

# Unreliable Paratexts in Intralingual Translation: A Case Study of an Excerpted English Translation of *San Guo Yan Yi*<sup>1</sup>

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## *Abstract*

This paper contains a charge of plagiarism in which Cheung Yik-man, the translator of a classic Chinese novel *San Guo Yan Yi*, failed to acknowledge the existing translation by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang while Cheung's retranslation is extremely close to Yangs' with some changes only in the first two chapters. In this case, paratexts to Cheung Yik-man's version covered up the behaviour of plagiarism, which is different from Lawrence Venuti's discussion of paratexts' function in his 2004 essay as "an immediate form of intertextuality" and "make[s] explicit the competing interpretation". This article examines the unreliability of paratexts in intralingual translation, based on a case in English translations of *San Guo Yan Yi*: Cheung Yik-man's translation of "The Battle of the Red Cliff" excerpted from the novel.

*Keywords: retranslation, paratexts, plagiarism, San Guo Yan Yi, English translation*

## 1. Paratexts and Retranslation

This essay contains two issues, a reflection upon paratexts and a charge of plagiarism. Paratexts, in Gérard Genette's now classic definition, are the "accompanying

productions”, both within and outside a book, which “enable a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public” (Genette, 1997, p. 1). They can be divided into peritexts—“within the same volume are such element as the title or the preface and sometimes elements inserted into the interstices of the text, such as chapter titles or certain notes” (Genette, 1997, pp. 4-5) and epitexts—“all those messages that, at least originally, are located outside the book generally with the help of the media (interviews, conversations) or under cover of private communications (letters, diaries, and others)” (Genette, 1997, p. 5). In this essay, I will be dealing with the paratexts accompanying an excerpted retranslation of a classic Chinese novel *San Guo Yan Yi* known in English as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

As for the charge of plagiarism, it is levelled at the translator Cheung Yik-man in connection with his part-translation, published in Hong Kong in 1972, of the novel *San Guo Yan Yi*. The plagiarism that I have detected does not take the form of a translation which fails to acknowledge the original on which it is based. Rather, it is a case of one translator plagiarising an existing translation. Because two translations are involved, one coming after its predecessor, the second translation is, by definition, a retranslation. It would be retranslation even without the incidence of plagiarism because there is a much earlier complete English version of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* which both our plagiarist and the translators being plagiarised explicitly acknowledge.

There has recently been a degree of critical attention paid to retranslations. Recently Cecilia Alvstad and Alexandra Assis Rosa (2015) edited a special of the journal *Target* on retranslation. According to Koskinen and Paloposki (2010, p. 294), retranslation as a product “denotes a second or later translation of a single source text into the same target language”. As early as 1935 the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges wrote a spirited essay, “The Translators of *The One Thousand and One Nights*”, in which he interpreted retranslations in antagonistic terms. The successive retranslators of the *Arabian Nights*, in Borges’s reading, marked the difference between their own and their predecessors’ version in order to displace and even demolish their predecessors.

Retranslation can be regarded as part of interlingual translation as in most cases retranslation takes place between two or more languages; lots of translation scholars rely on Jakobson's three kinds of translation (intralingual translation, interlingual translation and intersemiotic translation) for their definitions of retranslation, but in fact they mostly focus on Jakobson's concept of interlingual translation. Yet, when retranslation is generated within the same language, as the prior translation, even sometimes very close to the prior one, it involves *intralingual translation*. Jakobson builds on Pierce's theory of signs and meaning; he argues that "the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign" (Jakobson, 1959/2000, p. 114). In his words, "intralingual translation or rewording is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language" (ibid.). The definition by Jakobson makes intralingual translation still an ambiguous term which leaves certain space to extend the understanding of intralingual translation, to describe the paratexts to the translated texts and to discuss some borderline issues within the scope of the term such as an extreme closeness between retranslated texts.

The line I will take here regarding retranslation, and a plagiarising translation as a special instance of it, takes its cue from Lawrence Venuti's essay "Retranslations: The Creation of Value" (2004). In Venuti's reading, both translation and retranslation are value-creating processes: "the value-creating process takes the form of an interpretation inscribed in a source text" (Venuti, 2004, p. 96). A translation adds value by articulating a particular interpretation of its source text. A retranslation adds value by virtue of the difference between its interpretation of the source text and that contained in the preceding translation(s).

Venuti makes it clear near the beginning of his essay that he is concerned solely with retranslators who are aware of the existence of earlier translations of the same source text. In many cases, he suggests, the translator will use a paratext to highlight the value added by his or her new translation vis-à-vis the predecessor. When this happens, the paratext contains "a more immediate form of intertextuality" (Venuti, 2004, p. 105) in that, apart from the intertextual echoes linking the retranslation to its source text and to one or more existing translations, the paratext "signals its status as a retranslation and make[s] explicit the competing interpretation that the retranslator

has tried to inscribe in the source text” (ibid.). According to this statement, “immediate” and “explicit” imply that the paratexts unveil the relation between the original text, the first translator and the retranslator in a more direct way and make it easier for readers to figure them out.

Is a paratext always “an immediate form” of intertextuality? What less visible links might be involved? I have no reason to take issue with Venuti’s observations on the value added by retranslations and on the role of a retranslation’s paratext as foregrounding the new interpretation which the retranslation offers. However, the case I want to discuss in the following pages exceeds the relatively straightforward scenario he presents, and it puts the question of added value in a different light. My case involves a retranslator who, entirely along the lines sketched by Venuti, acknowledges a predecessor and marks the distance separating his own rendering from that predecessor’s. At the same time, however, the retranslator remains silent about another predecessor upon whose work the retranslator relies to such an extent that the charge of plagiarism imposes itself. In what follows I will seek to add to Venuti’s argument, based on my case study of the English translations of the classic Chinese novel *San Guo Yan Yi* (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*).

Let me first introduce the original Chinese novel at the heart of this whole affair. *San Guo Yan Yi*, composed by Luo Guan Zhong in the 13th to 14th century, is a historical novel based on *San Guo Zhi* (*Records of the Three Kingdoms*) written by the historian and writer Chen Shou (233 – 297). The novel outlines the turbulent events of the period from 168 to 280 CE, when China’s Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) was riven, through decades of bloody strife, into three separate states nearly constantly at war with each other. The novel contains one hundred and twenty chapters with more than 750,000 words, describing the waxing and waning of the states and depicting around five hundred characters, some of which are known to almost every Chinese household, including the resourceful Zhuge Liang, the crafty Cao Cao, the proud Guan Yu, the forthright Zhang Fei, and the generous Liu Bei.

*San Guo Yan Yi* was transmitted overseas at a comparatively early date. The earliest translation into a foreign language was into Japanese in 1689. In English, translations of excerpts appeared in various periodicals as early as 1820. Apart

from the two full prose translations by C. H. Brewitt-Taylor in 1925 and by Moss Roberts in 1991, I have found 28 excerpted translations and adaptations in various forms, including partial and abridged renderings, prose and drama versions, as well as extracts inserted in journal articles or in monographs. The cases discussed in this paper are the one by Brewitt-Taylor of 1925, the one by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang of 1962 and another by Cheung Yik-man of 1972.

Let me say a few words about C. H. Brewitt-Taylor's translations here. The translator gave a two-page long (two columns) general review of the original book *San Guo Yan Yi* in 1891 published in *China Review*, in which the author elaborates several aspects in detail including the historical background of the book, his interpretation of its genre, the plot of the narrative, characters, battles and armies, as well as the methods of warfare and strategy in the novel. It is a quite well-known review which was referred to by later excerpted translations like the version of Z. Q. Parker (1925), who mentioned the impact of Brewitt-Taylor's review on his own excerpted translation. Brewitt-Taylor produced three partial translations of *San Guo Yan Yi* in *China Review* around the 1890s before his full translation came out in 1925. Generally, it may be said that Brewitt-Taylor made his own voice much more discernible in his 1925 full-text translation. This version demonstrated considerable fidelity to the original text without any commentary from the translator's own perspective to bridge the narrative, while his previous excerpted translations contained more omissions, adaptations and notes to explain certain cultural-specific elements in the text. Apart from the names of characters, Brewitt-Taylor attempted to retain all the details and make the book readable as a novel in English.

## **2. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's Translation**

I would like firstly to describe an excerpted translation which can be believed, beyond reasonable doubt, to be a previous translation from which Cheung Yik-man quoted without acknowledgement. A Chinese couple Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang selected chapters 43 to 50 of the novel *San Guo Yan Yi* and published their translation in January and February 1962 under the title "Selections from Classics: *The Battle*

*of the Red Cliff* in *Chinese Literature*, a journal based in Beijing and founded by the Chinese Foreign Languages Bureau and Foreign Language Press in 1951. The translation was later edited and included in the collection *Three Classic Chinese Novels* in 1981 in the *Panda Book* series, which was designed to introduce Chinese literature to the West.

Preceding the main translated text in the Yangs' version there is a one-page long introduction as a kind of translator's note or preface. Though the introduction is unsigned, the phrase "our translation is made from..." in the last paragraph shows that the translators themselves were its authors. The first four paragraphs centre on the plot and characters of the novel; the following two relate to other relevant articles in the journal and to the edition of the original text which they refer to. A sentence in the last paragraph is worth mentioning: "A few verses interposed in the text have been cut" (Yang & Yang, 1962, p. 41). They did not speak of any other changes or adaptations in their translation, so it may be assumed that the deletion of a few verses is the only obvious change they made to the original text.

Comparing the Yangs' version with Brewitt-Taylor's, we can see the disparity in the language and the style as a whole. Brewitt-Taylor's translation is more like an English novel with quite a few additions and minor adaptations. The Yangs' version is generally word-for-word and employs a simple style with omission or simplification of details at times. Here is an example.

鲁肃听了，开口不得，把些言语支吾了半晌，别孔明而回。孔明嘱曰：“望子敬在公瑾面前勿言亮先知此事。恐公瑾心怀妒忌，又要寻事害亮。” (Luo, 1973, p. 395)

**Brewitt-Taylor:** Lu Su was quite dumbfounded; he stayed a little time longer passing the time in making empty remarks, and then took his leave. As he was going away K'ung-ming cautioned him against letting Chou Yu know that his new rival had guessed his ruse. "I know he is jealous and he only seeks some chance to do me harm." (1925, Vol. 1, p. 481)

**Yangs:** Flabbergasted, Lu Su made small talk for a while before taking his leave.

"Please don't tell Chou Yu that I knew this," said Chuko Liang. "He would be jealous and

find some excuse to kill me?” (1962, (1), p. 80)

The original passage, from chapter 46, centers around the characters Lu Su and Kongming who asked Lu Su not to tell his words to the jealous Zhou Yu. We can easily see from the quotation marks that Kongming’s words are in direct speech in the original text. The Yangs’ version keeps the original form while Brewitt-Taylor renders the first part of Kongming’s words in indirect speech as “K’ung-ming cautioned him against letting Chou Yu know that his new rival had guessed his ruse”. In fact, such kinds of shifts between direct and indirect speech are not unusual in Brewitt-Taylor’s translation. Possibly, in Brewitt-Taylor’s eyes, the changes make the narration more fluent and the language more native.

Also, for the first sentence of this example “鲁肃听了，开口不得，把些言语支吾了半晌”，Brewitt-Taylor renders it in detail with words like “a little time longer”, “passing the time” and “empty remarks”: “Lu Su was quite dumbfounded; he stayed a little time longer passing the time in making empty remarks”. We can see that the translator tries to depict the character’s action and emotion in an active and elaborated way. In comparison, the Yangs’ version is more succinct: “Flabbergasted, Lu Su made small talk for a while”. Here is another example of this difference.

此人有夺天地造化之法、鬼神不测之术！若留此人，乃东吴祸根也。及早杀却，免生他日之忧。(Luo, 1973, p. 424)

**Brewitt-Taylor:** Really the man has power over the heavens and authority over the earth; his methods are incalculable, beyond the ken of god or devil. He cannot be allowed to live to be a danger to our land of Wu. We must slay him soon to fend off later evils. (1925, Vol. 1, p. 511)

**Yangs:** Why, the fellow has the power to change the course of Nature: he is more than human! If we let him live, he will be the ruin of our state. I had better kill him now to avoid trouble later. (1962, (2), p. 44)

This example is also a representative example of the simplification in Yangs' version. When dealing with the phrase “天地造化之法、鬼神不测之术”, Brewitt-Taylor's translation is almost word-for-word to the original text: “power over the heavens and authority over the earth; his methods are incalculable, beyond the ken of god or devil”, while the Yangs' version, “the power to change the course of Nature”, omits the original images of god and devil, heaven and earth, and is then followed by their own interpretation or addition in the phrase “he is more than human!”. By and large, compared with Brewitt-Taylor's translation, the Yangs' retranslation presents a different style, following the original text in terms of grammar and principal meaning while omitting details possibly to reduce repetitions or to avoid any exaggeration in the translated text beyond the original author.

### **3. Cheung Yik-man's Version**

Cheung Yik-man self-published his translation entitled *Romance of the Three Kingdoms: From Chapter 43 to Chapter 50* (三国志演义精华) in 1972, printed by the Datong Printing Company (大同印务公司) in Hong Kong. It was reprinted in 1986 in mainland China by the Youyi Publishing Company (中国友谊出版公司). The first edition of 1972 is bilingual with both the Chinese and the English text in parallel; prior to the main text, it has forewords by four Chinese scholars and the translator's note.

#### **3.1 Translator's preface**

I will first elaborate on the translator's own preface. Cheung Yik-man's preface is one page and a half long with three paragraphs, justifying the changes he has made in this version compared with previous work and speaking of his plans for more translations in the future. He claims that his translation is more loyal to the original text than that by Brewitt-Taylor:

... the difference between my translation and that by C. H. Brewitt-Taylor is that my translation is a line for line and sometimes, if it is possible, word for word translation,

whereas the other translation is only an inaccurate paraphrase in which it is very easy for any Chinese reader with a little knowledge of English to find out the inexcusable mistakes. A translation with such mistakes must be a stumbling block for the foreigners to have a thorough understanding of our Chinese classics. I confess my translation is by no means the best one, but I profess it to be a faithful one which, I am perfectly sure, is a requisite for the foreigners to study the Chinese literature and culture. (Cheung, 1972, p. 29)

At the very beginning of his preface, Cheung directly clarifies the differences between his version and Brewitt-Taylor's translation. He uses some quite strong words to comment on Brewitt-Taylor's work and to justify his retranslation, such as "inexcusable mistakes" and "stumbling block". Though Cheung claims that his translation originated from his reflections on the errors in Brewitt-Taylor's translation, he does not say a word about the Yangs' 1962 version. Given the reputation and impact of *Chinese Literature* abroad at that time and the obvious copying on the textual level in his version which I will demonstrate below, Cheung's deliberate omission suggests an attempt to cover up his copying.

Cheung then talks about his plans to translate more works of ancient Chinese literature, since he is not satisfied with the inaccuracies in previous efforts by other translators.

As for the mistakes in C. H. Brewitt-Taylor's translation, I plan to write a special article about them. I also plan to publish my translation of other chapters of this novel in the near future.

In fact, it is quite necessary for us to have faithful translations for the Chinese classics such as "Water Margin" (水浒传) and "The Dream of the Red Chamber" (红楼梦) because in these two present translations by other writers I have also found out many serious mistakes that not only would make such lively and interesting novels dull but would distort the real meaning of the authors. It is my hope that after finishing the translation of this novel, some day I may have an opportunity to devote myself to this task. (Cheung, 1972, p. 29)

Unfortunately, I have not found any evidence that he fulfilled his ambition of translating other Chinese literary works<sup>2</sup>. In terms of the two Chinese literary works Cheung mentions in the preface, two full translations of *Shui Hu Zhuan* (*Water Margin*) were published before 1972: one in 1933 by Pearl S. Buck, which was heavily criticized for its errors and inaccuracies; and one in 1937 by J. H. Jackson. A better full translation by Chinese-naturalized scholar Sidney Sha (沙博理) was published in 1980, which cannot have been read by Cheung before he wrote this preface. As for *Hong Lou Meng* (*The Dream of the Red Chamber*), after several early partial translations, two full versions highly praised in academic circles were published in 1973 and 1978 respectively, both after Cheung's preface. According to the English title applied by Cheung in the preface, it is likely that the version to which Cheung referred is *The Dream of the Red Chamber* by Florence and Isabel McHugh, published in 1958. So the previous works with "serious mistakes" as Cheung said in the preface may refer to those early translations of the two novels and it is likely that Cheung did not have time to produce his own translation of *Hong Lou Meng* when the two full-text versions by David Hawkes and the Yangs respectively came out in 1973 and 1976, since these two works diminished the significance of his intended retranslation.

### 3.2 Textual comparison

Textually, it is evident that Cheung Yik-man copied the Yangs' version. Let me compare Cheung Yik-man's version with the translations of the Yangs and Brewitt-Taylor. The source text is from chapter 44 of the novel, when the character Kong Ming is replying to a brutal interrogation from a Wu advisor.

儒有小人君子之别。君子之儒，忠君爱国，守正恶邪，务使泽及当时，名留后世。若夫小人之儒，惟务雕虫，专工翰墨，青春作赋，皓首穷经；笔下虽有千言，胸中实无一策。(Luo, 1973, p. 377)

**Brewitt-Taylor:** Kung-ming replied, "There are scholars and scholars. There is the noble scholar, loyal and patriotic, of perfect rectitude and a hater of any crookedness. The

concern of such a scholar is to act in full sympathy with his day and leave to future ages a fine reputation. There is the scholar of the mean type, a pedant and nothing more. He labours constantly with his pen, in his callow youth composing odes and in hoary age still striving to understand the classical book completely. Thousands of words flow from his pen but there is not a solid idea in his breast.” (1925, Vol. 1, p. 453)

**Yangs:** Zhuge Liang retorted, “There are two types of scholar: the noble and the mean. A True scholar is loyal to his sovereign and loves his country, abiding by the right and hating evil, eager to benefit the men of his time and leave a good name to posterity. A mean scholar on the other hand devotes himself to trivialities. All he can do is flourish a pen, wasting his youth writing poetry and studying the classics till his hair turns white. A thousand words flow from his pen, but there is not one sound principle in his head.” (1962, (1), p. 48)

**Cheung:** Then Zhuge Liang replied, “There are noble scholars and mean scholars. The noble scholars are loyal to their sovereign and love their country, abiding by the right and hating evil, eager to benefit the men of his time and leave a fine reputation to future ages. However, the mean scholars devote themselves, only to literary trivial skill and labour only with pen[sic], in their youth composing odes and in their hoary age striving to understand the classical books completely. Although a thousand words may flow from each of their pens yet there is not a single plan in each of their heads.” (1972, p. 20)

If a comparison between the translation by the Yangs and that by Cheung Yik-man is attempted, it can be seen that the two versions are remarkably similar in language and structure. In this example, on the textual level, Cheung’s version copies both Brewitt-Taylor’s and the Yangs’ translation, with slight modifications. For instance, when translating the phrase “名留后世” [leave a good reputation to future ages], Cheung copied the expressions in Brewitt-Taylor’s version “future ages” and “fine reputation”; while in translating the phrase “忠君爱国” [loyal to the king and love the country], he copied Yangs’ version “loyal to his sovereign and loves his country”. However, a subtle mistake reveals his inconsistency. Brewitt-Taylor uses subjects and

related verbs in the plural form, such as “noble scholars”, while the Yangs’ version applies the singular form, such as “a true scholar is...”. But Cheung seems to be less cautious when referring to the two translations, thus making his own version incorrect on a grammatical level. Cheung translates the first sentence of this passage as “There are noble scholars and mean scholars” using the plural form, but then continues with “The noble scholars are loyal to..., eager to benefit the people of **his** time and leave a fine reputation to future ages”, when he tries to imitate the Yangs’ version: “eager to benefit the men of his time and leave a good name to posterity”. The highlighted word shows his inconsistency.

The title of chapter 43: “诸葛亮舌战群儒，鲁子敬力排众议” (Luo, 1973, p. 372)

**Brewitt-Taylor:** CHUKO LIANG DISPUTES WITH THE SCHOLARS: LU SU DENOUNCES THE MAJORITY OPINION (1925, Vol. 1, p. 447)

**Yangs:** Chuge Liang Worsts the Scholars in Argument Lu Su Rejects the Majority Opinion (1962, (1), p. 41)

**Cheung:** Chuge Liang Defeats the Scholars in Argument Lu Su Rejects the Majority Opinion (1972, p. 1)

Cheung’s version remains almost the same as the Yangs’ except for a single difference in a verb’s translation: “defeats” in Cheung’s version versus “worsts” in the Yangs’. By contrast, the Yangs’ version is different from Brewitt-Taylor’s not only in lexical choices but also in grammatical structure. Collocations such as “worst... in argument” in the Yangs’ version versus “disputes with” in Brewitt-Taylor’s reveal their different choices in the translation process. But the copying by Cheung can be discerned in the almost identical nouns, verbs and structure.

The examples above illustrate the close similarities and even identity between Cheung’s and the Yangs’ versions in chapters 43 and 44, and the way in which Cheung copied both Brewitt-Taylor’s and the Yangs’ translations at times. Here is another

example in chapter 44.

**Brewitt-Taylor:** Ts'ao Ts'ao and his hordes are encamped up the river. He has just sent letters asking our lord to hunt with him in Chianghsia. He may have a desire to absorb this country but, if so, the details of his designs are still secret. We prayed our master to give in his submission and so avoid the horrors of war, but now Lu Su has returned bringing with him the Commander-in-Chief of Liu Pei's army, Chuko Liang. He, desiring to avenge himself for the recent defeat, has talked our lord into a mind for war and Lu Su persists in supporting him. They only await your final decision. (1925, Vol. 1, p. 459)

**Yang's:** Tsao Tsao is encamped with a million men up the River Han. The other day he invited our lord to hunt with him in Chianghsia. Though he may have designs of our territory, he has not disclosed them yet. We have advised our lord to surrender to avert disaster from our land. However, Lu Su has brought Chuko Liang, adviser to Liu Pei, back from Chianghsia. Thirsting for revenge on Tsao Tsao, he has goaded our master into preparing for war; yet Lu Su is too ignorant to realize this. The matter is awaiting your decision. (1962, (1), p. 56)

**Cheung:** Tsao Tsao with a million men is encamped up the River Han. The other day Tsao Tsao sent a letter here asking our lord to hunt with him in Chianghsia. Though he may have designs to absorb our territory, he has not disclosed them yet. We have advised our lord to surrender to avoid disaster of our land. But Lu Su has brought Chuko Liang, adviser of Liu Pei, back from Chianghsia. He, thirsting for revenge on Tsao Tsao for the recent defeat, has goaded our lord into preparing for war; yet Lu Su is too ignorant to realize this. They are waiting for your final decision. (1972, p. 38)

The original paragraph is uttered by Zhang Zhao, a Wu advisor, who is analyzing the battle against Cao's army. Comparing Cheung's translation with the Yang's version, we can see similar or even the same expressions more than once. For example, in the Yang's translation, the sentence "Thirsting for revenge on Tsao Tsao, he has goaded our master into preparing for war; yet Lu Su is too ignorant to realize

this” was copied in Cheung’s version with slight modifications as “He, thirsting for revenge on Tsao Tsao for the recent defeat, has goaded our lord into preparing for war”. Another example, in the Yangs’ version, there is a sentence “We have advised our lord to surrender to avert disaster from our land”, while in Cheung’s version the only difference is the replacement of “avert” by “avoid”. Also, Cheung’s version does some subtle adjusting by making use of words in Brewitt-Taylor’s version. For instance, the phrase “sent a letter here asking our lord” in the second sentence refers to “sent letters asking our lord” in Brewitt-Taylor’s translation. It is highly likely that Cheung intended to make a difference from the Yangs’ version which renders it as “invited our lord” so as to make his copying of the Yangs’ not too obvious. However, Cheung’s modification of Brewitt-Taylor’s phrase here changes the original meaning, since “letters” means men who are in charge of delivering messages while “letter” means a paper edition of a message usually written in a formal way. It is not at all difficult to trace Cheung’s copying of the Yangs’ translation through numerous similar or identical expressions and slight modifications as an attempt to cover up the copying.

Moreover, from chapter 45 to chapter 50, Cheung’s version remains the same as the Yangs’, except for the notes which are more numerous in the Yangs’ translation than in Cheung’s. Here is an example of the identity. The original sentence is quoted from the very start of chapter 47.

**Brewitt-Taylor:** This K’an Tse was from Shanyin, a son of a humble family. He loved books, but as he was too poor to buy he used to borrow. He had a wonderfully tenacious memory, was very eloquent and no coward. (1925, Vol. 1, p. 491)

**Yangs:** This K’an Tse was a native of Shanyin in the province of Guiji. Son of a humble family, he was so eager to study that even when working as a hired hand he used to borrow books, and what he had once read he never forgot. He was an eloquent and fearless youth. (1962, (2), p. 21)

**Cheung:** This K’an Tse was a native of Shanyin in the province of Guiji. Son of a humble

family, he was so eager to study that even when working as a hired hand he used to borrow books, and what he had once read he never forgot. He was an eloquent and fearless youth. (1972, p. 122)

In the Yang's version, many differences are presented from Brewitt-Taylor's including "what he had once read he never forgot" and "he had a wonderfully tenacious memory", "fearless youth" and "no coward", etc. By contrast, it can be clearly seen that Cheung's version is word-for-word identical to the Yangs' translation.

### 3.3 Allographic prefaces

Apart from the translator's own preface, those by others also reveal the intertextual relations between author, translator, reader, the previous translations and the retranslation. As Genette points out, the functions of the allographic preface "overlap with the functions of the original authorial preface (prefaces are to promote and guide a reading of the work)" but also have some special functions: "high praise of the text becomes a recommendation, and information about the text becomes a presentation" (Genette, 1997, p. 265).

It is not unusual that an author would invite someone "whose reputation is more firmly established than the author's" and "who is capable of adding a value" (Genette, 1997, p. 268) to write prefaces to a work. This is the meaning we could give to the prefaces to Cheung's translation. In Cheung's book, the forewords are by the president of Chu Hai College (珠海书院) Kong Mou-sum (江茂森), the scholars Huang Wen-shan (黄文山) and Fu-kun Wu (伍福锸), as well as Cheung's colleague Professor Lo Hsiang-lin (罗香林).

Let us first illustrate their personal profiles and reconstruct the context in which their prefaces were produced. Kong Mou-sum (1901 – 1982) was a well-known educator in the Republican Era (1912 – 1949), and one of the founders of Chu Hai College before it moved from Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, in the south of mainland China to Hong Kong. Lo Hsiang-lin (1906 – 1978) was a famous scholar in Hakka language and culture. From 1956 to 1968, he worked as a professor in Hong Kong University's Chinese department and in 1969, he was the first director of the Research

Institute of Chinese Literature and History at Chu Hai College. Huang Wen-shan (黃文山, 1898 – 1988) produced a great deal of excellent research in the fields of cultural studies, sociology, anthropology and ethnology. Huang was a supporter of anarchism during the May 4th Movement. I have not found much information about Fu-kun Wu (伍福焜), with only a few words online about his background as “伍福焜，密歇根大学博士，中山大学、珠海、联合、联大等院校教授” [Wu Fu-kun, Doctor of Michigan University and Professor of Zhong Shan University, Chu Hai College, Beijing Union College and National Southwest Associated University]. According to my research, there were several editions of Wu’s manuscripts from the Minguo period (1912 – 1949) in recent years, which indicates both his reputation as a well-known scholar and the value of his works.

These preface-writers all speak very highly of Cheung’s good knowledge of English literature and language as well as of Chinese literature. As president Kong Mou-sum says: “Professor Cheung Yik-man writes in good colloquial English without falling into slang, and the short paragraphs are pleasant” (Cheung, 1972, p. 2). Professor Luo Xianglin also justifies Cheung’s retranslation since the previous versions contained inadequacies. Two preface-writers even recall traditional Chinese translation concepts in their preface to advocate Cheung’s work. Prof. Huang Wenshan shows his admiration for Cheung’s translation by using Yan Fu’s three principles: “Such style of translation is really up to the three standards: resonance, assimilating and creating. As to the standards of translation, in addition to Yen Fu’s three standards: accuracy, intelligibility and elegance, I think these standards are the standards of ‘integral translation’” (Cheung, 1972, p. 25).

As for the previous translations, however, only the preface by Lo Hsiang-lin discusses in detail Brewitt-Taylor’s version of 1925. If *Chinese Literature* was widely visible at home and abroad, why did none of the four preface-writers mention the Yangs’ translation of 1962? It is possible that they knew of the Yangs’ work but did not check it or compare it with Cheung’s version when they wrote the prefaces; alternatively, they were never aware of the Yangs’ translation.

I will provide further evidence from paratextual elements, including the reviews in *Chinese Literature*, the Yangs’ translation, as well as the reputation of the Yangs,

in order to support my argument from the perspective of the impact of the Yangs' version. Let us first have a look at the translators' profiles. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang are well-known translators of Chinese literature—both ancient and modern novels. They made significant contributions to the introduction of Chinese literature and culture to the West. One of their most famous works, which received high praise in academic circles, is their translation of *Hong Lou Meng* (*A Dream of Red Mansions*), which I mentioned above.

I could not find any biographical information about Cheung Yik-man. The only details I found comes from a journal article in Chinese titled “《三国演义》的外文译文” [Translations of *San Guo Yan Yi*] by two authors based in mainland China. In this article, Cheung Yik-man is referred to as a Canadian-based or Canadian translator (Wang & Du, 2006). Other writers subsequently quoted the same details: Wen Jun and Li Peijia (2011) in their article on the history of *San Guo Yan Yi* translations, and Feng Lei in his PhD dissertation (2012) on two English translations of *San Guo Yan Yi*.

Judging from the preface to the book in this case study, Cheung was probably working at Chu Hai College (珠海书院) in Hong Kong when the work was published, as both the president of this college and one of Cheung's colleagues wrote forewords to his book. Also, the page containing publishing information at the end of this version shows that the book was printed in Hong Kong and self-published. Cheung appears to have been living in Hong Kong at the time, with the address noted on the page: “香港九龙太子道199A五楼 / 199A, Prince Edward Rd., 5/F., Kln., Hong Kong” (Cheung, 1972, p. 217).

*Chinese Literature*, the journal in which the Yangs' translation was published, was very well known. It was founded by the Chinese Foreign Language Bureau and Foreign Language Press in 1951, and between 1961 and 1965 many English translations of classic Chinese literary works. The purpose of the journal was to introduce Chinese culture to the West. Due to the prevailing political and cultural norms (fighting against the old feudal ideologies), the works to be translated, selected by the authorities were supposed to satirize the decay of feudal society.

The circulation of *Chinese Literature* abroad illustrates the popularity of the journal. One PhD dissertation (2012) claims around 15,000 volumes were printed

in 1957 and there were even more subscriptions after 1963 (Zheng, 2012, p. 103). Libraries outside mainland China and universities with sinological studies subscribed to *Chinese Literature*, either its paper edition or in microform. I searched in the libraries of Hong Kong Baptist University, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Lingnan University of Hong Kong, yet their collections of *Chinese Literature* lack the volumes of 1962 in which Yangs' excerpted translation of *San Guo* was first published.

The public epitexts—book reviews, journal papers—relating to the Yangs' version as well as the journal *Chinese Literature* illustrate the considerable impact of the press and the wide availability of the Yangs' translation; thus the materials support the assumption that Cheung Yik-man was aware of the Yangs' work before his retranslation, and that his work was the result of copying rather than coincidentally thinking along the same lines.

#### **4. Value in Unreliable Paratexts**

Based on the textual analysis as well as the paratextual evidence, we have obtained a clear image of Cheung's copying. It is evident that the textual comparison presents a different story from that in the paratexts. If paratexts are, as Venuti suggests, "an immediate form of intertextuality", what information could be read in the paratexts of Cheung's translation? At the very least, one significant intertextual link was hidden by the retranslator on purpose. As we have seen, the paratexts to Cheung's version blur the set of relevant intertextual relations underpinning his version and thus weaken the function of the paratexts as interpretation. If we examine this case in terms of values, then what kind of value does that deliberate covering-up involve?

On a purely textual level, the identity between Cheung's and the Yangs' versions means that Cheung added zero value. With respect to Brewitt-Taylor, Cheung does add value, because there is an appreciable difference between the two versions, as indeed Cheung's preface makes clear.

The problem, however, is that the value Cheung claims to have added is not his own, but belongs to the Yangs. Whether the value is dubious depends greatly on the

information possessed by the reader. As Venuti mentions in his 2004 essay, some readers, who possess adequate information, might figure out intertextual links where others might not (2004, p. 100). In Cheung's case, we can say that he did not want his intended reader to spot the intertextual link. Indeed, spotting the right link depends on the reader's access to the earlier version together with his or her willingness to compare the relevant versions in some detail. The retranslation may be judged differently by readers who do not look at the work from a critical and comparative perspective.

This fact of the dubious value is important, because this is precisely what plagiarism is about: presenting something as your own which in fact is not your own. Plagiarism, like theft, is a matter of ownership. In this case, Cheung Yik-man merely copied most of the text in the Yangs' translation and got it published in another place by another press. Cheung is not the rightful owner of the version he presents as his own; it belongs to the Yangs. This could be called 'negative' value.

When the translator not only fails to realize his claim to make a difference but also copies other works to pretend an equal ability, a negative value is therefore inscribed. The adjective 'negative' here refers to a retranslation with a value that is not accepted by the moral criteria in the prevailing social norm. Also, we could say that the value plummets upon the discovery of plagiarism.

Cheung's copying of the Yangs' translation covers most of the text (exactly the same from chapters 45 to 50), and makes deliberate modifications in chapters 43 and 44; as Jaucourt says, a plagiarist "by means of a few minor changes in expression or a few additions presents the productions of others as something that he has himself imagined or invented" (quoted in Randall, 2001, p. 17). Cheung's minor modifications reveal his intention of claiming authorship of the translation by making it look new and different.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper reflects upon the function of paratexts in retranslation as a kind of intralingual translation. It involves a charge of plagiarism in which the translator

Cheung Yik-man failed to acknowledge the pre-existing translation by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang while Cheung's retranslation is extremely close to Yangs' with some changes only in the first two chapters. In this case, paratexts to Cheung Yik-man's translation covered up the behaviour of plagiarism, which is different from Lawrence Venuti's discussion of paratexts' function in his essay as "an immediate form of intertextuality" and "explicit". Then, it has offered us a chance to reflect upon paratexts and their actual functions: what do paratexts actually do? Paratexts in retranslations are often regarded as windows on the complex relations between author, translator, retranslator, reader and translations, but at times they prove to be unreliable and to cover up highly relevant intertextual links. When this happens, they fail in their function of expounding or announcing new interpretations; instead, they mislead the reader.

## Notes

- 1 This paper is part of the research project titled "The English Translations of *San Guo Yan Yi*" (18CYY012), funded by the National Social Science Fund of China.
- 2 I have searched the British Library and the SOAS library in London, the Library of Congress in the US, and the libraries at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Baptist University.

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