, no less fascinating.[76]

Being 'added onto' sounds as if it was not really part of the selection, or perhaps too different to compare. But then again, it does recognize that the text is still popular among modern Chinese readers, which Borel wrote in the introduction. A third reviewer makes a general remark about the fact that the stories in the anthology are too superficial to determine the importance of the works, and just thinks that the names of the contributors are a guarantee for the quality of the book.[77] Finally, the one that praises the stories for their contents is an anonymous reviewer in *Forward: Social-democratic Daily* (Voorwaarts: sociaal-democratisch dagblad) of 14 April 1926:

> (...) Translated from the Yiddish by C. J. Hildesheim is the story 'Dumb Souls' by I. L. Peretz, the Polish expert of East Jewish literature, while Henri Borel has translated from the Chinese a novella about China's most popular poet Li Bai, dating from about 1516. Both these two contributions, as well as the Greek one, are by far the most profound and the highest in terms of literary standard, although they do demand much concentration and study of the reader. Those who put in the effort will have no regrets whatsoever.[78]

The reviewer offers more comments and evaluation about the other stories, such as that the Italian is 'a masterpiece of lively narrative' and the Spanish 'a picturesque mix of dry class pride and pursue of freedom.'[79] But the reviewer does not tell us why he thinks the literary quality of the Yiddish, Greek and Chinese stories is so exceptional, unless it is the fact that the stories are difficult to understand. In all, it seems fair to say that the Li Bai story is regarded as different from the European stories, and this must also be the result of the way Borel presents literary work from China.

7.3 *Of Life and Death*

The visibility of the translator's presence further increases in Borel's collection of Daoist stories, *Of Life and Death*. The collection contains thirty-nine stories, many of which, as Borel explains in the introduction, are inspired by stories from Chinese texts. Borel stresses that

[75] Anonymous 1 April 1926.
[76] Anonymous 7 May 1926.
[77] Anonymous 23 February 1926.
[78] Anonymous 14 April 1926.
[79] Ibid.

they are '*very free adaptations, but not translations,* yes, sometimes even fantasies based on a single motive.'[80] Although Borel has indeed applied varying degrees of translational intervention, the stories that I have been able to identify do contain the full text of the source text. In each story Borel adds or changes things, to reinforce or explain certain details of the story.

The source texts that he used are the *Zhuangzi* and the *Liezi* 列子. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the *Zhuangzi* has traditionally been ascribed to Chinese philosopher Zhuang Zhou, or Zhuangzi, who lived around the fourth century BCE. The *Liezi,* also known as *Chongxu Zhenjing* 沖虛真經 (True Classic of Simplicity and Vacuity) is a text attributed to Daoist philosopher 'Master Lie', or Lie Yukou 列禦寇 (fl. 400 BCE). In both the *Zhuangzi* and the *Liezi*, philosophical exposition is combined with a large number of parables. Scholars are divided about the dating and authorship of the works, but the *Zhuangzi* quotes the *Liezi,* and it is therefore concluded that the *Liezi* came first.[81]

Besides the first three stories in *Of Life and Death*, which Borel claims are his own creative writing, so far I have been able to identify eleven stories from the *Zhuangzi,* thirteen from the *Liezi,* and two Buddhist stories translated from the English.[82] There are three stories which are based on legends, for example the one about Ke Ai, the girl who sacrificed her life so that her father could cast the perfect bell for the Clock Tower in Beijing. The remaining seven stories I have not (yet) been able to identify, possibly because Borel gave free rein to his imagination in them.

In the present context of writing and translating, the metaphor of the translator as actor is useful. As quoted in Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility*, literary translator Willard Trask explains how he 'realized that the translator and the actor had to have the same kind of talent. What they both do is to take something of somebody else's and put it over as if it were their own.' Thereupon Venuti concludes that '[i]n Trask's analogy, translators playact as authors, and translations pass for original texts.'[83] In this sense translators identify with the author whose work they are translating in the way actors identify with the character they impersonate. But what effect does that have on the performance of the actor/translator? Will strong identification decrease the difference between authoring and translating?

It appears that this is what Borel did with the Daoist stories: he 'put them over as if they were his own.' But what 'role' did he play? In *The Beautiful Island*, from 1922, we have noted his identification with the Chinese. He reiterates this in a talk on literature in The Hague, which was reported in *The Fatherland* of 17 January 1925. According to the anonymous writer, Borel said that because of 'my stay in China, I've become a bit of an "odd

[80] Borel ca. 1925 (1926?), p. 6 (emphasis in original).
[81] See more details in the entries on *Zhuangzi* and *Liezi* in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, edited by Michael Loewe. Berkeley, Calif.: Society for the Study of Early China, 1993.
[82] Carus 1895.
[83] Venuti 2008, p. 7.

Chinaman." I look at life from a Chinese point of view.'[84] This would explain how Borel assumes the role of a Chinese author and adapts his script for that purpose. In his view, he understands the Chinese better than anyone else because he is capable of thinking as a Chinese person, and he thinks that anyone involved in (the translation of) Chinese material should do the same. Consider, for instance, how Borel criticizes the poet and physician Johan W. Schotman (1892-1976). Schotman, who worked in China from 1921 till 1927, published *Myths and Legends of China* (Mythen en legenden van China). Borel published a review of this book in *The Dutch Revue*:

> Dr. Schotman has not read Chinese myths and legends as a Chinese, in a Chinese mood, with a Chinese mind, but as a European intellectual, a physician, who analyses with Western psycho- analytical methods, yet without suspecting that in the 'quellenden Urgrund' [Ground of Being] lies something other than the unconscious inclination and longing that result in a dream.'[85]

Borel posits a sharp contrast between things Chinese vs European and Western, and emphasizes the fact that this lies beyond the reach of the intellect. He uses the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's (1775-1854) notion of 'Urgrund', which means 'original grounding of all reality, as Being whose existence precedes any entity'. This idea of the 'quellenden Urgrund' can also be found in Richard Wilhelm's title of his German translation of the *Liezi: The True Book of the Ground of Being* (Das wahre Buch vom quellenden Urgrund). The way Borel condemns Schotman of his lack of this so-called 'Chinese mindset' is pedantic and his criticism leads to disagreements. As Schotman's biographer Arend Huussen notes, Borel's many works had been 'an eye-opener for the beauty of China, for the immutable "Idea of China" as it were,' but Schotman realized that this was only one side of the picture.[86] In Huussen's view, Schotman and Borel had similar ideas about the need to immerse oneself into a foreign culture to understand it and that their disagreements were based on misunderstandings.[87] This immersion is clear in Borel's work: he playacts as the Chinese author. Below I will give examples of different kinds of translational intervention, for which I will give the Chinese source text (ST) and the Dutch translation (TT).

The first example comes from 'The Skull' (De doodskop), which is the fourth story from 'Perfect Enjoyment' (*Zhile* 至樂), where Borel's intervention is quite prominent. In this story Zhuangzi has a conversation with a skull about death. Zhuangzi thinks that the skull would like to come back among the living, and the skull explains that there is more happiness among the dead. In Borel's version, the basic story is there, but Borel adds another

[84] Anonymous 17 January 1925.
[85] Borel 1925b, p. 951.
[86] Huussen 2011, p. 39.
[87] Ibid, p. 45. Huussen further writes 'Between them a 'dialogue of misunderstandings' continued to exist, as Erik Zürcher would call it' (Tussen hen bleef wat de sinoloog Erik Zürcher zo aardig genoemd heeft 'dialoog der misverstanden' gaande.) (*Dialogue of Misunderstandings* (Dialoog der misverstanden), Leiden: Brill, 1962).

paragraph halfway, where Zhuangzi asks the skull how he ended up in such a deplorable state. This additional paragraph is in fact a repetition of similar questions as raised in the previous paragraph from the Chinese source text. Together with some other additions, the story in Dutch has 865 words, as compared to the source text of 283 characters, or the English translation of 306 words by Burton Watson.[88] An expansion occurs in the paragraph where the skull asks Zhuangzi whether he wants to hear a lecture on the dead:

> (ST) 莊子曰：「然。」髑髏曰：「死，無君於上，無臣於下，亦無四時之事，從然以天地為春秋，雖南面王樂，不能過也。」 *Zhuangzi yue: 'Ran.' Dulou yue: 'Si, wu jun yu shang, wu chen yu xia, yi wu si shi zhi shi, cong ran yi tiandi wei chunqiu, sui nan mian wang le, bu neng guo ye.*'('Yes,' said Zhuangzi. The skull said, 'Among the dead there are no rulers above, no subjects below, and no chores of the four seasons. With nothing to do, our springs and autumns are as endless as heaven and earth. A king facing south on his throne could have no more happiness than this!')
>
> (TT) *Zhuangzi, die als ieder ander mensch, in den slaap veel dichter bij den dood was dan tijdens het waken, antwoordde nieuwsgierig: 'Ja!' Toen sprak de doodskop: 'In den dood zijn er geen bedelaars en koningen, geen vorsten en knechten, geen armen en rijken, geen wijzen en gekken, geen vreugden en smarten, geen moeilijkheden en zorgen, geen wisselingen van jong en oud. Van alles waar gij, levende menschen u zoo het hoofd over breekt, waar gij u zoo angstig bezorgd over maakt, hebben wij dooden, geen last. Alles wat wij ondervinden is zoo vanzelf en natuurlijk als de bewegingen van hemel en aarde, wij laten ons maar gaan en alles is van zelf goed. Zelfs het geluk van den rijksten koning op zijn troon kan in de verste verte niet met het onze worden vergeleken en de wijsheid van den grootsten levenden wijsgeer op aarde heeft er niet de flauwste voorstelling van.'* (Zhuangzi, who like any other human being was nearer to death in his sleep than when awake, replied in a curious manner: 'Yes!' Then the skull spoke: In death there are no beggars or kings, no princes or servants, no poor or rich people, no sages or idiots, no happiness or sadness, no hardship or worries, no cycles of young and old. Everything that gives you—the living—headaches, and that worries you mad, does not bother us—the dead. Everything that we experience requires no effort and is as natural as the movements of heaven and earth, we let go and everything turns out right. Even the happiness of the richest king on a throne cannot be compared with ours and the wisdom of the greatest sage on earth has not the slightest idea of it.)

Whereas the original answer by Zhuangzi to the skull is a simple 'yes,' Borel inserts what Zhuangzi must have felt ('curious') and what his state of mind was ('closer to death in his sleep than awake'). Borel also adds words of contrast here: 'no poor or rich people', and 'no sages or idiots', to reinforce the point the skull is making: all are equal in death. At the end of this paragraph, Borel adds that for all his wisdom, Zhuangzi would not be able to imagine what death is like. One almost feels that Borel wants to correct Zhuangzi. Yet, in the chapter on *Daodejing* of *The Spirit of China* he writes:

> I cannot resist giving excerpts of the *Nanhuajing,* the mystical work of Laozi's greatest disciple who lived 250 years later and who illustrated the teachings of the *Daodejing* with similarities in stories and parables. One should not expect any logical explanation because the same intuitive and suggestive method is applied, which can be understood by those who are not only intellectuals but gifted with an innate intuition.[89]

[88] See English translation by Burton Watson: *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1968. The anecdote about the skull is on pp. 141-142.
[89] Borel 1916, p. 106.

Clearly, Borel thinks the text is important. Yet, he says that the *Zhuangzi* is not logical, and that if you lack intuition you will not be able to understand the meaning. Still, compared with Laozi's *Daodejing*, Borel thinks that the *Zhuangzi* is clearer and more important:

> It is true that Zhuangzi too did not work with strict logic or clarification, for his book is also filled with vague, mostly obscure ideas, and yet the extremely dense and essential things from the *Daodejing* are depicted with greater sense.[90]

Of Life and Death shows that Borel believed he possessed the intuition needed to capture the meaning of these texts. He tries to convince his readers that Daoism cannot be explained, that it is illogical and obscure. He constantly stresses that there are few people who can perceive the meaning, but he himself makes an attempt at clarifying the contents of the texts. The Dutch version of 'The Skull' essentially retains the intention of a relativist definition of human happiness and the question of death, but also focuses on the wisdom and skills of Zhuangzi, because that is what Borel chooses to foreground.

Then there are stories where multiple changes can be detected, not only additions of information and descriptions, but substantial change to a character, and substantial omission from the ending. An example is the story about the deer in 'Dream and Reality' (Droom en werkelijkheid) from *Liezi*. It seems that Borel wants to emphasize the dream effect more strongly. Borel follows the beginning of the story quite closely: the protagonist 'the woodcutter' goes to the woods to gather firewood. Unexpectedly he encounters and kills a deer and then hides it for fear that someone else would see it. Soon he forgets the place where he has hidden the deer and thinks that he must have been dreaming.

While the Chinese goes on about how a passer-by overhears the woodcutter mumbling to himself about the deer and where he hid it, the Dutch has the woodcutter go and tell a friend about his dream. Then in both versions, when his friend/passer-by finds the deer, the friend/passer-by's wife says that it was he who must have been dreaming, not the woodcutter. Then the woodcutter has a true dream about the place where he had hidden the deer and how his friend found it. The next day the woodcutter seeks out his friend to demand his deer back. In the source text, the woodcutter goes to court to contest his right to the deer and the case comes before the Chief Justice, who suggests that they divide the deer into two. Here Borel adds a lively dialogue between the woodcutter, his friend and the Chief Justice to create further confusion about dream and reality, and a passage on how the Chief Justice threatens to chop their heads off if they don't settle the case. In the original, towards the end of the story, there is a passage where the case is further reported to the Lord of Zheng and the Prime Minister, which is omitted in the Dutch translation. Hence, although the first half and the middle part are true to the original source text, it has more

[90] Ibid, p. 93.

modifications towards the end of the story. Compared to the other stories, 'Dream and Reality' is heavily adapted and wordier: 755 words in Dutch, 355 characters in Chinese, and 435 words in English translation. Yet, even though much has been added and the ending has been modified, it is still clearly a story from the *Liezi*.

We can see an internalization of core ideas of *Zhuangzi* and *Liezi* in Dutch tales that embody Chinese elements. Borel has internalized and rewritten his 'alien experience' (according to Carbonell quoted above) in his own Dutch culture. I would argue that this is evidence of one of the most important aspects of cultural translation, which is this 'accommodation in the interstices', which Borel is doing in these stories: he is interpreting and facilitating an understanding of Daoist thought. By putting the stories over as if they were his own, Borel transports the 'Chinese feeling' into his stories and the difference between translating and authoring is difficult to make. One way of enhancing the Chinese cultural contents is by inserting Chinese concepts in transliteration such as 'Jiang gu' 講故 (storyteller)[91] and 'xiao' (filial piety).[92] In addition to that, Borel also invents sinified-Dutch expressions such as 'earning his daily rice', where the Dutch would normally have 'bread'[93], and 'brush war', where the Dutch would normally have 'pen war'.[94]

The result is such that the afore-mentioned reviewer François in his review *Of Life and Death* in the *East Indies Newspaper* (Indische Courant) of 17 July 1926, writes that Borel must have descended from the Han ethnicity, or Chinese people, in his previous life. François notes a recurrent theme of the awareness of transience of things and an inner peace as the result thereof. But he also writes that

> This book is actually not suitable for finishing in one go, as I had to do as a reviewer, because the tone, the color of every story is too much the same. But rather [reading] now and then, something of the tranquility of this Chinese wisdom will naturally inform the reader.[95]

It must be the style and words that Borel uses, that flattens stylistic differences across the various stories. Actually, *Zhuangzi* and *Liezi* in their original version are far from being the same, as Lionel Giles writes in his introduction to *Taoist Teachings from the Book of Liezi:*

> Nearly all the Taoist writers are fond of parables and allegorical tales, but in none of them is this branch of literature brought to such perfection as in Lieh Tzŭ, who surpasses Chuang Tzŭ himself as a master of anecdote. His stories are almost invariably pithy and pointed. Many of them evince not only a keen sense of dramatic effect, but real insight into human nature. Others may appear fantastic and somewhat wildly imaginative.[96]

[91] Borel ca. 1925 (1926?), p. 56.
[92] Ibid, p. 57.
[93] Ibid, p. 56.
[94] Ibid, p. 65.
[95] François 17 July 1926.
[96] Giles 1912, pp. 14-15.

Borel's versions are no longer anecdotes. The stories are long and repetitive, quite the opposite of being 'pithy and pointed.' Yet perhaps this similarity among the stories is the unity that Borel sought. As he notes, the stories 'do not seem to be connected but they are intimately united.' (with the exception of the legend of Ke Ai.) For this concept of unity, it shows that Borel is influenced by Buber. Earlier, in *The Spirit of China*, Borel also quoted Buber about his interpretation of the concept of 'unity'. The quote is from Buber's afterword to his work on *Zhuangzi*, stressing that 'every Thing reveals Dao by the path of its existence, by its life, because Dao is the Unity in Change, the unity which proves itself both in the Multiplicity of things (…).'[97] From this, it appears that in *Of Life and Death*, Borel tries to show this unity through the stories, which in a way is a projection of Chinese thought onto 'real life' and existence.

7.4 *Mencius*

This way of thinking can also be seen in Borel's final major translation project of the *Mencius* to complete his translation of the *Four Books*. Borel's translation of *Mencius, the People's Tribune of China* (Meng Tsz', China's Volkstribuun) is what Arthur Waley would call a scriptural translation. In the preface to *The Way and its Power*, Waley makes the distinction between historical translations which 'set out to discover what such books meant to start with,' and scriptural translations which 'aim only at telling the reader what such a text means to those who use it today.' Waley goes on to say his object is the same as that of previous translators: 'For I cannot believe that the study of the past has any object save to throw light upon the present.'[98]

The *Mencius*, the fourth of the Confucian classics collected under the *Four Books*, consists of seven books, each in two parts, and contains dialogues between Mencius and rulers and other contemporaries. Topics of conversation vary from relationships and ethics to the philosophy of life. The *Mencius* is often compared with the *Analects* as both are structured conversations, and the *Mencius* develops Confucian concepts.

Here, again, Borel features prominently as the translator. First, this is because he offers a scriptural translation, and he presents Mencius as the People's Tribune which is different from the source text. Secondly, he maintains his translation strategy of staying close to the source text and explaining Chinese culture.

In fact, Borel had already claimed in 1916, in *The Spirit of China,* that according to Mencius the sovereign reigns in wisdom and puts the people first, and that without Mencius's ideas penetrating Chinese minds, the 1911-12 revolution might never have happened.[99] Hence, this shows that the message Borel has for his readers is what the

[97] Borel 1916, p. 115. English from Buber 1991, p. 94. The use of capital letters is retained from the Dutch version.
[98] Waley 1934, p. 13.
[99] Borel 1916, p. 64.

Mencius means to those who use it in their own time. There are two methods with which Borel enhances this idea in this volume: one is the subtitle 'The People's Tribune of China,' which, as he explains in the introduction, he chose because:

> Confucius's attention is focussed on the rulers and the moral and ethical foundations of their government. Mencius recognizes and propagates the same foundation, but for him the common people come first. Unlike Confucius, Mencius was the People's Tribune, and as such more compassionate and dialectical.[100]

According to Borel, this idea that Mencius was speaking for the people is reflected in several places in the text. Borel gives an example from Chapter VI of the second part of Book I, 'King Hui of Liang', where Mencius is in dialogue with the king about unacceptable behavior leading to dismissal from one's post. Mencius implies that this refers not only to friends and officials, but also to kings. In his note to the passage, Borel writes:

> Here we have a stark example of what Mencius, the People's Tribune, dared to tell the king.[101]

Borel signals to his readers his own affirmation of Mencius's ideas, to persuade them of their value, explicitly attempting to influence the readers' perceptions of the translated text. Duyvendak, however, rejects the idea of Mencius as the People's Tribune of China. In his review, he says it is misleading to view Mencius as a radical reformer, arguing that:

> Mencius himself rather enjoyed being a grand lord more than he sympathized with the common people, although he did recognize the usefulness and importance of people's welfare for the nation.'[102]

It is clear that Duyvendak and Borel have a different view of Mencius, which each justify in their own way. It shows that Borel is heavily opinionated in presenting the Chinese text, and very visible as a translator as such. He positively manipulated the Chinese text, and the image of China presented to his readers.

The second method of enhancing the idea of current use of the *Mencius* is the selective nature of Borel's translation. Out of the 261 chapters, Borel translates 193, omitting about a quarter of the text. As he notes in the introduction:

> I have translated the first couple of books in their entirety (there are seven books in total) to give the reader an idea of the compilation; from the remaining chapters I have only rendered the items that are of universal value which today are still important to humanity. Matters related to human nature and the character of man are included in this volume, as are also matters of which their foundation even now—and how! oh League of Nations!—ought to be of charitable and justified politics and mutual relationships between different nations.[103]

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[100] Borel 1931, p. 17.
[101] Ibid, p. 61.
[102] Duyvendak 26 November 1931.
[103] Borel 1931, pp. 4-5.

This statement sets the intention of the Dutch text: it gives the *Mencius* a more general access, downplaying anything like exclusive 'Chineseness'. Borel was trying to convince his readers that the *Mencius* contains ideas that concern anyone, not just the Chinese.

Omissions include sentences and passages, which according to Borel are irrelevant for non-sinological readers. Most of the deletions deal with administrative details of the early states or biographies of kings and courtiers. Some of these are clearly explained. In Book II, Part A, Borel writes:

> I have left out some passages (18-24) of Chapter II since they are about a comparison between various ministers and sages from ancient times, concerning who was the higher or lower, an issue which cannot be of much interest to the non-sinological Dutch reader.[104]

The passages in question are a discussion of what it takes to become a sage, ending with the conclusion that there is no one who surpasses Confucius. In a way it is understandable that Borel skipped these passages, because besides Mencius, Confucius, Yao and Shun, another eleven figures are included by name in the conversation, which would have required another page of explanatory notes. However, the conversation does give an idea of Mencius's definition of sagehood and his admiration for Confucius, which would have helped the reader understand the position and relation of the two sages.

Another example is found in Book V, Part A:

> The first four chapters with various details about Shun's marriage and other matters about his life are left untranslated as they are of less importance to the non-sinologist.

Here, what is left out is in fact not just data about Shun's personal problems, as Borel writes. More generally, the omitted chapters here shed light on Chinese family values and moral issues, which would have been useful information for the reader.

In addition, there are instances where Borel does not inform the reader that passages have been omitted. Since I found no evidence of other reasons, such as time constraints or limitations set by the publisher, one may surmise that Borel thought these were of no interest to his readers. Although leaving out certain passages is not automatically or always unjustified, notifying the reader would normally seem the right thing to do.

The second reason why the presence of translator is highly visible, is that Borel continues to stay close to the original Chinese text, and provides detailed information on Mencius and Chinese philosophy. As I will show below, the reader is constantly reminded that the text is a translation. This manifests itself in the paratexts and the use of romanization for Chinese concepts. With the text of the translation on the left page, and his notes on the right, Borel ensures that his readers are fully aware of the cultural background

[104] Ibid, p. 91.

of concepts and persons. For Chinese concepts such as *junzi* 'gentleman', *li* 'decorum', *dao* 'way', *xiao* 'filial piety', which he mentioned earlier in volume 1 on Confucius, he remains of the opinion that there are no good equivalents in any European language – he was certainly not alone in thinking this – so that they must be transliterated and explained. The problem, he says in the introduction to the *Mencius*, is also that the Chinese language has characters and not an alphabet. He had explained this before in volume 1 on Confucius, and again in *The Spirit of China* in 1916. Although the use of transliteration may give readers a sense of alienation, at the same time it allows for semi-direct contact with the foreign culture. In spite of his copious notes, however, in short sentences with more than one of those concepts, it may be difficult for the reader to work out the meaning, as shown in the following passage from Book IV, Part II, Chapter XIV:

> (ST) 孟子曰:君子深造之以道,欲其自得之也. *Mengzi yue: junzi shen zao zhi yi dao, yu qi zi de zhi ye.* (Mencius said: the Gentleman immerses himself in the Way, because he wishes to find it in himself.)
>
> (TT) *De Junzi gaat diep naar Tao in, en wenscht Het (in) zichzelf te verkrijgen.* (The Junzi goes deep into Dao and wishes to obtain It (in) itself.)[105]

Here, Borel explains in his note: 'Again I have retained Dao and did not try to translate it, because in terms of significs [significa, the Philosophy of Significance][106] it has more potential than, for instance, "proper course" as in Legge, or "Wahrheit" [Truth] as in Wilhelm.' Borel expects the reader to be familiar with core notions, such as *junzi* and *dao*, which he has explained before. In fact, Legge's translation is very wordy: 'The superior man makes his advances in what he is learning with deep earnestness and by the proper course, wishing to get hold of it as in himself.' The words 'learning with deep earnestness' have strong interpretive hues, whereas Borel leaves it to the reader to imagine in what sense the meaning of 'deep' is interpreted.

Of course, the original text itself is very concise, and as such, it has generated many commentaries in Chinese and other languages. In that sense, Borel's use of transliteration does convey the message that the text is difficult. However, since his target audience is non-sinological, he could alternatively have opted to limit the number of transliterations and try to give a close rendering, and still keep the notes for those interested.

The comments in the notes strengthen the translator's voice, especially in cases where Borel compares other interpretations: English by James Legge, Latin by Stanislas Julien, and German by Richard Wilhelm. In such cases, Borel usually gives explanations in his notes, clarifying his own interpretation and his reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with someone

[105] Borel 1931, p. 196.

[106] Borel mentions 'significs' because he was involved in this study with van Eeden. Characterized as 'the philosophy of Significance', that is 'the philosophy of the human capacity of expression', it was developed by Victoria Lady Welby (1837-1912), and introduced in the Netherlands by van Eeden. See Schmitz 1990, p. 220.

else's version. As the above example shows, he thinks that Legge's and Wilhelm's translations of *Dao* are inadequate. Another example, in which Borel disagrees with Legge, is found in Book VI, Part I, Chapter VI-7:

> (ST) 惻隱之心，人皆有之；羞惡之心，人皆有之；恭敬之心，人皆有之；是非之心，人皆有之。 *Ceyin zhi xin, ren jie you zhi; xiu'e zhi xin, ren jie you zhi; gongjing zhi xin, ren jie you zhi; shi fei zhi xin, ren jie you zhi.* (Commiseration is what all people have; shame and dislike are what all people have; reverence and respect are what all people have; distinguish right from wrong is what all people do.)
>
> (TT) *Medelijden en medegevoel hebben alle menschen, schaamte en afkeer hebben alle menschen, een hart van eerbied en reverentie hebben alle menschen, een hart (met de onderscheiding van) waar en niet waar hebben alle menschen.* (Commiseration and sympathy are what all people have, shame and dislike are what all people have, a heart of respect and reverence is what all people have, a heart (that can discern) truth from not truth is what all people have.)[107]

Borel explains in a note:

> A heart means, again, 'a mind'. For *shi* and *fei*, 'to be' and 'not to be', i.e. true and not true, Legge has 'approving and disapproving' which seems wrong to me.[108]

The passage is from a chapter in which Mencius expands on his own idea that human nature is good. So what is described here are feelings that all human beings innately have. This example shows that Borel leaves room for the reader to interpret 'true' or 'not true'. With the explanation, Legge adds his own ideas and thereby deviating from the original source text. So in this case, it appears that Borel is fairly neutral in his rendering of the text, but then makes a notable translator's intervention, with his voice audible on a paratextual level.

In translating and publishing the *Mencius*, Borel completed his self-imposed task of introducing the *Four Books* to Dutch readers. As in his previous translations, Borel went to great lengths to bring the target audience to the source text, in order to gain insight into things Chinese. Although there are moments in his translation that may give the reader a sense of alienation, at the same time this allows them semi-direct contact with the foreign culture. The frame of paratexts that surrounds the translation signifies the translator's own strong identification with indigenous values in traditional Chinese philosophy and culture.

The high degree of visibility of Borel is his claim of or attempt at recognition as translator. He thinks that in his role of expert he is able to determine implicit meanings, in the words of Talal Asad:

> if the anthropological translator, like the analyst, has final authority in determining the subject's meanings—it is then the former who becomes the real author of the latter. In this view, 'cultural translation' is a matter of determining implicit meanings—not the meanings the native speaker actually acknowledges in his speech, not even the meanings the native listener necessarily accepts,

[107] Borel 1931, p. 232.
[108] Ibid, p. 233, note 7.

> but those he is 'potentially capable of sharing' with scientific authority 'in some ideal situation' (...)[109]

Borel, then, is not necessarily providing his readers with the intentions of the Chinese author in question. This is also the reason why readers have a different perception of Borel's work as compared to that of other writers. As Ada Geyl opines in her review of books on China, the older generation of sinologists had a kind of 'fanatical admiration' for Chinese culture, and that caused them to 'shut their eyes to the reality of Chinese people.'[110] Although she does not specifically mention names, it is very likely that she counts Borel among this older generation of sinologists.

Here, it is useful to refer to Herbert Giles. Like Borel, Giles is someone known for his 'undiplomatic' personality, with a failed official career in the East and retirement at forty-seven on health grounds, and with the following approach to introducing China to his readers, in the words of Tong Man:

> [Giles] was always a fierce defender of Chinese culture. He wanted his contemporaries to admire China and things Chinese.[111]

Borel tried to do the same in the Netherlands. This is reflected in his own writing on China and in his translations, but also in his involvement in polemics about China, for instance with the journalist Louis Grondijs (1878-1961) in the spring of 1933.[112] In a letter to the newspaper, Borel criticizes Grondijs for his lectures about the situation in China and Japan. Grondijs had just returned from a trip to Asia, during which he had joined Japanese soldiers in the invasion of North China. The invasion was instigated by the Mukden incident in 1931, in which the Japanese caused part of the railway near Shenyang to explode. Allegedly the plan was that the Chinese would be blamed for the incident, which the Japanese would then use as a pretext to attack Manchuria. Borel disagrees with the way Grondijs justifies the Japanese invasion of China, by claiming that the Japanese bring peace and wealth in the region. Grondijs in turn accuses Borel of his pro-Chinese view of the situation. While Grondijs bases his arguments on first-hand experience, Borel quotes from Putnam Weale's *The Fight for the Republic of China* (1918) and *The Truth about China and Japan* (1921) to

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[109] Asad 2010, p. 26.

[110] Geyl 29 July 1936. Duyvendak does not belong to this group, for 'his vision was broad and his evaluation was healthy', according to Geyl.

[111] Tong dissertation 2001, p. 91.

[112] The polemics can be found in various issues of *The Fatherland* in April and May 1933. Eventually Borel gives a lecture about the issue on 18 May 1933 to explain his views, which report can be found in *The Fatherland* of 19 May 1933. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010014753:mpeg21:a0001 A summary 'Polemics between Dr Grondijs and Henri Borel' (Een polemiek tusschen dr. Grondijs en Henri Borel) appeared in the *East Indies Newspaper* of 7 June 1933, accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010284558:mpeg21:a0004 For more details on Grondijs, see the article by Gerard Groeneveld 'War God in Journalism' (Oorlogsgod in de Journalistiek) in the *People's Daily* (Volkskrant) of 2 September 2005.

support his argument that the invasion was part of a larger plan to conquer other parts of Asia, which had originated a decade earlier. This shows that in his self-assigned capacity as the China expert, Borel would frequently take issue with other people's views of China, and had a tendency to impose his pro-Chinese view.

This continued until he died on 31 August 1933. Two months before his 64th birthday, Borel fell ill with high fever on 29 August 1933. He had been suffering from heart problems for three years by then, had difficulty walking and was often struck by sudden fevers. In addition to that he had an infection in his arm.[113] On 30 August, he lost consciousness and died in the night.[114]

[113] Anonymous 2 September 1933.
[114] Anonymous 31 August 1933a.

Epilogue

Borel's image of China is (in Wolf's words) 'filtered and arranged through his consciousness.' His translation of Chinese culture and his translations of Chinese literature are all done with a clear presence of his own voice. This is mainly the result of his poetic approach, which was rooted in European Romanticism and further developed with ideas in Chinese and Buddhist poetics that define poethood. Here Borel finds a connection which helps him justify his self-proclaimed poethood, which he maintains throughout his life. Indeed, the image that Borel had of himself was a poet, in this case meaning someone searching for a way to 'transcend humanity'. As he wrote in his autobiographical essay 'Karma', from the collection *Karma* published in 1923:

> Nearby lived a poet who had travelled a lot in the East and he would sometimes come to our place to play the piano. He would always play Bach because he could not play anything else anymore, so he said. If you get old, he explained, you can no longer play Chopin or Schumann, and Schubert, not even Beethoven, the Great, but you play Bach because it is way above everything else and leaves everything behind, it rises out above all deeply human into the realm of divine harmony.[1]

If we keep this identity in mind when reading his works, we can understand Borel 'poet's way' of translating China. His personal development presented in his works on and from China over a period of forty years, starting off as someone who had no high expectations about China, to ultimately sinicizing Chinese literature, was directly reflected in his writing. He adds Chinese words and phrases to make his own writing and his translations 'more Chinese'. It is as if this were a development from 'Borel in China' to 'China in Borel', as he ultimately felt Chinese.

This explains why Borel is such a visible translator. He is prominently present in both his essays about Chinese culture and his literary translations, and one might argue that the artistic elements of his approach to translating China are as strong as, if not stronger than, the scholarly elements. His presence is prominent in the paratextual elements added to the texts, in the form of introductions and footnotes, but also explanations embedded within the texts. His presence is also felt in the way he claims that some Chinese notions are untranslatable and therefore he gives romanization with explanations. Finally, Borel takes the position that things Chinese should be explained from a Chinese perspective. Hence, in his view, other writers about China and translators of Chinese literature often have a wrong approach and therefore a wrong interpretation. These include not only the missionaries who translated Chinese classics, but also Dutch officials in the Dutch East Indies, who drafted legislation relevant to the Chinese local population, and fellow sinologists in the Netherlands, whom he blamed for their Western methods. Instead, in terms of cultural translation, Borel's

[1] Borel 1923, p. 9.

work displays, in the words of Carbonell, an internalization of a Chinese experience rewritten in his own (Dutch) culture.[2]

Yet, other elements of Borel's character are those of rivalry with others, of curiosity, and of a strongly felt sense of justice: the desire to surpass others, the urge to explore the unknown, and the conscious decision to divulge professionally confidential matters when he thinks this is the morally right thing to do. Combined with his so-called Chinese mindset and confidence of having a superior understanding of China since he considers himself a poet, these things create tension in work-related matters. He finds himself positioned between East and West and has issues of belonging. On the one hand, he admires Chinese culture, language, literature and philosophy, but on the other hand, he dislikes the food and the smells, and what he perceives as the uncleanliness of the Chinese people. This is revealing of an essentialist streak in Borel. The feeling that he is torn between East and West is illustrated in his essay about Singapore, when he describes his struggle to deal with the urge of going into the Chinese district, and his frantic escape back to European surroundings. It also shows in the way Borel moves out of the Foreign Legation in Beijing, in an attempt to get closer to local life among the Chinese, but ultimately misses the Western comfort and moves back to the hotel in the Foreign Legation.

In thinking and writing Borel becomes increasingly sinicized, but not in terms of daily life. This is reflected in the way he translates China. In his early work, he introduces and explains about Chinese culture, as he does in the essay about Guanyin and Chinese hell, presenting information based on his experience and including excerpts of literary translations. This eventually changes into his assuming the role of the Chinese author, as he does in the Daoist stories collected in *Of Life and Death*, where the border between translating and authoring is obliterated. It is his belief of having a 'Chinese mindset' that leads him to rendering Chinese stories 'more Chinese', by adding Chinese words and phrases.

This leads to growing complacency and self-confidence, which can be observed in the way Borel repeatedly criticizes other sinologists and poses himself as the China expert. The problem is that while he criticizes others, he is making (worse) mistakes himself. His literary translations show that his command of the Chinese language is not as good as he likes to believe. Overconfidence also results in errors in his relay translations caused by editorial intervention, and he does not recognize or acknowledge his own limits. All this has a negative effect on his relations with colleagues in the Dutch East Indies, which results in the transfers to other locations in the colonies and ultimately his departure. Borel's critical essays on Dutch sinologists and Chinese Studies at Leiden University also affected his chances of obtaining a position there.

Still, Borel's writing did find a readership among the general readers. According to

[2] Carbonell 1996, p. 81.

reviewer Pierre H. Dubois (1917-1999) in his article 'A Look at Henri Borel a century after his birth' (Blik op Henri Borel [een] eeuw na zijn geboorte), Borel 'roused a lot of genuine interest in Chinese philosophy, art and culture with his books, articles and talks.'[3] This is evidence of the influence Borel had and his success in popularizing Chinese culture. His writing about China and his translations of Chinese literature were new to the readers, even though his selection of works hardly went beyond the curriculum of Chinese Studies at Leiden University. But the readers would not know about the contents of the curriculum, and perhaps for the general reader this was a good way to start an introduction to China. Moreover, Borel published in a wide range of venues, in books as well as literary magazines and newspapers that reached a broad readership.

His works received very mixed reviews. Most positive reviews praise the novelty of his works, which give a different view of China, unlike other works. The most appealing must have been Borel's method of explicitly mobilizing his knowledge of China, especially when describing what he perceived as the beauty of things Chinese. This must have inspired a different image of China, especially because previously many reports on China had been negative and racist. Negative appraisals—including those by Duyvendak and Nijhoff—often included the assertion that Borel was overly subjective. So much so that some readers find that the China Borel described didn't exist. Yet the many reprints of his works indicate that his books sold well, and his works certainly contributed to a growing interest in Asia in the Netherlands, as reflected in *The Fatherland* of 5 November 1932, which contains an announcement of the opening of the 'Oriental Bookshop' in The Hague. Borel is mentioned among the authors whose books were in the collection. The bookstore was seen as 'a gain for intellectual The Hague.' As Girardot writes about the English-speaking world:

> There was, however, a growing demand for books about Oriental and Chinese subjects (especially if they were classical or sacred texts) that were expressly written for a generally literate, although not necessarily scholarly, readership in both Great Britain and America. The extent of this interest is indicated by the appearance in the United States of a number of abridged pirated editions of the *Chinese Classics.*[4]

Likewise, in the Netherlands there was a growing supply of books on China.

Borel was able to overcome the problem that Herbert Giles had (according to Pollard), of having to address a very different audience than sinologists today. Only very few people had any command of the Chinese language, and so Giles had to create the interest out of which grew, very gradually, the present audience. And this was an uphill battle.[5] For Borel it was the same. Few readers in the Netherlands had had any direct contact with China or the Chinese, and racism and a prejudice against Asian people were little-contested parts of public discourse. The way Borel wrote shows that he was much less racist than others in his

[3] Dubois 28 November 1969.
[4] Girardot 2002, pp. 102-103.
[5] Pollard 2013, p. 247.

time, and he tried to establish the dignity of the Chinese by giving the reader a translation of China from what he saw as a Chinese perspective.

Yet by writing for readers of his time and his strong presence in his translations, Borel set his images of China apart from directions that would soon be taken by others, such as Duyvendak's demonstrably more objective, and perhaps more 'sober', approach. It was mostly Borel's early works that appealed to the reader, probably because they were genuinely informative and appreciative, without the pedantic tone of his later writing. The very 'personality', or indeed the 'personal-ness' of his writing, affects its long-term sustainability when critically examined. In all, it was doubtless inspirational and impressive for many readers – and for all the 'personal-ness' of his writing, or perhaps precisely because of it, Borel left a legacy that is an important part of the cultural history of the Netherlands, the Dutch East Indies, and ultimately, of China.

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Summary in Dutch

Hoe Henri Borel (1869-1933) China vertaalde

Dit proefschrift is een studie naar de vertaling van Chinese literatuur en teksten over China door Henri Jean François Borel. Borel, ook bekend als prozaschrijver en journalist, studeerde Hokkien Chinees aan de Universiteit Leiden van 1888 tot 1892, en in Xiamen van 1892 tot 1894. Hij volgde deze opleiding ter voorbereiding op zijn aanstelling als 'Tolk voor de Chineesche Taal' in het toenmalig Nederlands Indië, nu Indonesië. Zijn werken, die hij publiceerde over een periode van veertig jaar (1893-1933), boden een algemeen lezerspubliek een goede toegang tot China, en waren van invloed op het beeld van China in de late negentiende en vroege twintigste eeuw in Nederland.[1] De gevestigde sinologische gemeenschap keurde zijn werk echter weinig achting waardig.[2]

De centrale vraag in dit proefschrift is nu: hoe vertaalde Borel China? De term 'vertalen' wordt hier gebruikt als in 'cultureel vertalen', oftewel vertalen tussen culturen. In deze zin is 'vertalen' niet beperkt tot de omzetting van de ene taal in de andere, maar breder in de toepassing van taal als het middel om een vreemde cultuur te verwoorden. In dat proces wordt de vreemde cultuur, zoals Michaela Wolf schrijft: 'niet rechtstreeks verwoord, maar slechts indirect gefiltreerd en gevormd via het bewustzijn van de etnograaf of vertaler.'[3] In die zin toetst deze studie Borels literaire vertalingen van filosofie en proza op de wijze waarop ze China vertalen, alsook zijn eigen artikelen, essays en reisverslagen over China, die niet per se gebaseerd zijn op bestaande Chinese bronteksten.

Borel is een zeer zichtbare vertaler en dit heeft invloed op de perceptie van de lezer. Deze zichtbaarheid is het gevolg van zijn vertaalstrategie: hij blijft doorgaans dicht bij de brontekst en behoudt Chinese concepten in transcriptie wanneer hij die onvertaalbaar vindt. Daarnaast doet hij paratekstuele ingrepen, in de vorm van introducties, voetnoten en opmerkingen. Op die manier voorziet hij de lezer van veel uitleg en informatie, wat zijn werk subjectief en vaak exotiserend maakt. Naast zijn vertaalstrategie is het feit dat hij zichzelf als een dichter ziet ook van invloed op zijn interpretatie en vertaling van China. Zijn dichterschap en zijn zelfbeeld als geheel, is in belangrijke mate oorspronkelijk geworteld in de Europese Romantiek, maar wordt later mede gevormd door Chinese en Boeddhistische culturele tradities, waarin hij bevestiging vond van zijn overtuiging dat hij als dichter op unieke wijze in staat was China te begrijpen, omdat alleen de dichter de verborgen betekenissen van een tekst en cultuur kan aanvoelen. Door dit zelfbeeld van dichterschap en daarmee superieur begrip van China, identificeert Borel zich met de Chinezen en dat

[1] Pos 2008, p. 179.
[2] Idema 2003, p. 231.
[3] Wolf 2002, p. 181.

veroorzaakt vaak spanningen in zijn werk als tolk in Nederlands Indië. Aan de ene kant kiest hij vaak de kant van de Chinezen, aan de andere kant heeft hij het gevoel dat hij niet thuishoort in Azië, en dat versterkt zijn bewustzijn van de splitsing tussen Oost en West.

Het proefschrift is chronologisch en thematisch in drie delen verdeeld. Deel I, 'Ontdekking van China (1888-1894)' gaat in op de studieperiode van Borel in Leiden en Xiamen. Hoofdstuk 1, 'Beeldvorming', bespreekt Borels het beeld van China, dat hij heeft gevormd door boeken over China en door zijn opleiding in Leiden. Pas in het derde jaar van zijn studie in Leiden raakt Borel geboeid door het Chinese schrift. Hoofdstuk 2, 'De Romantiek' gaat in op hoe Borels romantische inslag zijn kijk op China beïnvloedt. Dit komt vooral tot uiting in zijn essays in het boek *Wijsheid en Schoonheid uit China*, waarin Borel zijn ervaring beschrijft van zijn tijd in Zuid-China, en Chinese en Nederlandse culturen vergelijkt. Hier bestudeer ik de methodes waarmee interculturele interactie totstand komt.

Deel II, 'Op zoek naar "het echte China" (1894-1916)', behandelt de periode waarin Borel als tolk in Nederlands Indië werkzaam is en hij zich bewust wordt van de identiteit van de Chinezen daar versus die in China. Hoofdstuk 3, 'Oriëntalisme' toont hoe zijn werken een oriëntalistische inslag krijgen. Borel probeert Chinese cultuur uit te leggen vanuit 'Chinese perspectieven' en een beter begrip van de identiteit van de Chinezen te krijgen. Dit toont hij met name in het essay 'Maar een Chinees...' dat is gebaseerd op een rechtszaak in Nederlands Indië. Tevens uit het zich in zijn literaire vertalingen van Chinese filosofische werken en een combinatie van de twee (praktische ervaring en literaire vertaling) in bijvoorbeeld 'De Chineesche hel'. Hoofdstuk 4, 'Verscheurd tussen Oost en West', gaat in op Borels interne tweestrijd over waar hij toe behoort. Die tweestrijd uit zich in vertwijfeling tussen het zich thuisvoelen in het Oosten, en tegelijk een schuldgevoel tegenover de inheemse bevolking. Ondertussen blijft hij zoeken naar het 'echte China' en gaat Mandarijn studeren. Uiteindelijk mag hij daarvoor in 1909 voor vier maanden naar Beijing. Zoals hoofdstuk 5, 'Een poëtische blik', laat zien is er vanaf zijn studiereis in 1909 een duidelijke ontwikkeling in Borel. Hij voelt zich, door zijn ervaring en kennis opgedaan in Beijing, een China-expert. Dit toont hij in *Het Daghet in den Oosten*, maar ook zijn latere werken hebben vaak een pedante toon. Zijn zelfingenomen houding heeft verregaande gevolgen. In Nederlands Indië leidt ze tot onenigheid met zijn baas, die zijn expertise niet erkent, met als gevolg het einde van zijn carrière daar. In Nederland hebben Borels gepubliceerde kritieken over de Nederlandse sinologie en ideeën over de noodzaak van haar modernisering een negatieve invloed op zijn kansen om aan de Universiteit Leiden te werken. Zijn ideeën droegen echter wel bij tot veranderingen in het curriculum en de functiebeschrijving van hoogleraar Chinese taal en letterkunde aan de Universiteit, in die zin dat ook het Mandarijn werd opgenomen in het programma, en dat er aandacht kwam voor het contemporaine China naast de geschiedenis en literatuur van het oude China. Hier kijk ik naar hoe Borel zich in culturele vertaling het vreemde eigen maakt, terwijl hij tegelijkertijd ook het vreemde

ervan behoudt.

Na Borels terugkeer in Nederland volgt een periode van terugblikken, zoals deel III, 'Herevaluatie van China', aangeeft. Hij wordt redacteur bij *Het Vaderland* in 1916 en verwerft bekendheid met zijn scherpe en heldere kritieken over kunst en drama. Hoofdstuk 6, 'Chinese Geest', bespreekt *De Geest van China*, waarin Borel een 'Chinese denkwijze' benadrukt in de beleving van China, en zijn reisverslag *Het schoone eiland, een tweede boek van wijsheid en schoonheid uit China*, waarin hij China idealiseert. Hoofdstuk 7, 'De Chinese literatuur verchinezen', toont hoe Borel zich inleeft in de Chinese auteur in zijn literaire vertalingen, zoals onder meer de Daoïstische verhalen in *Van Leven en Dood,* die hij publiceert, terwijl hij tegelijkertijd anderen bekritiseert die China bestuderen met Westerse wetenschappelijke methodes. In zijn schrijven presenteert hij zich als een China-expert. Zijn obsessie met die 'Chinese denkwijze' leidt uiteindelijk juist tot fouten, in zijn vertalingen en zijn bredere omgang met de teksten. In culturele vertaling is duidelijk te zien hoe Borel de Chinese cultuur vereigent en het als het ware herschrijft in de Nederlandse cultuur.

Deze studie toont aan dat Borels werk belangrijk is geweest voor Nederlandse beelden van China in de laat-19e en vroeg-20e eeuw, soms ook met enige internationale uitstraling. Zijn werken boden een nieuwe visie op China, maar waren erg subjectief en tegelijk nauw verbonden met de tijdgeest. Zijn romantische, poëtische en niet-wetenschappelijke aanpak was van invloed op beelden van China bij een algemeen publiek, maar de status van zijn werk was van voorbijgaande aard, want in de loop van de jaren 1920 bieden andere auteurs – sinologen en anderen – de lezers een objectiever beeld van China. Zo hebben Borels 'persoonlijkheid' en het 'persoonlijke' van zijn werken geresulteerd in hun vergankelijkheid. Dat doet niet af aan de invloed die hij had in zijn tijd: hij was ongetwijfeld inspirerend en indrukwekkend voor zijn lezers van toen. Bovendien is het verhaal van zijn leven en zijn werk illustratief voor generieke kwesties die spelen bij de bestudering van 'vreemde' culturen, waarvan het belang onverminderd is terwijl de context verandert, en daarmee het wetenschappelijk en algemeen-cultureel discours.

Propositions

Relating to the subject of the dissertation:

1. Borel's self-proclaimed poethood profoundly influences his translation of China.
2. Borel increasingly assumes the role of a Chinese author by internalizing Chinese culture in his own writing and crossing the border between translating and authoring.
3. Borel's prominent presence as a translator means his readers are offered a personalized vision of China.
4. Borel moves across the full range from preconceptualizing China to essentializing, idealizing China and indeed sinicizing Chinese literature.
5. Borel is passionate about the language, culture and philosophy of China but strongly dislikes the everyday life of the Chinese.
6. Borel's criticism of others presents a stark contrast with his failure to recognize the limits of his own knowledge and his own mistakes.

Relating to the field of the subject of the dissertation:

1. The identity of the translator determines voice in translation.
2. A poetic approach to cultural translation makes the presence of the translator more prominent.
3. If the target language has no equivalent for a particular expression in the source language, the referent of this expression may still exist in the target culture.
4. Essays about Other culture(s) are translations.

Other propositions

1. Self-translation inevitably leads to rewriting.
2. An emigrant never comes home.

Curriculum Vitae

Audrey Jane Heijns (Delft, 1967) deed in 1986 haar eindexamen HAVO aan het Pallas College in Zoetermeer, en ging datzelfde jaar de opleiding Schoevers doen. Zij deed de avondstudie Engels aan het HBO, terwijl zij werkte als secretaresse. Zij behaalde haar propedeuse Engels waarmee ze zich in 1988 aanmeldde voor de studie sinologie aan de Universiteit Leiden. Zij studeerde af met een eindscriptie over de roman *Veranderingen in de Familie* van de Taiwanese auteur Wang Wenxing (1939-). In 1993-1994 reisde zij in een uitwisselingsprogramma naar de National University of Taiwan te Taipei, Taiwan. In 1995 verhuisde zij naar Hongkong, waar zij aanvankelijk in de commerciële sector werkzaam was. In 2001 begon zij te werken als Research Assistant en Assistant Editor aan het Research Centre for Translation aan The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Zij was mede-verantwoordelijk voor het vertalen en redigeren van publicaties van het tijdschrift *Renditions*, dat Chinese literatuur in Engelse vertaling publiceert. Ook werkte zij in samenwerking met collega's aan het Sinologisch Instituut aan de Universiteit Leiden aan het Project VerreTaal: Online database of Chinese Literature in Dutch Translation. Deze database werd in 2008 gelanceerd, met Heijns als editor. In 2009-2012 werkte ze als Research Fellow aan het Centre for Chinese Civilisation, City University of Hong Kong, waar zij zich bezig hield met onderzoek, vertalen en doceren van Chinese literatuur en cultuur. Haar publicaties van Nederlandse en Engelse vertalingen van Chinese literatuur verschenen o.a. in *Het Trage Vuur*, *Armada*, *KortVerhaal*, *Renditions* en *Epiphany*.

Cover design: Audrey Heijns, in search of Borel's beautiful island, Gulangyu.
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