

## **On the Translation and Dissemination of Chinese Modern and Contemporary Fictions - With the Translation of Mu Xin's Short Stories as a Case Study \***

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### **Abstract:**

The Chinese modern and contemporary fictions in English translation have not made much impact in the English-speaking countries. The publishing of Mu Xin's first collection of short stories in English creates a stir in America. With the application of the new principle of "Difference, Displacement, Travel and Art" put forward by its translator Toming Jun Liu, the translation is able to capture the exquisite quality of these stories. In the process of translating, the difference between the two languages has to be clearly born in mind, then with the application of translation skills, the textual material in the source language is flexibly displaced by the target language. Translation is a cultural travel, thus a kind of cultural translation. Translation, literary translation in particular, is also an art. With the reproduction of the artistic value of the original, the original thus achieve its second life in the target culture. The success of the translation of Mu Xin's work points out a way to the successful translation and dissemination of Chinese modern and contemporary fictions.

**Key Words:** Mu Xin, Short Stories, Translation, Modern and Contemporary Fictions

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, Chinese literature continues to expand its influence. However, compared with foreign literature translated into China, Chinese literature, modern and contemporary literature in particular, is much less influential in western countries. Though Chinese modern and contemporary fiction is a vital part of Chinese literature, its position and influence in the world literature doesn't match with its large numbers of talented writers and huge numbers of readers. W.J.F. Jenner remarked: "THAT MODERN Chinese writing in English translation has not made much impact in English-speaking countries is very obvious (Jenner, 1990:177)". We have to admit that Chinese modern and contemporary fiction, scattered into the ocean of world literature, has inevitably become marginalized. For China, there's still a long and tough way to go to spread it to the world.

Then, how to introduce Chinese literature to the world? Translation plays a paramount role. At present, there are four major modes to translate Chinese literature: translation by Chinese translators, translation by English translators, writer's self-translation and translation by overseas Chinese. In terms of influence, it is English translator who has made the hugest contribution. Now, the two most influential translators of Chinese modern and contemporary fiction in the English-speaking world are Howard Goldblatt and Julia Lovell, among whom Howard Goldblatt's contribution is particularly large. He translated more than 50 Chinese fictions, including 9 fictions written by Mo Yan, who won the 2012 Nobel Prize in literature. Though English translators have made a great contribution to the translation and dissemination of Chinese culture, there is only a very limited number of English translators who are willing and qualified to translate Chinese literature into English. English translators may lack a correct understanding of Chinese culture or be influenced by their own ideology and other factors, thus mistranslations often occur. Outstanding overseas Chinese, who have a good knowledge of both Chinese and English, familiar with both Eastern and Western cultures, are the ideal ones for the translation of modern and contemporary Chinese fiction.

In May 2011, *An Empty Room*, the first translation of Mu Xin's short stories by Toming Jun Liu, was published by New Directions, a very famous American literature press. Meanwhile, it was published by the world's leading publisher "Penguin Books Canada Limited" in Canada. Once published, *An Empty Room* made a stir. *Publishers Weekly* and *Three Percent* made a high value on it. Positive comments effectively boosted the popularity of this book. Readers have also expressed their pleasant surprise when reading the English translation of Mu Xin's short stories.

The author of the paper interviewed Toming Jun Liu on the translation of *An Empty Room* in July of 2011. Toming used four Chinese characters "异、易、移、艺" ("Difference, Displacement, Travel and Art"), with the same Chinese pronunciation "YI" to generalize his translation principle. In his recent paper "Writing is Paternal, Translating is Maternal: On the Translation of Mu Xin's 'Wei Ma Zao Chun (Weimar in Early Spring)'", he said: "As a

complete translation concept, I advocate four dimensions of translation, which can be summarized by four Chinese characters ‘异、易、移、艺’ (Tong Ming, 2013: 119).” This paper, with Toming’s translation of Mu Xin’s short stories as an example, explores how the translator applies the new principle of “Difference, Displacement, Travel and Art” to gain the second life of the original in the target culture.

## 2. THE BOND BETWEEN THE AUTHOR AND THE TRANSLATOR

Mu Xin’s work enjoys great popularity among the English-speaking countries with its insuperable artistic value, but the art of translation cannot be overemphasized. It is the artistic value recreated in the translation that attracts readers into Mu Xin’s literary world. A translator will first choose a work that attracts him. He thus meets the author of the original work. They discuss and finally fall into “love” with each other. A strong bond between the author and the translator is thus built.

Mu Xin, the pen name of Sun Pu, a renowned Chinese writer and artist, was born in Wuzhen, Zhejiang Province, in a wealthy aristocratic family. From 1947 to 1949, Mu Xin attended Shanghai School of Fine Arts. From 1949 to 1982, Mu Xin lived in China. Although he wrote profusely in that period, all of his earlier manuscripts were confiscated and destroyed during the Cultural Revolution Time. From 1982 till 2006, Mu Xin lived in the United States. This was a period of prolific and profound artistic and literary creativity in his life. Since 1982, Mu Xin has published twelve books of fiction, prose, and poetry in Chinese and has been contributing to literary columns in Chinese journals and newspapers outside the PRC. In the following decades, his literary works and paintings won great admiration around the world and established him as a revered artist-intellectual (See Mu Xin, 2011:148-149). Mu Xin returned to Wuzhen in 2006. He passed away there in December 2011 at the age of 84.

Toming Jun Liu (his original name is Liu Jun and his Chinese pen name is Tong Ming) was born in Xi’an, China and received his education in China, Britain, and the United States. He was a translator at the United Nations Secretariat in the early 1980s. He is now a professor in the Department of English, California State University, Los Angeles, where he teaches American literature, nineteenth-century and twentieth-century European literature, aesthetics, and critical theory. He has published numerous articles on modern American and Asian American authors in various forums in the United States. In addition, Liu has published translations from English into Chinese, including Faulkner’s *Light in August*.

Toming met Mu Xin in New York in the late 1980s when his literary works began to arouse great interest among diasporic Chinese intellectuals. During those years, Toming interviewed Mu Xin on his life and art twice and subsequently published those interviews. With his understanding of Mu Xin’s style deepening, he decided to translate Mu Xin’s work into English. Toming said, “I feel privileged that I’ve been able to work closely with Mu Xin to complete this translation (Mu Xin, 2011:149).” *An Empty Room*, a collection of thirteen stories

from Mu Xin's three most important works: *Collected Sanwen: Volume 1* (《散文一集》), *Windsor Cemetery* (《温莎墓园》) and *Barron* (《巴珑》), has thus come out.

In translating *An Empty Room*, Toming had continuously consulted Mu Xin on issues relating to this book and had received direct advice from him about what details should be changed and what should not. As Toming said, decisions in translation often concern details that initially seem trivial but are ultimately significant. For example, Toming didn't translate "芳芳 No. 4" into "Fang Fang No. 4" because "芳芳" is a very popular girl's name in China, however, according to the New Oxford Dictionary of English, "Fang" is a large sharp tooth, especially a canine tooth of a dog or wolf, or the tooth of a venomous snake. It has an unpleasant connotation. In consultation with Mu Xin, Toming decided to use "Fong Fong" in the story "*Fong Fong No.4*" as the English transliteration instead of using the strictly Chinese pinyin rendition of "Fang Fang" as the latter might cause confusing connotations in English (Mu Xin, 2011:149). Toming himself pointed out that during the various stages of working on this collection, he made many other such choices, not to deviate from the original, but to try to capture the spirit of Mu Xin's stylized, elegant Chinese (ibid).

Mu Xin's works, together with the Chinese tradition and culture, walk into the English-speaking countries. In addition to Mu Xin's unique writing style, Toming's exquisite art of translation also has its great contribution. The translator's thorough understanding of the entire work, profound knowledge of both English and Chinese, together with Eastern and Western cultures, along with his philosophic thought and ingenuity, helps to make *An Empty Room* gain its second life in the English world.

### 3. TOMING'S TRANSLATION PRINCIPLE IN AN EMPTY ROOM

For a century in China, 'fidelity, fluency and elegance' are regarded as the most widely accepted standard to evaluate the quality of translation, among which fidelity is the most important one. However, Toming argues that it is hard to give an accurate definition to fidelity, and he holds that Benjamin's view in "*The Task of Translators*" is of great significance. In "*The Task of Translators*", Benjamin points out that "Fidelity in the translation of individual words can almost never fully reproduce the meaning they have in the original. For sense in its poetic significance is not limited to meaning, but derives from the connotations conveyed by the word chosen to express it (Benjamin, 1970:78)." It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. (Benjamin, 1970) From Toming's view, the translation task proposed by Benjamin is to show the translatability of the original text and to emphasize the importance of creation during translation. Such interaction between the original text and translation reflects the art of translation.

Toming uses four Chinese characters "异、易、移、艺" ("Difference, Displacement, Travel and Art"), with the same pronunciation "YI" to generalize his translation principle, which can also be defined as the four steps or four dimensions in translation. "Difference"

means that translators should always bear in mind the difference between the source language and the target language ; “Displacement” means that translation is to replace the information expressed in source language accurately and fluently with the target language; “Travel” means that literary translation is an experience of cultural travel, which is a cross-culture activity; “Art” means that translation, literary translation in particular, is an art, which should aim at creating the aesthetic values of the original. Toming thinks that art is the mysterious fourth dimension of translation (Tong Ming, 2013). It is the creative and inspired level of translation.

### 3.1 Difference

An excellent translator is the one who is skilled at both source language and target language. English-Chinese Translation has always been considered one of the most challenging translations, due to the language barrier. English belongs to the Indo-European Language family, while Chinese belongs to Sino-Tibetan language family. These two language systems have huge differences in morphology, syntax, and logic. In *An Empty Room*, the translator Toming Jun Liu tackles the language barrier successfully as we can see in the following examples.

[ST1 (Source Text 1)] 芳芳是侄女的同学，侄女说了几次，便带她来看我了。明显的羞怯，人也天生纤弱，与侄女的健朗成了对比。她们安于对比，不用我分心作招待，要来则来，要去则去，芳芳也成了熟客。算是我非正式的学生，都学键盘，程度不低。（《芳芳 NO.4》）（木心 2006： 79）

[TT1 (Target Text 1)] Fong Fong was my niece’s schoolmate. My niece had mentioned her quite a few times before she introduced her to me. Fong Fong was quite shy. Her frail build was a stark contrast to my niece’s healthy glow but they didn’t seem to mind. There was no need for me to play host with them so they came and went as they pleased and soon Fong Fong was no stranger. I secretly thought of her as one of my piano students. Both she and my niece were quite advanced musicians. (*Fong Fong No. 4*) (Mu Xin, 2011:33)

There is a huge difference in words and sentence structure of Chinese and English. Chinese structure emphasizes parataxis, while English emphasizes hypotaxis. Connectives are always omitted in Chinese clauses, but the meaning is still coherent. In the sentences like “芳芳是侄女的同学，侄女说了几次，便带她来看我了”；“她们安于对比，不用我分心作招待，要来则来，要去则去，芳芳也成了熟客”，the reader can understand the meaning without conjunctions between clauses. However, in English, conjunctions like “before”, “but”, “so” has to be added, otherwise it will cause logical chaos and grammatical problems.

[ST2] 丁琰是男生，琴弹得可以，进步不快，每星期来上两课。爱了芳芳，我早就感觉到有这回事。（《芳芳 NO.4》）（木心 2006： 80）

[TT2] Ding Yan was a young man who was a decent pianist, though he made rather slow progress in his lessons with me twice a week. I had long sensed that he was in love with Fong Fong. (*Fong Fong No. 4*) (Mu Xin, 2011:34)

In Chinese, person is usually used as the subject. The ellipsis of subjects will not destruct sentence meaning, but make sentence structure more concise and coherent. The sentence “丁琰是男生，（他）琴弹得可以，（但是他）进步不快，（他）每星期来上两课。（丁琰）爱了芳芳，我早就感觉到有这回事。” is a typical example of subject ellipsis. In this sentence, the subject “丁琰” only appears once, but the logical structure and meaning of this sentence is still clear. Readers know clearly who is in love with Fong Fong. On the contrast, English uses both person and impersonal things as subjects, which cannot be omitted. Otherwise, some confusion will appear. We can clearly see that in the translation of the above sentence “Ding Yan was a young man who was a decent pianist, though made rather slow progress in his lessons with me twice a week. I had long sensed that he was in love with Fong Fong”, Toming adds the personal pronouna to make it logical.

[ST3] 我是小叔，侄女只比我幼四岁，三人谈的无非是年轻人才喜欢的事。虽然男女有别，她们添置衣履，拉我一同去品评选择，这家那家随着转——这就叫作青年时代。（《芳芳 No. 4》）（木心，2006：79）

[TT3] I'm only four years older than my niece—her youngest uncle. Talking with her and Fong Fong wasn't any different from conversing with my other friends. And despite the gender difference, they dragged me along when they went shopping for dresses and shoes as they respected my opinions in such matters. We casually strolled from store to store, idling away that wondrous phase of life called youth. (*Fong Fong No. 4*) (Mu Xin, 2011:33)

Toming believes that faithful translation is not word-for-word translating, but accurate and fluent transferring of the original meanings to readers. The good translation should maintain the original author's writing style and spirit. This requires that translators have the ability to selectively add or reduce some words in the translation. The ultimate goal is to make translation more understandable, avoiding confusion and misunderstanding. In the above example, the translator adds “as they respected my opinions in such matters” to make the implied information explicit. Besides, “这就叫做青年时代” is flexibly turned into “idling away that wondrous phase of life called youth”, which expresses the meaning in the deep structure in an idiomatic way.

Such translation skills are also flexibly used in the following example.

[ST4] 信来信往，言不及义的文字游戏，写成了习惯似的。某年秋天，我应邀作钢琴演奏比赛的评判，便上了京城，事先致函侄女和芳芳，不料即来复示，各要代购春装冬装，男人去买女装已是尴尬，尺寸不明，来个“差不多”买下带走便是。（《芳芳 NO.4》）（木心 2006：82）

[TT4] Our correspondence, or rather our word games, became a regular ritual. Then one autumn I was invited to Beijing to sit on a judging panel for a piano competition. I wrote to my niece and Fong Fong not expecting that they would ask me to purchase some winter and spring clothes for them. Besides being a little awkward for a man to buy women's clothes, they didn't even tell me their sizes. So I made my best guess and purchased a few things. (*Fong Fong No. 4*) (Mu Xin, 2011:36)

In this paragraph, Liu translates “信来信往” into “our correspondence”, and “言不及义的文字游戏” into “or rather our word games”. The word “correspondence” express author's meaning of writing letters to each other, concisely and precisely. And the translator chooses not to translate “言不及义”, but only use “word games” instead. This seeming omission makes translation smoother and more natural.

To sum up, the first standard for translation is to master the difference between source language and target language. Only with the thorough understanding of the source text, can the translator accurately transfer the original meaning to target readers.

### 3.2 Displacement

Translation is the replacement of the original text material by equivalent text material in the target language, with the application of appropriate translation strategies on the precondition of the full awareness of the difference between source language and target language. Such translation skills as amplification, deduction, conversion, word order adjustment are used. Besides, a translator should also pay attention to the conversion of image, style and even the artistic conception of the original text.

A few examples from *An Empty Room* are given as follows:

[ST5] 门开着，院里的落叶和殿内的尘埃，告知我又是一个废墟。这里比教堂有意思，廊庑曲折，古木参天，残败中自成萧瑟之美。正殿后面有楼房，叫了几声，无人应，便登楼窥探——一排三间，两间没门，墁壁斑驳，空空如也。最后一间有板扉虚掩，我推而赶紧缩手——整片粉红扑面袭来，内里的墙壁是簇新的樱花色。感觉“有人”，定睛搜看，才知也是空房，墙壁确是刷过未久，十分匀净，没有家具，满地的纸片，一堆堆柯达胶卷的空匣。我踩在纸片上，便觉得纸片的多了，像地毯，铺满了整个楼板。（《空房》）（木心，2010：34）

[TT5] The gate was open. Fallen leaves in the yard and dust floating in the hall indicated that this was another place in ruins. The temple was more appealing than the church, though. The corridors crisscrossed and the tall ancient trees provided heavy shade so that even in decay there was a tranquil beauty. Behind the main hall stood a two-story building. I called out a few times but received no response. I walked upstairs to look around. Two of the three rooms didn't have doors, their dilapidated wooden walls exposed within. Empty, empty. I came to the third room and found a screen door ajar. I pushed it open but withdrew my hand immediately – a sudden flood of pink washed over

me. The walls inside were painted the color of flowering cherry blossoms. I felt a “human presence,” but after a quick inspection it was clear that this room, too, was empty. The walls, however, were freshly painted with a clean evenness. No furniture. The floor was covered with pieces of paper and piles of empty Kodak boxes. Stepping on the paper scraps, I felt as if a rich carpet covered the entire floor. (*An Empty Room*) (Mu Xin, 2011:28)

In the above example, the translator flexibly uses various translation skills. Toming translates the Chinese sentences “廊虎曲折，古木参天，残败中自成萧瑟之美” into “The corridors crisscrossed and the tall ancient trees provided heavy shade”, and then with the use of conjunction “so that”, the following sentence functions as the adverbial clause of result. This approach of reconstructing sentence structure can make the translation in line with the English expression and grammatical habit. In the translation “the temple was more appealing than the church, though” of “这里比教堂更有意思”，Toming use the conjunction “though” to illustrate the hidden concession relationship in the original text. Then in the translation of “满地的纸片，一堆堆柯达胶卷的空匣” into “the floor was covered with pieces of paper and piles of empty Kodak boxes”, Toming changes the nominal structure into a subject-predicate structure.

In terms of reproduction of the original style, Toming uses simple sentences because conciseness and profoundness are the typical style of Mu Xin’s short stories. In the example above, “空空如也” is translated into “Empty, empty”, and “没有家具” into “No furniture”. The seventeen short sentences strongly highlight the image of “empty” and attract readers to read further to find out “emptiness” of the room.

To sum up, Toming believes that a good translation is to displace the original text with the target text with flexible application of translation skills to reproduce the original image, style and even the artistic conception to target readers.

### 3.3 Travel

Translation is actually a cultural travel, thus a kind of cultural translation. In the process of translating the original language into the target language, text travels from one culture to the other. In the border-crossing process, the original text bumps into the target one. After the collision, negotiation and integration, a new text is finally produced with a new cultural horizon, thus gaining its second life.

Cultural translation is involved in the concept of diaspora. Mu Xin's literature falls within that realm. So does Toming’s life and work. In the broad sense, literary creation by diasporic writers is an example of cultural translation. Of course, any translation that involves in-depth knowledge of culture-specific contexts and contents should be included also.

Walter Benjamin pointed out that “If translation is a mode, translatability must be an essential feature of certain works” (Benjamin 1970: 70-71). Inspired by Benjamin’s thought, Toming



interprets the “cultural translatability” from two aspects: retain the identity of national culture and reproduce the culture difference in a creative way. To preserve the spirit of the original text, a translator should first recognize his own culture features and then show the cultural differences in a creative way. Thus, the spread of culture is the most important part in literary translation.

[ST6]不满十岁，我已知“寺”、“庙”、“院”、“殿”、“观”、“宫”、“庵”的分别。当我随着我母亲和一大串姑妈舅妈姨妈上摩安山去做佛事时，山脚下的“玄坛殿”我没说什么。半山的“三清观”也没说什么。将近山顶的“睡狮庵”我问了：“就是这里啊？”（《童年随之而去》）（木心，2010：13-14）

[TT6] Before I was ten years old, I already knew the nuanced differences between the seven types of Buddhist temples: *si*, *miao*, *yuan*, *chan*, *guan*, *gong*, and *an*. That year I followed my mother and the whole retinue of my paternal and maternal aunts to Mount Mo-An for a Buddhist service. I didn't complain when we passed a temple at the foot of the mountain or when we reached another one halfway up. But when we neared the Shizi Mian An (Sleeping Lion Nunnery) close to the peak, I asked, “Is this the place?” (*The Moment When Childhood Vanished*) (Mu Xin, 2011:3)

In China, the cultural travel of Buddhism and Taoism, owing a long and splendid history, is often considered to be a major challenge in C-E translation. Most translators use Pinyin to translate the proper nouns in such cases. In this sentence, Toming also chooses Pinyin to translate “寺”，“庙”，“院”，“殿”，“观”，“宫”，“庵”. Such a large number of frequently occurring proper nouns, representing the similar meanings, will make English readers unintelligible. If the translator gives a detailed explanation to each term, then the translation will become lengthy and make readers lose their interest. In Toming's translation, he ingeniously adds a simple definition - “the seven types of Buddhist temples” - before these seven terms, giving readers a macro-conception. However, since the terms “殿”，“观” and “宫” belong to Taoism, it is inappropriate to use “Buddhist temples” to generalize all seven terms. It may be better to translate it into “Before I was ten years old, I already knew the nuanced differences between the four types of Buddhist temples: *si*, *miao*, *yuan* and *an* and three types of Taoist temples: *dian*, *guan* and *gong*. In the second sentence, Toming uses “a temple” and “another one” to translate “玄坛殿” and “三清观”，for these two terms are relatively not so important in the original text. As for the term “睡狮庵”，which is of great significance in the text, Toming first translates it in Pinyin and then gives an explanation. On one hand, transliteration can keep the original feature of Chinese Buddhist culture, and on the other hand the English explanation can help target readers better understand this term. Toming ingeniously chooses different strategies in the cross-culture translation process, thus successfully disseminating the unique characteristics of Chinese culture to the English-speaking countries.

[ST7] 我家素不佞佛，母亲是为了祭祖要焚“疏头”，才来山上做佛事。“疏头”者现在我能解释为大型经忏“水陆道场”的书面总结，或说幽冥之国通用的高额

支票、赎罪券。阳间出钱，阴世受惠——众多和尚诵经叩礼，布置十分华丽，程序更是繁缛得如同一场连本大戏。（《童年随之而去》）（木心，2010：14）

[TT7] My family never failed to honor the Buddha. It was for the purpose of worshipping our ancestors and burning shu-tou that my mother had decided to make this trip. As far as I could explain then, shu-tou was the written penance sent to the dead ancestors “by water route and by land route,” the entire rite involving an elaborate performance. Or, as I understood it, a kind of bank check with a high monetary value acceptable in the other world, an otherworldly currency for penance. People in the world of Yang supposedly paid for the benefit of the people in the world of Yin. Many monks were involved in this extravagantly observed rite of complicated procedures as if it were a grand drama acted out in sequential segments with monks reciting the scriptures and kowtowing on the ground. (*The Moment When Childhood Vanished*) (Mu Xin, 2011:4)

Western countries and China have different religious cultures. Therefore, while translating Chinese religious culture and affairs, translators should take English readers’ understanding into consideration. In the above example, Toming translates Chinese Buddhist culture of worshiping ancestors marvelously. Toming again uses the method of transliteration in translating “梳头” to avoid the ambiguity of this term. When translating “幽冥之国”，Toming picks up the similar term in western religious culture, “the other world”，which makes it easily accepted to English readers. “阳间” means “this world” and “阴世” means “the nether world”，“Hades” or “hell”. However, Toming translates “阳间” into “the world of Yang” and “阴世” into “the world of Yin”，a method of foreignization, which may bring a strangeness to the target reader, but can well retain the Chinese culture. The term “连本大戏” means the traditional Chinese opera, like Beijing Opera. Here Toming translates “戏” into “drama”，a method of domestication, which is in line with the western drama culture and makes the term more acceptable to English readers.

Translations need to be balanced between national character and cosmopolitanism. During the process of translating *An Empty Room*, the translator Toming did not succumb to pressure from the mainstream culture of the target language, but strived to find the best balance between the preservation of Chinese culture and integration into the Western culture.

### 3.4 Art

Translation, literary translation in particular, is an art. The achievement of aesthetic values comes from selecting original text, reading in-depth and weighing every word, comprehending the author’s spirit, mastering the writer’s style and resonating with the author.

Mu Xin is a master in “cultivating the whispering power of reverie” as Mark Stevens wrote in New York magazine. “Familiar with both Asian and Western ways—he’s also a man of our day---he creates an art of communion, one that brings together the masters of each tradition and unites past and present (Mu Xin, 2011: back cover). Toming Jun also commented on Mu Xin’s style, “Mu Xin’s works is not just the display of his writing skills; his flexible writing style

gives us an access to aesthetic judgments. It is the very aesthetic thinking that features Mu Xin's writing with cosmopolitan spirit and constitutes the central theme of his works (Tong, 2008: 26).”

“*Fong Fong No.4*”, as the highlight of Mu Xin's short stories, is a story about the humanity change before and after the Cultural Revolution. The translation of this short story embodies translator's achievement of aesthetic values.

[ST8] 头发斑白而稀薄，一进门话语连连，几乎听不清说什么，过道里全是她响亮的嗓音，整身北方穿着，从背后看更不知是谁。引入客厅，她坐下，我又开一盏灯，她的眉眼口鼻还能辨识，都萎缩了，那高高的起皱的额角，是从前所没有的。外面下着细雨，江南三月，她却像满脸灰沙，枯瘦得，连那衣裤也是枯瘦的。（《芳芳 No. 4》）（木心，2006：89）

[TT8] Her thinning hair was turning gray, and her loud talking echoed in the hallway without pause, though I could barely understand what she was saying. She was dressed in the northern style from head to foot—from the back I could have never guessed who she was. I showed her to the living room to sit and turned on another light so that I could look at her more closely. Her eyes, mouth and nose were somehow shrunken. Her high and slightly wrinkled forehead I had never seen before. It was drizzling outside as it always is in March in Shanghai, but her face seemed to be covered with dust. She looked withered, even her clothing looked withered. (*Fong Fong No. 4*) (Mu Xin, 2011:43)

The original language is very concise, with many subjects omitted. In the translation, Toming has given full consideration to language differences between English and Chinese, and then transfer it in a flexible way. For example, Toming uses “her thinning hair” and “her loud talking” as the subject, instead of “Fong Fong”; adds some conjunctions such as “though”, “so that” and “even” to clarify the logical relation; translates “江南三月” into “in March in Shanghai” based on the context.

[ST9] 她在重复着这些：“……要满十年才好回来，两个孩子，男的，现在才轮到啊，轮到我回上海……他不来，哈尔滨，他在供销社，采购就是到处跑，我管账，也忙，地址等忽儿写给你，来信哪，我找到音乐会，噢不，音乐协会去了，一回家，弟妹说你是上海三大名人，看报知道的，报上常常有你的名字，你不老，还是原来那样子，怎么不老的呢……”（《芳芳 No. 4》）（木心，2006：89）

[TT9] Her words didn't stop: “Ten years is how long it has taken for me to return...two children...yes, boys...it took me all these years to be able to return to Shanghai...he didn't come this time...yes, he works in a food and goods co-op in Harbin and travels everywhere for supplies...I'm the accountant of course ...very busy...I'll give you the address so do write me...I went to the Musicians' Congress...sorry, Association...the first thing that my brother and sister told me when I came home is that you are one of the three most prominent celebrities in Shanghai...I also read it in the paper...your name is

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often in the paper...you don't look old, still your former self...how is it that you haven't aged...(*Fong Fong No. 4*) (Mu Xin, 2011:44)

In the above translation, there are 15 ellipses, trying to describe the picture of “her loud talking without pause”. Far more than this function, these ellipses help to extend the interval of intermission, during which readers and “I” expecting the miracle – the erstwhile Fong Fong would come back – would happen. With the sudden arrival of three unexpected visitors, the conversation with Fong Fong was interrupted. In Fong Fong’s changes from a young girl, an intellectual, a farm laborer and finally to a businesswoman, she is losing her identity, her sentimentality and finally some of her humanity, thus leaving readers a lot of food for thought.

*An Empty Room* has successfully crossed the cultural border and its artistic values are well transferred. Its good reception can be seen from the following comments from the English readers:

These stories have an exquisite, crystalline quality ably captured by Liu's flawless translation (*Publishers Weekly*).

The translator Toming Jun Liu has rendered Mu Xin's prose in this collection as extremely literary...I was stunned by the quality of the prose and the depths of its emotion, and I sincerely look forward to reading more of Mu Xin's work in the future (*Three Percent*).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This paper, with Toming's translation of Muxin's short stories as an example, explores how the translator applies the new standard of “Difference, displacement, Travel and Art” to recreate in the target language the exquisite quality of these stories. The translating process is a cultural travel. As a border-crossing traveler, Toming first bear in mind the difference between his home culture and the target culture, and then recreate it in the target language with transnational characteristics. In the border-crossing process, the original text bumps into the target one. They conflict, negotiate and finally conclude the travel with new cultural horizon. The original thus gains its second life. The successful translation and publication of Mu Xin's short stories provides a lot of inspiration to the successful translation and dissemination of Chinese modern and contemporary fictions.

First, the translator Toming Jun Liu's profound knowledge of both Eastern and Western culture lays a solid foundation for the correct understanding of the source text and the expressiveness in his target text.

Second, the author and the translator have a long-term friendship. The translator has an in-depth insight of the author's style. What's more, the translator can often turn to the author for help, which ensures the accuracy of the translation.

Third, the artistic value of the original work plays a vital role in the dissemination and acceptance of the translation. Mu Xin is a writer who has the cosmopolitan spirit and embodies such spirit in his work.

Fourth, it is necessary to maintain the national character as well as cosmopolitanism in the translation. Otherwise, the blind compliance with the target language culture and ideology, the destroyed integrity of the original text, the loss of national character will have negative impacts on disseminating Chinese modern and contemporary fictions.

Fifth, *An Empty Room* is published by the famous American Press New Directions and simultaneously published in Canada by Penguin Books. These prestigious publishers help a lot to promote the popularity of the translation. In other words, choosing well-known publishers in the target language country can ensure the sales channels. Michael S. Duke pointed out in his article that only when our translations become available in commercially competitive editions will the dominant mode of literature of one of the world's great civilizations be in a position to gain the international reputation it deserves (Duke, 1990:216). Therefore, China should strive to attract more mainstream publishers in the target countries to participate in the publication of Chinese Literature.

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