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Fu Lei's translation activity and legacy

Chuanmao Tian

¹School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University, Hubei, 434023 P. R. China.

²Intercultural Studies Group, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona, 45002 Spain. E-mail: tcm_316@163.com.

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The 1950s and 1960s witnessed the survival of the one and only freelance translator in mainland China, whose name was Fu Lei. Fu's selection of source texts was affected by the ideological factors of the day. His financial conditions were intimately related to the change of the country's policy on royalties, but his translation quality almost remained at the same level. His repeated revisions of some works indicate that good translations, in many cases, come out of serious revisions and retranslations of the same work. His translation experience has several implications. First, translators with high literary and artistic accomplishment and taste may not produce a canonical translation in their first rendering of a work. Responsibility, devotion, honesty, love and hard work are also the basic prerequisites for the advent of an excellent translation. Second, the achievements of a forgotten translator will sooner or later be recognized. Third, translators' influence on people through their translation and people's commemoration of them in various forms are the natural reward for their hard work and contributions to translation as a holy cause. Finally, the translation ideas and theories coming from great translators are more convincing, thought-provoking and constructive to the development of translation studies.

Key words: Fu Lei, translation, activity, legacy.

INTRODUCTION

In mainland China, the socialist movement since 1949, the year of the birth of the new China, had gradually driven almost all people to be affiliated with a work unit (单位, *dan wei*) which in countryside was a production team and in towns and cities was a government agency or state-owned enterprise. In other words, people depended on the government-provided salary to make a living. The planned-economy China (1949-1978) hardly saw the existence of freelancers. However, the 1950s and 60s witnessed the survival of a freelancer in the field of professional translation. This one and only translator is Fu Lei (傅雷) whose translation activity and legacy are well worth exploring.

AN OVERVIEW OF FU'S LIFE

Fu Lei got his given name due to his thunderous cry when he was born in 1908 as Lei means "thunder" in Chinese, which might have preordained his outspoken character and thus his hard and miserable life. In his youth, Fu was a very progressive student. He fought against all kinds of fetishes and superstitions, imperialist

aggressions and warlords and scholar-tyrants in various kinds of upsurging student movements. One year after he entered Shanghai Chizhi University, he went to France for a four-year further study (1928 to 1932), listening to literature and art courses at Paris University and Louvre Academy of Fine Arts History. In order to learn and master French, he began to translate the short stories by Alphonse Daudet and Carmen by Prosper Mérimée. This is the very beginning of his translation practice. Influenced by Romain Rolland, Fu fell in love with music and art. Invited by the Italian Royal Society of Geography, he toured Italy and delivered a famous speech in Rome, eulogizing the military revolution against the warlords at home. During his stay by Lake Léman, he translated a local legend from the old calendar of his landlord. In Paris he began to translate the first chapter of Lectures on Art by Hippolyte Adolphe Taine. He also rendered four prose poems by Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev.

Back in China in 1932, he married his cousin Zhu Meifu (朱梅馥). Fu, Pang Xunqin (庞薰琹) and Ni Yide (倪貽德) founded Juelan Society with the purpose of improving the social situation of that time. He was invited to teach the fine arts history and French by Liu Haisu (刘海粟), the

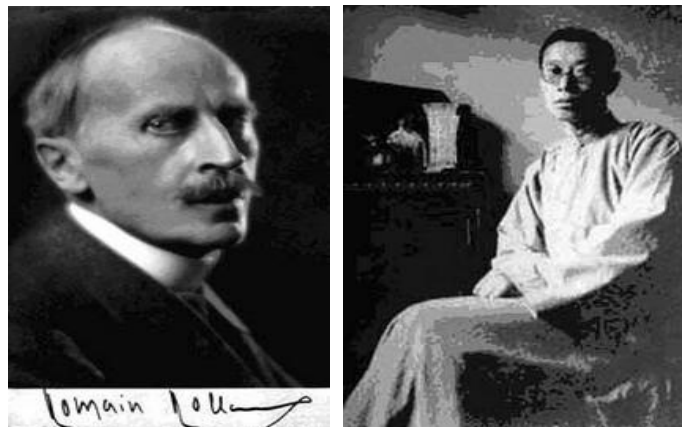


Figure 1. Romain Rolland and Fu Lei.

principal of Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts. He wrote the well-known *Twenty Lectures on the World Masterpieces of Fine Arts* as his teaching notes. He and Ni co-edited the *Art Magazine* which was published by the Academy. One year later he resigned from his teaching post due to his disagreement with Liu's commercial bias of running the Academy. He translated and published Charlot by Philippe Soupault with his own money. In 1935 he worked four months in the Central Commission for Protecting Relics in Nanjing. And from then on to his death, he became a freelancer mainly as a translator. In 1937 he translated the first volume of *John Christopher* (*Jean-Christophe*) by Romain Rolland. In 1944 he and his comrades organized a grand exhibition of handwritings and paintings by the famous artist Huang Binhong (黄宾虹) in Shanghai. In 1945 Fu and Zhou Xuliang (周煦良) co-edited *Xinyu*, a semimonthly. In 1946 he wrote a major critique entitled "On the Novels by Zhang Ailing", making an appropriate and to-the-point criticism on the woman writer's development trend of novel writing. In 1948 Fu translated Eric Newton's *British Painting* at the invitation of the British Council. In the same year he translated Honoré de Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Fu's translation reached its peak. During the 1950s and 60s, he translated and retranslated a large number of works by Romain Rolland, Balzac, Voltaire, Prosper Mérimée, H. A. Taine, and so on. They mainly include *Cousin Betty*, *Old Father Goriot*, *Cousin Pons*, *John Christopher*, *Carmen*, *Colomba*, *Colonel Chabert*, *The Commission in Lunacy*, *Candide*, *Ursule Mirouet*, *Zadig*, *The Philosophy of Art*, *The Rabouille*, *The Vicar of Tours*, *Pierrette*, *Lost Illusions*, and so on. During this period, he also wrote some essays and critiques, and sent his elder son Fu Cong (傅聪) to Poland to study music. Under the guidance of Professor Zewiecki, Fu Cong became an internationally well-known pianist later. When the turbulent Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) came, Fu Lei and his wife committed suicide in 1966 because they

could not tolerate the political, spiritual and physical tortures and persecutions from the Red Guards.

Fu Lei is a translator, writer and critic. He has a very high literary and artistic taste. He claimed himself to be an artistic critic, which could be evidenced by the title "Critique d'Art" on the back of the name card of his own. His interest in art and music relates to his study experience in France. Soon after he came to Paris, he came into contact with Romain Rolland's *Life of Beethoven* by chance. After reading it, he felt as if he had turned a new leaf completely. He said:

After completing the reading, I burst into tears and suddenly felt as if I had been lighted by the divine light and got the power of rebirth. From that time on, I wonderfully took heart, which was indeed a great event in my whole life (Yang, 2008).

Romain Rolland's influence on Fu Lei was so great that the latter decided to translate *Life of Beethoven*, *Life of Tolstoy* and *Life of Michelangelo*. After finishing the translation in 1934, Fu wrote a letter to the author who made an immediate reply. They discussed the works and exchanged their opinions on the world situation as well as their signed photos (Figure 1).

FU'S TRANSLATION ACTIVITY

As stated above, Fu's translation apprenticeship began when he studied in France. Due to his love of Romain Rolland, Fu translated the former's works on Beethoven, Tolstoy and Michelangelo. His translation is mainly from French to Chinese, focusing on French authors, such as Romain Rolland, Balzac, Voltaire and Prosper Mérimée, with the only exception of rendering *British Painting* from English to Chinese.

The selection of source texts

Fu's selection of source texts is a mirror of his taste and

personality, as well as the requirement of the times. Fu loved classical music and art all his life and he married Zhu Meifu because she played the piano very well. Some of the source texts of his translation were related to music and art directly or indirectly, such as *Life of Beethoven* and *Lectures on Art*. Due to the fact that his father had been oppressed by the local gentry and died in depression when he was a child, Fu was very righteous, ambitious and avenging, hating all kinds of evils and evildoers and embracing heroes (Hong, 2009).

The hero of John Christopher is a Beethoven-style young man who bravely combats against the destiny and who is very pure and lofty, proud and aloof, and contemptuous of all authority. In fact, these are Fu's own qualities and he used to call himself John Christopher. In his eyes, Beethoven, Tolstoy and Michelangelo are heroes of this kind and he loved to translate texts depicting them.

A close look at Fu's translations in the 1950s and 60s seems to indicate that, besides a few works on music and art, most source texts of his translation are of realism. In other words, his rendering centers around Balzac. His choice of source texts was influenced by the ideological context of his day. After the founding of P. R. China in 1949, the new socialist power had to be maintained and consolidated by all possible means, including that of literary and artistic propaganda. The nature of the power decides that the country was biased toward the "old big brother" of the Soviet Union in politics, diplomacy as well as literature and art. China's literary and artistic circles introduced the principle of socialist realism from the USSR. It was combined with the criterion of "political standard first, artistic standard second" for literary and artistic criticism, which was prescribed in Chairman Mao's famous speech "Talk on the Conference of Literature and Art in Yan'an". So, socialist realism and the criterion became the maximum norm in the 1950s and 60s. According to Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory (1990), translated literature is part of literature as a larger system. The principle for choosing source texts, in some degree, is always relevant to the co-system of the target-language literature (Chen and Chang, 2000: 115). This degree of relevance is particularly important in the 50s and 60s when political ideological discourse dominated everything in mainland China. That is to say, the political ideology determined the choice of the source text to be translated.

Accordingly, introducing and translating the Soviet literature of socialist realism became the mainstream in the translation activity.

As for the literary works of non-socialist countries, such as Britain, France and America, they were under severe censorship. Due to the fact that works of capitalist countries could not satisfy the "socialist" nature of socialist realism as the maximum norm for the literary creation and translation of Chinese writers and translators, "realism" became the most basic precondition

for translating them. Another condition is the ideology of the work. The ideology of foreign literatures is an important prerequisite for deciding whether they are to be introduced or not (Bian et al., 1959/1984). By "ideologically progressive" works are meant, in most cases, those that can mirror the course of social and historical development, have the anti-feudal progressive significance and disclose the darkness, ugliness and cruelty of the capitalist system (Thomson-Wohlgemuth, 2006: 54). So, as far as mode of writing is concerned, the works translated from Western literatures were viewed as realistic ones. In terms of time, the translation activity of the period focused on the classical literature before the 19th century which is the golden age of realism.

Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* is a mirror of the social reality of the 19th-century France. The "revolutionary teachers" Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels called him the "outstanding novelist" and "realist master". In his letter to Margaret Harkness, Engels (1888) wrote:

The realism I allude to may crop out even in spite of the author's opinions. Let me refer to an example. Balzac, whom I consider a far greater master of realism than all the Zolas passés, présents et à venir, in "La Comédie humaine" gives us a most wonderfully realistic history of French 'Society', especially of le monde parisien, describing, chronicle-fashion, almost year by year from 1816 to 1848 the progressive inroads of the rising bourgeoisie upon the society of nobles....

The praise by Marx and Engels guarantees the legitimacy for translating Balzac's works. Fu Min, Fu Lei's younger son, said that his father's translation focused on Balzac out of political security (Hong, 2009). Fu's selection of source texts can also be examined according to André Lefevre's patronage theory. Lefevre (2004) claimed that patronage consists of three elements: ideological component, economic element and status element. The ideological component "acts as a constraint on the choice and development of both form and subject matter"; the economic element refers to the fact that "the patron sees to it that writers and rewriters are able to make a living, by giving them a pension or appointing them to some office"; the element of status means that "acceptance of patronage implies integration into a certain support group and its lifestyle". He classified patronage as differentiated and undifferentiated. When the three components are all dispensed by one and the same patron, patronage is undifferentiated; when economic success is relatively independent of ideological factors and does not necessarily bring status with it, patronage is differentiated.

According to Lefevre, China of the 1950s and 60s may be labeled "undifferentiated patronage" as the Communist Party and its government was the only patron for all the people of the country directly or indirectly. The ideological and status elements were relatively weak for

Fu Lei because he was not ideologically radical but somewhat neutral and he was not good at getting along with other people and closed himself within the confines of his study to do his translation and thus did not enter the patronage group. However, a passive integration into the country-wide political campaign can be discerned in his essays and letters. In her 1958 letter to Fu Cong, Fu's wife wrote:

As you know, he has always taken great pleasure in working. Therefore, if his physical health allows him to do things, he will study Marxism and Leninism as a preliminary step to reform himself and to improve his political consciousness and theoretical accomplishment. At the same time he does some preparations for his translation (Fu Lei's Family Letters, 1998: 130).

Actively or passively, all people of the nation got involved in the socialist movement. Fu was no exception because "acceptance of patronage implies that writers and rewriters work within the parameters set by their patrons" (Lefevere, 2004: 18). His translations were generally published by the People's Literature Publishing House which enabled him to make a living by paying him royalties on behalf of the government. The economic dependence and the fierce revolutionary movement of that time forced him to side with the Party like all other writers and rewriters. His financial dependence on the publishing house even forced him to give up the right to choose source texts which, in some cases, had been selected by the publisher (Su, 2008: 244). However, his turn to Balzac did not start after 1949. Actually, he had some initial idea of planning to translate Balzac as early as 1938 (Luo, 1984: 625). In 1946 he translated *Old Father Goriot* which was published by the Camel Publishing House. During the 50s and 60s, Fu translated and retranslated only 13 works by Balzac which were ideologically suitable for translation and the rest of his works were against the country's situation and the requirement of the readers, as claimed by the translator himself who was worried that the readers might get mentally "poisoned" when reading the translations because they might not be able to use Marxism-Leninism to analyze and criticize them (Su, 2000: 245).

The working conditions

Fu's financial condition is intimately associated with the change of the country's policy on royalties. During the first few years of the founding of the new China, Fu financially enjoyed his golden days like literary writers. From 1953 on, China copied the Soviet Union's system for paying royalties, adopting the standard of "printing quota system" which consisted of basic remuneration plus printing quota. The basic remuneration for a translator was between 50 and 150 yuan (RMB) per 1,000 characters and that for a writer was between 80

and 200 yuan. One printing quota was ten, twenty or thirty thousand copies. The writers and translators got the basic remuneration for each of the first four quotas, 80% of the basic remuneration from the 5th to 12th quota and 40% from the 13th (Chen, 2006: 85). This system ensured a wealthy life for popular writers and translators. Actually, in the literary circles of the 1950s, there were a few freelance writers who lived well on their royalties. For instance, among freelancers were Liu Shaotang (刘绍棠) and Cong Weixi (从维熙) in Beijing and Ba Jin (巴金) in Shanghai who did not receive a salary from the government. But in the field of translation, Fu Lei was the only freelancer (Hong, 2009). He got good payment from the publishers. For example, in 1952 and 1953 his retranslation of John Christopher was published and it has over one million characters. You can imagine how much remuneration he had got! Therefore, he could rent a Western-style two-storied building, buy a good piano for Fu Cong, drink coffee and smoke cigars, which later became evidence for his capitalist crime and led to the couple's suicide because most Chinese people of the day lived a very poor life and material enjoyment was denied. His study was conveniently and comfortably equipped with books, dictionaries and furniture. His income enabled him to buy the necessary translation references, some of which had been obtained with the help of his friends in France. Yang Jiang (杨绛), Qian Zhongshu's¹ (钱钟书) wife and famous contemporary writer and translator, admired Fu's study very much in that it provided Fu with all conveniences and the shelves were filled with books (see the preface of Fu's Translation of Five Biographies, 1983).

From 1957 on, the changes of the policy on royalties had been constantly made due to the inequality of the system, especially to the Anti-Rightist Movement which criticized that the printing quota system was the basis for the appearance of a high-income stratum. And at that time, a high income was exactly equivalent to capitalism! So, the printing quota system was abolished in September 1958 and only the basic remuneration was preserved. Even the basic remuneration was gradually reduced. In 1966, the year of Fu's death, writers were paid 20 to 80 yuan per 1,000 characters and translators 10 to 50 yuan. With the changes on the royalties policy, Fu's financial conditions went from bad to worse. In his last few years his health became very poor: his eyes became more near-sighted and he suffered from nervous breakdown and other diseases. A few years ago, he could translate more than 1,000 characters a day (Luo, 1984: 545) but now his translation work went very slow with only about 500 characters finished a day. And what's

¹ Qian Zhongshu (1910-1998) is one of the most influential scholars in contemporary China. His major works include the novel *Fortress Besieged* and the scholarly work *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters*. His *Lin Shu's Translation* is a major work among the translation studies literature in China.

worse, his translations could not be published or re-published because he was labeled a “rightist”. He had to eke out a living by the advance remuneration with the help of his friend Lou Shiyi (楼适夷), the deputy editor of the People’s Literature Publishing House. He needed money to go to hospital but his financial condition was so bad that he, a financially independent man had to ask for help from the government which made no reply.

The retranslation and revision of some works

Fu Lei loved art, so he insisted that his rendering be a work of art. His pursuit of perfection drove him to revise or retranslate some works he had translated before. For instance, he revised his translation of *Candide* eight times (Hong, 2009). The four-volume *John Christopher* was translated in 1937 and 1941. After the liberation, he retranslated it in 1952 and 1953. His distinguished translation of Old Father Goriot was first published in 1946. Then, the novel was retranslated and revised respectively in 1951 and 1963. Let’s use an example to illustrate the improvement of diction in his translation of Old Father Goriot in which there is such an expression: “Elle pue le service, l’office, l’hospice”. In the 1946 version, Fu’s translation is “它教你想起杯盘狼籍收拾饭桌的气息, 医院的气息”(ta jiao ni xiangqi beipanlangji shoushi fanzhuo de qixi, yiyuan de qixi, “It made you think of the smell of the cups and dishes strewn on the table which was being cleared, the smell of the hospital”), and in the 1951 and 1963 versions it is “那是刚吃过饭的饭厅味道, 救济院味道”(na shi gang chi guo fan de fanning weidao, jiujiyuan weidao, “It was the smell of the dining-room when the meal had just been finished, the smell of the poorhouse”) and “那是刚吃过饭的饭厅的气味, 酒菜和碗盏的气味, 救济院的气味”(na shi gang chi guo fan de fanning de qiwei, jiucai he wanzhan de qiwei, jiujiyuan de qiwei, “It was the smell of the dining-room when the meal had just been finished, the smell of the food and drink, the smell of the poorhouse”) (Zhou, 2001: 41-42).

The retranslations are more exact than the first translation in reproducing the original meaning in the fact that “医院” (yiyuan, hospital) was replaced by “救济院” (jiujiyuan, poorhouse) in the second translation and “酒菜和碗盏的气味” (the smell of the food and drink) was added in the third translation. The strengths of the final 1963 version lie in that the language tempo (Fu’s favorite word for “rhythm”) was improved by the addition of “的”, the symmetry and balance of the sentence structure were achieved by adding “酒菜和碗盏的气味” and the end rhyme was achieved by the repetition of “气味” which corresponds to the same ending sound of the original three nouns “service”, “l’office” and “l’hospice”. It often took several months or years for Fu Lei to revise his previous translations. His revised translations may be

regarded as retranslations because in revising he “returned to the source text” and modified his translations “with significant reference to the source text” (Pym, 2011: 90). Moreover, the above example supports the retranslation hypothesis that “later translations tend to be closer to their originals than first translations” (Williams and Chesterman, 2004: 78), which, at least, is the case with serious retranslations.

Good translations always come out of repeated revisions. Only responsible translators can always find out the imperfections in their translations and thus have a strong desire to revise them. For instance, in his first translation of Old Father Goriot, Fu found that, although the reproduction of the original meaning was generally acceptable, the dialogues were crude and stereotyped, the writing style was not smooth, the traces of the New Literature and Art were not totally removed, the rhythm and rhyme were not taken into consideration and the natural wholeness of the rendering was far from being reached. Therefore, he did a second translation of the novel. Anyhow, this second rendering was still far from being satisfactory. He exclaimed that art is long but one’s ability is short (Luo, 1984: 559).

Certainly, the production of a good translation, especially a good literary translation, requires some other prerequisites besides responsibility, such as having a high literary and artistic taste and accomplishment, a strong empathy with the author, a strong adaptability to authors of different styles and personalities. For instance, Lin Shu (林纾), a well-known translator of the late Qing Dynasty, had a high literary and artistic taste but his early and later translations are of different qualities. His early translations are very good, winning great success among Chinese readers because he had a strong responsibility in the initial stage of his translating which is evidenced in his preface to the magazine *Renditions* (《译林》): he wanted to use his translations to awaken his fellow countrymen to rise against the imperialist aggressors (Luo, 1984: 162). However, in his later life, Lin focused his attention on making money by means of translating, so the quality of his rendering became poor. As Qian Zhongshu said, Lin’s later rendering with “1,000 characters finished per hour”, became a commercial transaction performed by his “mint” (Luo, 1984: 711).

On the other hand, a translator with a strong responsibility but without a high artistic taste cannot produce a good text of literature. Today’s professional translators can turn out good technical texts which do not require a high artistic taste, but it goes beyond their potentials to produce a literary translation as good as those by Fu Lei. Fu loved art, so he hoped that his translation could become a work of art. His responsibility and great potentials of artistic talent ensure that his translations have so far been unsurpassed by any other translator in China. If we look at his translations closely, we may find that Romain Rolland is more suitable for him than Balzac though he had a strong ability to adapt

himself to different styles and his rendering of *Eugénie Grandet* is a masterwork. In terms of personality, preference and life experience, there is some similarity between Fu and Rolland. Both of them loved music and art, admired great artists and wanted to use the heroic deeds of these artists to inspire and awaken the world, which leads to Rolland's works on Beethoven, Tolstoy, Michelangelo, Mozart, and so on, and to Fu's translations of texts on art, artists and people of artistic temperament.

Fu's best rendering may be that of John Christopher. When he was a teacher in Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts, he began to translate *Life of Michelangelo* out of his ardent love of the author. This kind of love was deepened by Rolland's charm of personality and profound insights on art. After finishing the rendering, Fu began to communicate with Rolland, discussing the work and listening to Rolland's comments on his own work. In this way the translator got closer to the author and finished the latter's other biographies. On this basis, he began to translate John Christopher. The hero's experience and personality have much in common with Fu's own. The novel itself is like a great symphony which reflects the author's high musical taste. So the translator can understand the author and his hero thoroughly and finally a great translation work has been turned out by the translator's rigorous intellectual endeavors.

FU'S TRANSLATION LEGACY

Although Fu did not write a special work on translation, his conception of translation can be found in various paratexts, such as the translator's preface, his letters to friends, his essays to magazines and newspapers and his reports to government departments and conferences. On the other hand, his translations have had great influence on contemporary Chinese writers and common people.

His views on translation

At the beginning of the translator's preface of the second translation of *Old Father Goriot*, Fu has made a claim explicitly:

In terms of effect, translating is supposed to be like painting. What is sought for is not formal resemblance but spiritual resemblance (Luo, 1984: 558).

He continues:

Although the quality of translated literature differs from country to country, there has never been any French-style English translation or English-style French translation. Translation should be quite easy if the translator could retain the spirit of the source text by breaking the

structure and nature of the target language to represent the nature of the source language. Unfortunately, this kind of theory is rigid and mechanical and the result would be nothing-like (Luo, 1984: 558).

Fu offers an example to show that literal translation is not always possible and translators have to consider the usage of the target language. In Act 1, Scene 1 of *Hamlet*, there is such an expression: "Not a mouse stirring". The French rendering in the standard bilingual translation of the Complete Works by William Shakespeare is "Pas un chat". Here, "mouse" is not directly translated as "souris" but replaced by "chat" (cat).

Fu has noticed the distance between source and target texts. This distance is caused by the differences between the source and target language-cultures in word class, sentence structure, grammar and habit, figure of speech, metrical pattern, vulgarism, way of thinking, depth of feeling, point of view, custom, tradition, belief, social background, and so on. He argued that even the best translation is a little stronger or weaker than its original in flavor. When translating, translators can only shorten the distance as they can. If it is strong, it should not be too strong; if it is weak, it should not be too weak. Fu proposed a criterion for literary translation like this: "It seems that an ideal translation is the original author's writing in Chinese. In this way the meaning and spirit of the source text and the fluency and completeness of the translation can be considered at the same time, and there would be no such imperfections as the language choice impairing the original meaning or vice versa" (Luo, 1984: 559). However, this criterion is impossible to arrive at because a foreign author could not become a Chinese. How could we hope Shakespeare had become a Chinese to write his *Hamlet* in Chinese? Even if Shakespeare had become a Chinese, he would have faced the same language-culture barriers like other translators and the so-called "ideal translation" is still an impossibility.

Basically, Fu is a free-hander, emphasizing the achievement of spiritual resemblance between source and target texts, but he is not an absolute domesticator. He insisted that the foreign identity of the source text be preserved. Let's take the rendering of people's names. In 1963 Yang Jiang visited the Fu's and discussed some translation issues with Fu. Yang strongly hated the unnaturalness of translated names resulting from the foreignizing translation strategy. And what's worse, these translated names were not similar to the original ones in pronunciation. So, Yang wanted to make innovations and sinocize all foreign names just as Fu Donghua did in his translation of the American writer Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. And she also wanted to abbreviate all historical and geographical proper nouns with notes to explain them. Fu said 'No' (Yang, 1983). Clearly, he opposed to remove the foreign flavor in the source text even though his transliteration of people's names is not "standard" according to the current practical norms in

China.

He has some ideas on selection in translating. What is selected to be translated is an important issue for the success of a translator. Fu expressed two points in his 1957 article "Random Remarks on My Translation Experiences" published in *Weihui Newspaper* (Luo, 1984: 626-627). For one thing, translators should know their own strengths and weaknesses in terms of literary genres. Those who are not good at arguing and reasoning need not force themselves to translate theoretical books; those who cannot write poems shall not render poetry, otherwise the poetic flavor of the original would be lost and the rendering might even be unlike prose. For another, in terms of literary schools, translators should know which school, romanticism or classicism, realism or modernism is suitable for them. Which writers in the same school? Which works by the same writer? Translators' boundary of ability and range of adaptability can only be determined by practice. Even if a translator translated tens of thousands of words, they should give up the rendering if they found that they could not adapt themselves to it. Adaptability is one thing and extra processing is another. The first criterion for adaptability can be measured by whether translators love the source text or not because passion and understanding are mutually causative. The second criterion for adaptability is translators' artistic foresight. Without considerably deep insights, one may think that they can adapt to the work but actually it is nothing but wishful thinking.

In his 1951 letter to Stephen C. Soong (宋淇/林以亮), Fu has argued that the most difficult thing to deal with is the rendering of the simplest, clearest and shortest sentences. He gave an example. The French "Elle est charmant" means "She is charming". But for him it is almost impossible to represent the tone, sentiment and ambience of the original. And this type of sentences is closely related to the context. If the above elements cannot be transferred successfully, the contextual aura and spirit would be lost (Luo, 1984: 545). As for long-sentence translation, it is not very difficult. What is a difficult lie in the arrangement of the sentence focus. The original long sentence may contain a short main clause but three or four subordinate clauses together with some participle phrases. In the rendering all of them are split off, resulting in the obscurity of the focus and non-focus which leads to the loss of the focus. The translation of individual words is as difficult as that of sentence translation.

The commoner and simpler the words, the more difficult the rendering, such as "virtue", "spiritual", "moral", "sentimental", "noble", "saint", "humble", and so on. On the other hand, some abstract nouns cannot find their equivalents in Chinese, such as "La vraie grandeur d'âme" (the genuine grandeur of the soul) whose literal translation "心灵真正的伟大" should be adjusted to "真正伟大的心灵" by changing the word order so as to

suit the Chinese language habit (Luo, 1984: 546).

Another difficulty is that many Chinese characters have the same pronunciation which may give rise to phonological and even visual awkwardness. For instance, if "这个" (*zhege*, this) and "个别" (*gebie*, individual) are put together, the two neighbouring "个" are difficult to read, with a bad visual effect. Chinese characters are monosyllabic, each roughly enjoying the same sound volume. But in English and French "the", "that", "ce", and "cet" are all short sounds. In a sentence, the difference of sound volume between an article and a noun is considerable. Therefore, the difference between phonetic focus and non-focus in foreign languages is remarkable. However, it is not the case with the Chinese language. This is another difficulty in dealing with focus and non-focus in the translation from a foreign language to Chinese (Luo, 1984: 546).

Fu has also discussed the weakness of *Putonghua* (普通话, Mandarin Chinese). He has claimed that *Putonghua* is a kind of artificial language which is based on the Beijing dialect but which has removed all colloquial elements from it. And the colloquial element is the life and soul of a dialect. *Putonghua* can only express meanings but cannot convey feelings in a vivid, delicate and elegant way. If translators use it to render the dialogues of the source text, the original vividness will be lost. But the use of the colloquial element of a dialect in translating will completely obliterate the original localism, thus transforming foreigners into Chinese people (Luo, 1984: 546-547). Here, Fu poses a problem or dilemma for translators between achievement of the expressive vividness and preservation of the original local identity. The Hungarian scholar Kinga Klaudy (2003) has also discussed the issue of reproducing regional dialects in the original. It seems that she has held that the "regional equivalents of the regional words and dialect" exist in the target language-culture (Klaudy, 2003: 39). For instance, she has argued that it is reasonable for Imre Makai, the translator of Solohov's *Silent Don*, to use the dialect of Hajdúság (a county in Hungary) to represent the Don dialect used by proud, brave and free Cossacks. Thus, the "Don-like atmosphere" had been reflected successfully in the rendering. In my opinion, Hungarian readers will immediately think of Hajdúság and its people, instead of the Don dialect and the Cossacks when they read the dialect in the translation. However, the similarity in qualities between the Hajdúság people and the Cossacks facilitates the target-language readers' understanding of the Cossacks in *Silent Don*. This may be a compromise for translators to deal with the dialectal elements in source texts.

Fu has also noticed the difference of mentality of different nations. Western languages are analytic and prose-like but Chinese is synthetic and poetry-like. These two different aesthetic principles determine that their vocabularies cannot match each other well. Fu has devoted attention to translation theories. He agrees with

Alexander Tytler's views on translation. Many of Tytler's ideas had already been thought of and advocated by Fu before he read *Essay on the Principles of Translation*. Tytler objects to using the literal translation strategy indiscriminately. If translators cannot find an equivalent in the target language for an original idiom, they can only express its meaning in easy and simple language. Fu supports this method and he believes that over 90 percent of Chinese translators tend to use literal translation in these cases. He has claimed that such rendering would be "intolerable" and thus unacceptable. Fu thinks that in many cases translators are not bold in going away from the original literal meaning and sentence structure. Translators' boldness presupposes the thorough understanding and grasp of the original spirit and feeling tone, which implies that the imprudent boldness can just lead to the failure in reproducing the original spirit. He believes that Tytler's metaphor is quite logical that the words in a dictionary are just like chemical symbols. What translators render is not the symbols such as H₂O but the things they represent such as "water" (Klaudy, 2003: 548).

Although Fu is a free-hander, he does not ignore the formal features. He thinks that the translator should try their best to keep the original syntax. But in any case the introduced syntax should make readers feel that it is good Chinese even though it is new and fresh. The famous modern writer Old House (老舍) is the only writer who employed Western long sentences to produce his works but his language is good Chinese. Fu implies that translators can learn a lot from Lao She's works when introducing or importing the new form or syntax of a foreign text (Klaudy, 2003: 548). Here, Fu's discussion of making a balance between formal faithfulness and expressive naturalness is full of implications for contemporary translators, many of whom tend to use Lawrence Venuti's so-called "resistant translating strategy". Fu claims that an important function of translation is to enrich the target language in terms of vocabulary and syntax. The introduction of the new concepts and fresh ways of expression from a foreign language-culture can achieve this goal. The syntactic experiments should mainly be conducted by translators but not writers whose main task lies in creating fascinating ideas instead of producing new syntax. The syntax is the only way to reproduce the original style. If translators ignore the representation of the style, the rendering must be like flavorless plain water.

The influence of his translation

Fu's translations have been influencing middle-school students and writers for years and his views on translation began to attract translators and translation researchers in recent years. The image of the heroine of *Eugénie Grandet* as a typical miser has so far been

deeply rooted in my heart even though over thirty years has passed. When I was a teenager, I began to read the extracts of Fu's translations in the textbooks. But at that time I did not give attention to the translator but to the author, the plot and characters of the story and the language. This may be the general case with middle school students when they read translated texts. It is extremely difficult for a translator's work to enter the middle-school philological textbooks in China. There is a very rigorous system for the examination and selection of translated texts. According to my impression, about a dozen texts have been provided for students. I clearly remember I read the fragments of Fu's *Eugénie Grandet* and *Old Father Goriot*. The list of selected translated texts changes with the times but Fu's translations have always remained in the textbooks. My daughter is now reading his translations as I did many years ago. Because of the typical character and vivid language in these texts, the names of the heroes and heroines and some vivid expressions have become students' pet phrases. For instance, if I find that someone is miserly, I would call him or her "Grandet". Certainly, what I have used is not the original name but Fu's translation "葛朗台" (*Ge lang tai*). In the past fifty years billions of students have read his translations.

So far as his influence on Chinese writers is concerned, Balzac is the bridge. For those writers who want to know Balzac and his realist works and who do not know French, they have several alternatives. In China Balzac's works have been translated by some translators. But Fu is the best among them. Just as Professor Chen Sihe (陈思和) pointed out, compared with the works by other old French-Chinese translators, Fu's rendering is easier to read and more suited to repeated reading and it seems that it conveys a kind of spiritual atmosphere produced by an Oriental who has digested the Western culture (see the preface of *A Biography of Fu Lei* by Jin Mei, 1993). Therefore, writers turn to Fu's translations to know Balzac's works. In this kind of reading, they will undoubtedly be influenced by Fu's language which is labeled as "Fu Lei style" by Chen and other scholars. His language is characterized by fluency, rich variety of diction, change of colors, purity, freshness and wisdom. The writers Wang Xiaobo (王小波), Ye Zhaoyan (叶兆言) and Li Chaoquan (李朝全) have claimed that Fu had influenced them. In his essay "My Teachers", Wang, one of the major contemporary Chinese novelists, has praised that Fu's language is good and acknowledged that Fu is one of his teachers. Ye have been attracted by the rhythm, feeling tone and writing style peculiar to Fu's translation (Ye, 2008). Li has mentioned several books which had played an important role in improvement of his literary accomplishment (Li, 2008). They are John Christopher, *Eugénie Grandet* and *The Philosophy of Art*.

Fu's great achievements lead to the production of a few biographies about him which include *A Biography of Fu Lei* by Jin Mei (1993), *A Special Biography of Fu Lei* by

Su Liqun (2000) and *A Pictorial Biography of Fu Lei* by Ye Yonglie (2005). Fu's translations and translation views have been attracting the interest of many translators and scholars among whom the representatives are Xu Jun (许钧) and his former PhD student Song Xuezhì (宋学智). Professor Xu is the vice-president of the Translators Association of China and one of the translators of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. He has written many articles on Fu Lei which were published in magazines and newspapers, such as *Chinese Translators Journal* and *Chinese Reading Weekly*. Song is now a professor of Nanjing Normal University and his PhD project which made a comprehensive study of Fu's translation of John Christopher was listed in the country's 2008 Top Hundred PhD Theses in natural and social sciences. According to the CNKI, the world's largest dynamic online database, there are over 350 papers and theses on Fu Lei by the end of August 2010, more than 100 of which have discussed Fu's translations or his views on translation from a variety of perspectives, such as aesthetics (Shen, 2008), aesthetics of reception (Shao, 2008), paratexts (Xiu, 2008), translator's subjectivity (Zhang, 2009), ecotranslatology (Hu 2009), modern Translation Studies (Song, 2008), translator's cultivation in art (Huang and Wang, 2010), comparison with James S. Holmes (Wang, 2008), and so on.

The year 2008 is the 100th anniversary of Fu Lei's birth. The international seminar entitled "Fu Lei and Translation" was held at Nanjing University between the 15th and 18th of May and attended by over 180 experts, scholars and writers at home and abroad. The seminar discussed Fu Lei's life, spirit and translation achievements, covering many fields, such as Fu's spirit and his artistic life, Fu's translation and its modern significance and its social influence, the thought and social significance of Fu's translation, Fu's conception of translation and readers, the poetics of Fu's translation, the effect of Fu's classical translations on Chinese writers, Fu Lei's Family Letters and its influence, the significance of research on Fu Lei in intercultural communication, and so on. To celebrate the occasion, the *Chinese Translators Journal* devoted a special column in its 2008 fourth issue to publish six articles by writers, publishers and scholars to commemorate Fu's unique contributions in the field of translation from French to Chinese.

CONCLUSION

As the only freelance translator in the 1950s and 1960s, Fu lived a very special life. His charm does not only lie in his achievements in translation, but also in his martyred suicide and his musical tutorial of his son Fu Cong, which is reflected in the well-known *Fu Lei's Family Letters* which is now recommended as a necessary reading for middle-school students. His selection of source texts is a

combination of his interest and the ideological constraint of the times. The fact that the quality of his translations has almost always remained at the same level and has not been influenced by the changes of the financial conditions indicates that a responsible and conscientious translator of all times will fight against the hard times and put the quality of their translation in the first place. Fu's repeated revisions of his translations show that even a translator with high literary and artistic taste may not produce a canonical translation in their first translation of a work. The great influence of Fu's translations on people is a natural reward for his hard work, which implies that with the progress of the times, the achievements of a forgotten translator will sooner or later be recognized by the world. The popular discussion of Fu's conception of translation indicates that the convincing theories come from excellent translators instead of pure theorists. Unfortunately, outstanding translators seldom formulate their own theoretical system by writing books on translation. Their viewpoints are scattered in various paratexts. In my opinion, the contemporary Translation Studies is supposed to give more attention to the historical dimension of the translator phenomenon, especially the phenomenon of those excellent translators in special societies and times, unearthing their invaluable ideas and discussing and developing them extensively and intensively.

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