

Resistance Against and Collusion with Colonialism: Eileen Chang's Writing and Translation of "Steamed Osmanthus Flower Ah Xiao's Unhappy Autumn"

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ABSTRACT

Despite rising to stardom with her brilliant writings in Shanghai in the 1940s, Eileen Chang was criticised by the Leftist writers of her time and other later critics for failing to represent the general political panorama in China. In fact, they studied her works only with regard to the relations between her and China, but ignored the relationship between her, a writer of a semi-colonised nation, and the colonisers. However, through the analysis of her Chinese short story "Steamed Osmanthus Flower Ah Xiao's Unhappy Autumn" (1944) and her own translation of it into English entitled "Shame, Amah!" (1962) after her migration to the United States, this study explores how Chang resists colonialism through various means in the original text, and how such resistance is largely changed to collusion in the translation. The comparison between the source text and the translation reveals the dilemma of the diasporic writer - under the powerful domination of the host society, assimilation is inevitable; but at the same time, the writer is also trying hard to hold on to his or her own cultural traces.

Keywords: Resistance, collusion, migration, power

INTRODUCTION

Eileen Chang rose to stardom in Shanghai in the 1940s with her brilliant writings, but she came under criticism both from the Leftist writers of the era and subsequent critics for failing to represent the general

political scene in China at the time; they claimed that she put China's invasion by the Japanese aside, to focus only on narrow subjects and reflect only ordinary characters (Liu, 2000, p. 552; Zhou, 2003, p. 9-10). These critics limited their studies on Chang's works to her relations with China, but ignored the relationship between her, a writer from a semi-colonised nation, and the colonisers. This study, however, explores how Chang positions herself within the

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coloniser/colonised relationship through the analysis of her Chinese short story “Steamed Osmanthus Flower Ah Xiao’s Unhappy Autumn” (1944; henceforth “SOF”) and the English translation of the same story by herself after her migration to the United States, and reveals the oscillation of her attitude towards colonialism over time and space in the frame of postcolonial, gender and translation studies.

In colonial discourse, the coloniser was at an absolute superior position to the colonised. This distinction was essentialized through various European branches of knowledge about the Orient as well as literary works (Said, 1979, p. 39-40). Among these branches of knowledge, racial theory had a large role to play. As early as the 1770s, J. F. Blumenbach classified the human races into twenty-eight kinds, claiming that the pure origin of man was the white male, whereas all other forms were inferior (Young, 1995, p. 64-65). The treacherous part of such racism lied in that it proved to the West and the East at the same time that the colonised were “inherently inferior, not just outside history and civilization, but genetically pre-determined to inferiority” (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2000, p. 47). Therefore, their subjection to the coloniser became a natural result.

Peculiar to the male-dominated Orientalist discourse, the imperial women writers’ perspective was rather problematic. On the one hand, they were “empowered by colonialism” and assumed a superior position (McLeod, 2000, p. 49). They adopted male Orientalists’ perspectives

to lend value and significance to their writing so as to get acknowledged in the mainstream society. On the other hand, their inferior position in the Western patriarchal society might result in their “partial and problematic accord” with the colonised (ibid). The ambivalent positionality of the imperial women writers is similar to that of the diasporic Asian women writers in the Western countries. As the marginalised Other, they are eager to get acknowledged by the host society, thus having to adopt the mainstream perspective in relation to their fellow people. Nevertheless, their love of the homeland makes them cling to their cultural heritage, however flimsy it is, in their writing.

When it comes to their translation, the same ambivalent attitude remains. As is claimed by Andrew Lefevere, “Translations are never produced in a vacuum, and they are also never received in a vacuum... Translation always takes place in a certain context, one context is that of history; the other is that of culture” (2004, p. 3). A specific literary translation work cannot be isolated from the context in which it is produced. The society inevitably leaves its traces on the translator with its ideologies and poetics, thus influencing his/her translating strategy and resulting in his/her compromise with the target culture. As far as the diasporic writer/translator is concerned, their desire to get accepted by the host culture and their love for their homeland culture make the translated text an intense scene of struggle.

RESISTANCE AGAINST COLONIALISM

“SOF” was set in Shanghai in the 1940s, against the backdrop of China being a semi-colony, and Shanghai being one of the early five treaty ports open to imperial powers. Britain, the US and France had so-called international settlements in Shanghai, where they settled, conducted business and ran their own administration. Natives were inferior beings in the eyes of these imperial forces, and they exerted their power over the former to such an extent that “the usual demarcation of public and private space by class was joined to demarcation based on ‘race’” (Bicker, 2004, p. 43), where Chinese people were forbidden to enter public gardens and private clubs.

However, “whenever power is being exchanged [and] circulated, the possibility always exists that it can be reversed, transformed and resisted” (Barker, 2000, p. 37). As a resident of Shanghai, Chang would thus have been familiar with the coloniser’s exertions of power over the colonised locals, and as a writer she tried to reverse these power relations through her short stories. For instance, Chang portrays the colonisers as either pathetic or stupid, and criticises the damaging effects of colonialism. In most of her stories, colonisers largely function as background characters, but in “SOF” Chang depicts a direct confrontation between colonisers and locals. “SOF” is the story of Ah Xiao, an amah working in Shanghai, over the course of a day. While the subject matter may appear to be trivial, it nevertheless

exhibits her sharp critique of colonialism. And as opposed to the common discourse on colonialism, Chang places Garter, Ah Xiao’s Western employer, under her scrutiny, reversing the power relations within the critical concept of the gaze, where the colonised becomes the subject of the gaze, and the coloniser the object (Bhabha, 2002, p. 89), which has the effect of shattering the colonisers’ sense of superiority.

The term “Master” is used as a metaphor in the story. It refers both to the term Ah Xiao uses to address Garter, and to the status that colonisers assume they hold in China: they are masters to the subordinate natives. But this status is far from being unproblematic, because Garter’s position as the master is mocked by Chang. As the ‘master’, Garter makes no exception in exploiting his servant, but his exploitation is made to come across as funny, exhibiting his meanness and ridiculousness. For instance, because he has spent money to hire Ah Xiao, he keeps “ringing the bell for her until he [has] her running in circles” (Patton, 2000, p. 81).¹ Garter’s mannerisms appear all the more funny, especially when it is predicted beforehand by Ah Xiao. For instance, he lets Ah Xiao off two hours earlier one day, and she expects that he will be particularly hard to please the next. Garter is also portrayed as being stupid and suspicious; he suspects Ah Xiao will not work hard

¹ The original text is written in Chinese, and since Chang quite heavily omits some parts in her translation, we will use Simon Patton’s translation (collected in *Traces of Love and Other Stories*) when the source text needs to be quoted. Chang’s translation is used only to show divergences from the source text.

when he is out for work, so he soaks all his bed sheets, towel, and shirts together in the bath tub, resulting in the colour of his shirt coming off. His suspicion of Ah Xiao reflects the Orientalists' conception of the sly Chinese (Said, 1979, p. 117). All in all, it is through Ah Xiao's contempt of his deeds, that Garter's meanness and stupidity are presented vividly, which thus negates the self-vaunted social position of the coloniser.

Ah Xiao's contempt is also directed at Garter's moral decadence. The latter has a number of girlfriends—which include the yellow-haired woman, Miss Li, who might be a rich man's concubine, and a dancing girl—but he is devoted to none. He is used to seducing women. He talks in a very soft and sweet voice with any woman, even with Ah Xiao. Ah Xiao's comment is that he is “determined to make women like him, regardless of who they were” (Patton, 2000, p. 66). Nonetheless, he lacks the determination to commit to any woman—the ideal lover in his eyes is represented by a picture of a naked model hung on his wall, but he feels that even if he comes across such a woman, he will simply revert to type and take advantage of her. He is like a beauty no longer at his prime, so he needs to be “more economical with time and money”; moreover, he now thinks that women are “more or less the same” (Patton, 2000, p. 71). Garter's lack of moral fibre can be seen as a mockery of the arrogance of the colonisers, which destabilises the notion of their self-expressed moral superiority. Furthermore, since Garter is portrayed as not possessing the familiar “aggressive male sexual impulse of colonisation” (Racevskis,

2006, p. 76), namely the masculinity to conquer and subdue Oriental women, Chang is able to deconstruct the binary opposition between a “sexually aggressive colonial impulse and the kind of passive female victimhood” of the colony (*ibid.*).

The author's mocking of the colonisers is reinforced by Ah Xiao and her friend's complaint towards their respective foreign employer - Garter and the yellow-haired woman:

Their male employers were like the wind, rushing about helter-skelter, blowing up dust, while the women resembled the ornate carvings on expensive furniture, so particularly attractive to dust that they were kept busy cleaning from morning to night (Patton, 2000, p. 68).

Although the two amahs utter their criticism naïvely—equating their employers' moral decadence merely to the inconvenience they have to encounter in their daily work, the understatement only serves to highlight the irony of the conversation, which readers are left to infer by themselves.

The criticizing force can also be seen in Ah Xiao and her friend's gaze into Garter's bedroom. In the revealing sunlight, they see a Peking opera mask, red and blue rugs of Peking style, and a waste basket in the style of a Chinese lantern. In their eyes, Garter's bedroom is just like “the boudoir of a high-class Russian prostitute who [has] gathered some Chinese odds and ends to build herself a nest of peace

and happiness” (Patton, 2000, p. 69). As Ashcroft (2000) states, “the freedom of the gaze depends on the security of the position from which it is being directed” (p. 228). Theoretically speaking then, the colonised are not endowed with the authority to direct their gaze at the colonisers, but Chang negates this by making Ah Xiao and her friend criticise the stinginess of their masters, and as a contrast, to examine Miss Li’s expensive gift to Garter. This makes their act of entering Garter’s bedroom natural, and more importantly gives them a kind of moral authority to inspect Garter’s private space. This is a case of the empire writing back, wherein Chang reverses the imperial women travel writers’ gaze at the domestic space of the Orient. The threat of Ah Xiao and her friend’s gaze is embodied in their comparison of Garter’s bedroom to a prostitute’s boudoir; the castration of the displaced colonial desire and the further feminising of the claimed masculinity of the colonisers.

Ah Xiao and her friend’s gaze also covers the picture of a nude Western model hung on the wall. They inspect the model’s hair, skin, breasts, stiff body frame, “exaggeratedly slim waist,” and “large brown eyes indicating neither pleasure nor voluptuousness that gazed out blankly at her viewers” (Patton, 2000, p. 70). This description is virtually a replacement of a Western woman for the famous Hottentot Venus.² Fixed in the picture, the Western

² The Hottentot Venus was a young black woman transported from Africa and displayed in Britain and France in the early 19th century. Every part of her naked body was left open for the viewers to inspect with prurient or scientific interest (Qureshi, 2004, p. 223).

nude model appears lifeless and exotic in the observer’s eyes. Thus, Chang’s writing back is really “using the master’s tool” to “dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde, 2003, p. 25). By putting the female coloniser under inspection, she exaggerates the coloniser’s fallacy of inhuman treatment of the subaltern races.

The contrast between Garter and Ah Xiao can be seen everywhere in the text. In reality, Garter is the master, and Ah Xiao the servant; but this hierarchical relationship is inverted as far as morality is concerned. The colonisers were always claiming a moral superiority to the black as well as the yellow races (Young, 1995, p. 104), which were claims that were designed to subjugate the colonised races alongside military and economic exploitation. Nonetheless, what can be seen in “SOF” is that while Garter is promiscuous, Ah Xiao is a good wife and mother, while Garter is extremely stingy, Ah Xiao is hospitable and generous, and lastly, while Garter is hypocritical, Ah Xiao is sincere. Though Garter suspects that Ah Xiao steals his bread to give to her son (a groundless suspicion), he does not say anything, because “replacement for her would be difficult” (Patton, 2000, p. 65). However, as for Ah Xiao, even though she complains about him herself, she does not allow others to think lowly of him. When Miss Li says she wants to give a new bed sheet to Garter because the old one has torn, Ah Xiao defends his face determinedly, displaying her maternal instinct. These contrasts again make it evident that the colonisers cannot claim any innate moral authority or superiority.

Furthermore, Chang's portrayal of Ah Xiao shatters the common Oriental image in colonial narration: as the Other of the West, Oriental people constructed by Westerners tend to be "homogenized into a collective 'they' and described as an indistinguishable mass, void of individual details" (Park, 2002, p. 518). In colonial discourse, subaltern women are depicted as being passive and silent, needing in many ways to be represented by colonisers to be heard. In "SOF," Ah Xiao does not fit this stereotype:

The man is pettier than ten women put together...He says: 'Shanghai's a terrible place! Even the Chinese servants cheat foreigners!' But if he is not in Shanghai, he would have been killed off long ago in the foreigners' own war...I think he is getting cheaper and cheaper... It's no wonder he catches those diseases...He's much better now, but that medicine he was using made a mess of the sheets (Patton, 2000, p. 72).

Her judgment of Garter may be based on her simple knowledge and value system, and her criticism arises from the perspective of her work, and thus may appear naïve, intuitive, and lacking in sophistication. However, it is this very naïveté that lends force to her opinions, making readers reflect on the coloniser/colonised relationship. While Chang's works may not describe the large-scale confrontation of the colonisers and the colonised, she instead gazes at the

colonisers through the eyes of a relatively uneducated amah, who does not know much about class difference and colonial exploitation, and cannot be expected to resist the effects of colonisation on a theoretical level. It is this 'trivial' but objective portrayal of the private life of the coloniser that challenges the coloniser's authority.

However, being a servant of the foreigner, Ah Xiao is affected by Garter to some extent. This is most evident in her language. She tries to answer the phone in English, even if her English is not good enough, and always confuses her pronouns and syntax due to the influence of her native tongue. The hybridisation of her language is an effective means for Chang to deconstruct the domination of the colonisers. As Kobena Mercer maintains,

Across a whole range of cultural forms there is a 'syncretic' dynamic which critically appropriates elements from the master-codes of the dominant culture and 'creolises' them... The subversive force of this hybridizing tendency is most apparent at the level of language itself where creoles, patois and Black English decentre, destabilise and carnivalise the linguistic domination of 'English'... (qtd. in Young, 1995, p. 24-25)

Ah Xiao's speech includes two voices—both the colonisers' and the colonised, so that "the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal grip on meaning" (Young,

1995, p. 22). The appropriation of the colonisers' language decentres its integrity, making it lose the overriding superiority/authority.

COLLUSION WITH COLONIALISM

In 1955, Chang migrated to the United States, where she tried to establish herself in the literary scene by writing in English and translating her own short stories. Being a writer from China, an Other, she found it difficult to achieve her goal, and she had to face the scrutiny of the press and her target readers. Under such circumstances, she had to make a choice whether to accept the target culture's "ideology and poetics," namely to "manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way" (Bassnet & Lefevre, 2004, p. viii) or insist on her own. As Barker (2000) notes, "Insofar as power acts on the actions of the other, it incites, produces and engages the other in the possibility of both collusion and resistance" (p. 40).

Chang's own translation of the Chinese "Steamed Osmanthus Flower Ah Xiao's Unhappy Autumn" into the English "Shame, Amah!" (1962) exemplifies the above statement. The translation reflects her collusion with the colonial ideology and poetics of the target language and culture. At the same time, however, a feeble resistance is also maintained through keeping the universe of discourse of the source text; her manipulation of the text can be seen as a response to the manipulation of the host society over herself. Jessica Tsui Yan

Li (2006) holds that Chang is the one who knows her own intention the best, and that she is thus "free in terms of a 'droit moral'" (p. 99-100). While this is true, what escapes Li's attention is that Chang's intentions can change over time and space: in America, Chang is an Other who is eager to rid herself of the tag, and she does so by positioning herself in such a way as to manipulate her text to be favourable to colonialism. The strategy that a translator adopts has much to do with his/her ideology, which is a result of the translator's subjectivity. In Chang's case, we cannot say for sure that her ideology has changed, but her change of intention causes the change with regard to the ideology she succumbs to.

This manipulation is manifested in the debasing of Ah Xiao's image while beautifying Garter's in the translation. In the source text, Ah Xiao is an industrious servant, hospitable friend, good wife and loving mother, but in the translation, Chang foregrounds her subaltern aspect. Chang's former fondness of Ah Xiao can be seen in the original title, "Steamed Osmanthus Flower Ah Xiao's Unhappy Autumn," which connotes Chinese culture. The desolation and melancholy of autumn is a common sentimental trope of the Chinese, especially among intellectuals. This is significant because it indicates that Chang regards Ah Xiao as a person with rich feelings capable of forming a deep emotional relationship to the outside world.

However, in the translation, the title becomes "Shame, Amah!", a phrase which Garter uses to mock Ah Xiao with when she

confuses 6 with 9 in taking down telephone numbers, and which thus foregrounds Garter's opinion of Ah Xiao. Chen Jirong (2009) states that the title is tied to the plot and theme of the story, and that it shows that it is Garter who should be ashamed, rather than Ah Xiao (p. 55). However, this comment is self-contradictory. If "Shame, Amah!" reveals the theme, how can it reflect Garter's shame? In our opinion, by using it as the title of her translation, Chang conveys to her target language readers that Ah Xiao is but a colonised woman who lacks basic knowledge—a lack which overshadows her other redeeming features, and which shows Chang's collusion with an Orientalist viewpoint.

In translating the story, Chang renders Ah Xiao into a subaltern silenced woman. In the source text, Ah Xiao is neither a pitiful creature, nor socially degenerate (Shuijing, 2000, p.73). She is financially independent and morally sound, the latter characteristic evident in her contempt of Garter and his like, as well as her loving relationship with her husband. But all of this changes in the translation; Chang goes so far as to add that her son "[is] not her son just as her husband [is] not her real husband" (Chang, 1962, p. 104). Moreover, Chang 'creates' another husband for Ah Xiao, who is working in Australia and is distinct from the one working as a tailor in Shanghai. She also presents the new husband through Garter, putting Ah Xiao firmly under the latter's gaze:

Her husband had already walked out onto the veranda...Schacht³ pretended he did not see him. She had shown him an Australian pound note and asked him to address an envelope to Australia. Crimson and smiling, she told him she had gone to have a photograph of herself and Shin Fa taken and was sending it to her husband who was working in Australia. Apparently it was the first time he had ever sent her money. Then there was this tailor, said to be her husband. It was not uncommon, from what he heard (Chang, 1962, p. 107).

Chen (2009) believes that this addition to the plot is a reflection of Chang's opinion on marriage. Ah Xiao is shown to be merely cohabiting with her tailor husband; but even though without a more real form of marriage, they busy themselves with life and regard family responsibility as the material basis of the union. Their love is deep, tolerant and considerate (p. 57). This analysis does not seem to be entirely sound. Chang (2005) herself contends that compared with flirtation and whoring, cohabiting is ideal, since it carries more responsibility than mere flirtation, and is more humane than whoring (p. 20). Unfortunately, this still does not

³ Chang changes Garter's name to Schacht in the translation and makes it clear through Ah Xiao's mouth that he is German. This change of Garter's nationality from a native of an English-speaking country can be seen as a strategy to avoid displeasing American readers.

explain the ‘creation’ of a new husband for Ah Xiao, since her cohabitation with the tailor is already stated in the source text. We therefore contend that there is another purpose to this addition.

With this “additional” husband, Chang reduces Ah Xiao to the same morally degenerate position as Garter/Schacht, losing the force of contrast between the two characters. Ah Xiao is thus rendered into somewhat of a loose woman. Here, Chang places Ah Xiao under Garter’s gaze, reverting back to the familiar coloniser/colonised pattern in Orientalism. With the ‘knowledge’ about Ah Xiao that Chang grants to Garter in her translation, Garter is endowed with authority over her. As Said (1979) asserts, this authority refers to the coloniser denying the colonised a sense of autonomy (p. 32). Ah Xiao is denied autonomy of representation, and becomes a typical passive and silent subaltern woman. The added husband in the translation, together with the change of her son to an adopted son, brands Ah Xiao with a sense of illegitimacy. This is exactly what colonisers perceive the colonised subject to be: a fake construction, built upon a series of lies. Worse still, by having Garter/Schacht state that “it was not uncommon,” the negative representation is shifted beyond Ah Xiao and onto the general Chinese people.

Chang’s translation also erases Ah Xiao’s feminist subjectivity. In the original, she regrets that she cohabits with the tailor without having a wedding ceremony, but when she tells her husband about her friend’s extravagance of the coming wedding, her

husband just smiles but keeps silent. Then Ah Xiao has the following reaction:

This hurt her; it also made her angry. The worry was all hers, it seemed. It didn’t make much difference to a man whether he got married or not. At the same time she also felt bored by the whole affair. Their child was a big boy now, so what use was there thinking about such things? It was true he wasn’t supporting her, but he probably wouldn’t have been able to support her even if they had been legally married (Patton 2000, p. 107).

She feels it unfair that men and women are judged by different standards if they cohabit. In addition, she realises that marriage does not guarantee financial security: she has to support herself and her son, and sometimes even give him some money. This capacity for reflection indicates an intellectual independence, differing from the common view of Oriental women, who usually accept their social inferiority, and “do not long for the freedom enjoyed by European women” (Park, 2002, p. 527). In Chang’s translation, however, this section is completely omitted, and conceals Ah Xiao’s subjectivity from the target language readers.

Another obvious denial of Ah Xiao’s subjectivity is the omission of the last five paragraphs of the source text. These paragraphs are important for two reasons. First, they correspond with the title and

indicate the coming of desolate autumn, revealing Ah Xiao's unhappy sentiment—a feeling that only an active subject is capable of. The weather (the significance of which is noted above) echoes the unhappiness Ah Xiao feels due to her employer, her unsupportive husband and her unsuccessful son (Zhang, 1996, p. 59-70). However, since these paragraphs are omitted, the story ends with Garter's reflection that Ah Xiao is not as beautiful in her sleep as she looks in the daytime, and his relief that he does not have an affair with her. This ending freezes, as it were, Ah Xiao as a completely silent native woman in Garter's gaze, her value lying only in being of use to the coloniser.

Moreover, in this section a comparison is also made between the pedlar's cry to sell the food, and drunken people singing foreign songs in the street at night. The foreign song is "flimsy and weak," and will soon "vanish" (Patton, 2000, p. 90). Nevertheless, the pedlar's cry is long and sad, and it seems like he is not only carrying some food to sell, but "all the cares of the world" (Patton, p. 91). Whoever the foreign-song-singers are, be it the colonisers or the assimilated natives, their voices will vanish. If we cannot definitively regard this as Chang's prediction of the future of colonialism in China, we can at least say it indicates Chang taking a defiant stance against colonialism. In contrast, the significance she places on the pedlar shows that she thinks the latter is the essence of the nation. Such opinions are in tone with the idea she expresses in her prose, "Epilogue: Days and Nights of China" (1947), wherein she voices her empathy

with poor people, and her identification with the mass and nation through her poem at the end:

*My road passes
across the land of my country.
Everywhere the chaos of my own
people;
patched and patched once more,
joined and joined again, a people
of patched and coloured clouds.
My people...
(Chang, 2005, p. 219)*

In the source text, Chang elevates Ah Xiao and the pedlar to great significance, thus echoing her concern and identification with her people and her nation. Her very decision to omit these paragraphs demonstrates her denial, whether willingly or not, of this sentiment.

While silencing Ah Xiao, Chang also beautifies Garter's image at the same time, omitting any negative descriptions of him. As previously stated, Chang criticises colonialism through her mocking of Garter in the original. In the translation, however, she greatly negates this criticism. In the source text, Garter appears somewhat disgusting, as evident in the excerpt below:

*The flesh on his face was like
uncooked meat, bright red with
traces of blood. Of late, he'd taken
to cultivating an abbreviated
moustache. This made his face look
like a particularly nourishing egg
which had already begun to hatch
open to reveal a pair of tiny yellow*

wings. Nevertheless, Mr. Garter still passed for a handsome man. (Patton, 2000, p. 63)

In the translation, however, Chang's mockery turns into praise, with Garter/Schacht becoming "tall and handsome with a little moustache" (Chang, 1962, p. 95). Another significant change in Chang's translation is that she omits descriptions or comments comparing Garter to a prostitute, so that the metaphorical castration of the colonisers is avoided. Moreover, Ah Xiao and her friend's careful observation of Garter's bedroom is also greatly simplified, and the description of the nude Western model is completely omitted. Through such manipulation, Chang thus takes back the power that she has granted to the colonised in the source text, and the reversed coloniser/colonised relationship is restored within the Orientalist scheme.

Apart from an ideological compromise towards colonialism, Chang adapts to the target language poetics as well. The most obvious is the omission of the newlyweds living upstairs. In the original text, the presence of the newlyweds indicates Ah Xiao's reflection on marriage, so that she is presented as a woman of her own thinking. In the translation, Chang omits all subplots related to the couple. As Liu Shaoming states, when his American students discuss Chang's "The Golden Cangue,"⁴ they normally keep silent because they are confused about the complicated relationship

⁴ "The Golden Cangue" (1943) is generally regarded as Chang's most successful novella (Tang, 1976, p. 124), which involves more than twenty characters.

among the many different characters in the story (qtd. in Yang 2010, p. 59). In "SOF" too there are more than ten characters, and it can thus be inferred that Chang omits the plots about the newlyweds because she does not want to confuse her American readers. This still represents a kind of compromise to the poetics of the target language. While this compromise is not as obvious as that made with ideology, it nevertheless indicates Chang's choice of catering to the target language culture.

Nevertheless, though Chang quite obviously subjects herself to imperial ideology, and partially to the target language poetics, she struggles to keep some features of the Chinese universe of discourse⁵ in her translation. For instance, she provides a literal translation of the Chinese ways of addressing each other, rather than assimilating them to the English ways, "aunt", "sister", and "brother" are used to address neighbours to show the intimate and harmonious relationship among the Chinese people and further stresses the collectivism which is supposed to be characteristic of Chinese people. Moreover, she sticks to phrases such as "the Ninth Moon" instead of using "September." In addition, Chang applies transliteration in some instances, with terms such as *hong* ("company"). Auxiliary words for certain moods or exclamations are also left untranslated, such as Ah Xiao's husband using "wei" instead of "hello" when he calls her. These literal translation and

⁵ The universe of discourse refers to "certain objects, customs and beliefs" in a culture (Lefevere, 2004, p. 87).

transliteration are both effective ways to introduce Chinese culture; however, when set against Chang's ideological and poetic compromise, preserving the universe of discourse in the translation does not help much with the author holding onto her cultural identity.

CONCLUSION

Originally constructed as an excellent text to resist colonialism, "Steamed Osmanthus Flower" is transformed into a text largely subjected to the colonial discourse in its English translation. What lies behind the differences between the source and the target texts is the changing of the author's intention under the influence of her host society. While it is held that Chang resists general literary trends when in China, resistance is made more difficult after her migration to the United States. As a diasporic writer in the host land, she suffers an identity crisis; and to get acknowledged in the English literary field, she has to rid herself of her identity as the Other. She is compelled to do something to counter the claim that the Chinese "did not and never could assimilate with the whites" (Shen, 2006, p. 43). Hence, under the manipulation of American cultural hegemony, she turns to rewriting—adopting the colonialist view to comment on the characters in her story. As a result, the resistance against colonialism in the original turns out to fall largely into the scheme of Orientalism in the translation; the gaze at and judgment on the coloniser is turned back towards the colonised again.

Therefore, Chang as the translator negates her identity as Chang the writer. The famous contention that the author dies after the act of creation can apply in this case, the only difference being that Chang 'murders' herself, instead of being murdered by critics. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the assimilation is not all-encompassing; as an ardent lover of Chinese culture, she struggles to keep some of her cultural heritage in her translation. The clinging to the universe of discourse conveys the traces of Chinese culture to the target culture, but the subjection to the ideology and poetics almost overshadows such traces—the dilemma which the diasporic Asian writer has to face in the host society. Explained with Lacan's idea, the diasporic Asian writer's effort to get accepted by the host society is the entry into the Symbolic Order; he/she has to observe the law and order of the host society so as to be admitted into its signifying order. Only in this way can she get the legitimate identity.

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