Translating China : Henri Borel (1869-1933)

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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)
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> (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.