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A LACANIAN PERSPECTIVE ON LITERATURE,
TRANSLATION AND THE READER'S (INTER-)SUBJECTIVITY:
READ MY TEXT AND TELL ME WHO YOU ARE

CHENG ON YEE FRANZISKA

MPHIL

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2012

A LACANIAN PERSPECTIVE ON LITERATURE,
TRANSLATION AND THE READER'S (INTER-)SUBJECTIVITY:
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by

CHENG On Yee Franziska

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of the Degree of

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Lingnan University

2012

ABSTRACT

A Lacanian Perspective on Literature, Translation and the Reader's (Inter-)Subjectivity: Read My Text and Tell Me Who You Are

by

CHENG On Yee Franziska

Master of Philosophy

My purpose in this research is to raise some theoretical issues in the study of literature and translation. One dominating attribute of a piece of literary text is its poetic linguistic features, e.g. ambiguity, irony, contradictions and linguistic tension. However, these traits of literary texts are theorized by Julia Kristeva as the manifestation of the drive's dismantling of what Jacques Lacan characterizes as the Symbolic, hence an almost schizophrenic collection of disruptions of the relation between the signifiers and the signifieds. I intend to push this argument further into the realm of translation, arguing that even though it is impossible to achieve an equivalent *translatum*, it is possible to contain most of the meanings, or even plausible to create extra layers of meanings to the text through rendering the target text with the application of theories and the utilization of homophones.

This exploratory thesis takes Translation as its broad topic. More specifically, I am interested in the theory of translation, as well as the practice, as it applies to 'transgressive' texts in English being translated into Chinese (as language and culture), Jeanette Winterson as a case-study example. In the body of this paper, I provide an experimental translation of the first few complex sentences of the beginning of the first Sappho chapter in *Art & Lies* (2005), which demonstrates how the application of Lacanian psychoanalysis may help in the interpretation as well as translation of complicated literary texts. The target text would, ideally, preserve multiple layers of meanings and can be read in some other meaningful way after the application of interdisciplinary theories. In this dissertation, I embrace a heuristic rather than a correctness-based approach to translation which focuses on the explorations of various possible creative multileveled translations. I do not attempt to translate Winterson according to traditional translation norms, and do not attempt to apply Lacanian theory to translation in a rigid and dogmatic way. In other words, the production of the best, or even a defensible way to translate, is *not* my purpose of translation and hence is not any underlying premise of the birth of this thesis.

Moreover, in this dissertation I investigate the nature of reader's intersubjectivity in reading, as neither writing nor translation may be separated from the reading activity. As for intersubjectivity, I refer to the subjectivity of the reader which is dominated

by Other, for *sub-ject* is a person who is controlled and voiced over. The two prevalent manifestations of the Other in reading is the Other as Author-God and the Other as Text. It is the reader's intersubjectivity (rather than simply subjectivity) because these Others do not exist ontologically but only "survive" as an unconscious force in our mutual consciousness, something similar to a shared belief, a collective phenomenon. By discussing and comparing the two Others, the Other as the Author-God and the Other as Text, I demonstrate how these two seemingly contradictory Others do not bring about dramatic differences in the two subjectivities.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

(Cheng On Yee, Franziska)
1st August 2012

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

A LACANIAN PERSPECTIVE ON LITERATURE, TRANSLATION AND THE READERS'
(INTER-)SUBJECTIVITY:

READ MY TEXT AND TELL ME WHO YOU ARE

by

CHENG On Yee Franziska

Master of Philosophy

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1. Introduction

1.1 Translation and its Nature

Translation, the rendering of a text from its source to its target language, is a difficult and demanding task. It requires the translator to possess not only an excellent mastery of linguistic skills and the cultural connotations of both languages, but also an exquisite sensitivity and awareness to subtle cultural differences. An episode which occurred to an acquaintance of mine at a sister institution in Hong Kong recently has caught my mind while I've been considering the nature of translation. Studying for a Master of Arts in Translation at a university with a good reputation in Hong Kong, my colleague, a mainlander who is native in Mandarin Chinese, submitted an assignment which required her to translate a literary text from English into her Chinese. As is well known, literary translation is an especially difficult activity demanding a range of skills and knowledge. When the graded paper was returned from her teacher, she noticed a comment which she perceived as a very serious criticism. The teacher's remark which traumatized her confidence was a deceptively simple remark: '你的中文太歐化！(Your Chinese is too European!)'.

Shocked and depressed as she was, my colleague attempted to understand what was meant by this comment. If she had been told that her English was inadequate, she would have understood immediately, as a second language can always stand improvement. If particular lines of translation had been marked as either wrong or in some way inadequate, again she would have known what to do about it. But to be told that her Chinese is too European is harder to grasp. She

figured that probably the teacher was commenting on aspects of her translation that had more to do with implicit cultural emphases that showed her own points of view, points that stood in some kind of ideological or cultural contrast to those of her teacher. In other words, the way she sees the world, perhaps also politically, as this is reflected linguistically in her translation, is somehow ‘wrong’. It also occurred to her that her teacher was himself unaware of his hidden ideological assumptions, though the traditional Chinese context and the status of the teacher as authority meant that she could not say this to him.

This anecdote spoke to me powerfully in two senses: the first is that a *translatum* may never be separated from a translator’s background; the second is that no interpretation of any text may be separated from the reader. I will go into the first one here, and then the second one. As for the relation between translator and *translatum*, it is both arrogant and ignorant to aver that a translator’s subjectivity does not enter into the process of translation, for it is definite that a translator’s cultural, political, religious, educational as well as family background will influence the way that s/he perceives and *re-presents* the texts.

Undoubtedly, if we are to consider not only the field of Translation Studies but most societies, there is a mainstream celebration of what Douglas Robinson calls a “metempsychotic translation” (63), which can be partly traced back to the translation of the Bible. The term “metempsychosis” refers to the ancient Greek notion of the transmigration of souls from one body (through death) to another; the concept of metempsychotic translation was first introduced in *Translation & Taboo* (1996), using metempsychosis as a metaphor for the traditional ideal for translation, in which the meaning as the disembodied soul of a text is removed from the “dead

body” of the source text and reincarnated in the body of the target text, without change.

The counternormative approach to translation that I propose to explore heuristically here begins with the perception that metempsychotic translation—the dominant ideology of translation as a subordinate, secondary copy of the original, the more loyal the better—is overtly patriarchal and masculine, especially if we take masculinity to signify a defining, positing way of interpreting and classifying the world.

Although deviations from the normative “metempsychotic” approach to translation are often denounced by non-specialists, discussions of and propositions for such counternormative approaches by contemporary academics in Translation Studies are not rare. In her essay ‘Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation’ (1988), for example, Lori Chamberlain attempted to highlight the patriarchal nature of the metempsychotically “ideal” translation, which is, like the superiority of males to females, ideologically “normal” to our societies. As defined by traditional Western culture, translation is an “archetypally feminine activity” which is “reproductive” and “derivative”, “at best an echo”. If the translation in any way “deviates” from the source text, it is then considered “artificial, false, and treasonous” (57-58). When it comes to the subject matter of translation, most people “naturally” (unconsciously) consider metempsychotic translation “normal” and “proper”—particularly those who were raised in the Western nations where Christianity is prevalent, as well as cultures influenced by European colonization. Lacan has elaborated the term “nor-mal” as the norm of males, which coincides with Chamberlain’s application of gender politics in translation studies. And the very interesting term “proper” is remarkably similar to

the word “property”—and indeed the relation between the two is patent in patriarchal societies.

I would therefore like to consider the investigation of the subject matter of translation as something more than a listing of “right” principles of translation, let alone analysis of any specific *translatum* or translating experience *per se*. The nature and the activity of translation carry a heavy connotation of gender, which is one reason why Lacan, with his teaching of the phallus as the empty signifier of loss (symbolic stopping point) and Winterson, as a controversial feminist novelist, have come into place. And, when it comes to the subject matter of translation, psychoanalysis is an important tool for our study since the production and interpretation of translation can never be separated from human subjectivity. Our mind constructs and restricts our perception and interpretation of the text, as well as everything “outside”, which is why I have reserved Chapter 2 for the discussion of reading (inter-)subjectivity. Here, I have especially put down quotation marks on the term “outside”, because the idea of “outside-ness” and otherness is much more complicated than they superficially see. Can we, and how can we, perceive *anything* “outside”, if every image and idea that we perceive must go through our senses and mind?

“Deviant” translation is, similar to adultery, a taboo. Like many other taboos, this ban on unfaithful translation in some English-speaking countries can be traced back to the long history of the rise of European Christianity, in its linguistic and translated aspect, and the defense of the translated fiction of the Septuagint and other stories. As noted by Douglas Robinson in *Translation & Taboo*, the church repressed the critical thinking of both the translators and the masses by categorizing those who realized or spoke of the differences among translations as heretics and then enforced

punishment for deviation, which “[g]radually build the fear of excommunication, execution, eternity in hell into the normative (and eventually universal) structure or ‘principle’ of ‘translation’, so that, when Christian civilization becomes ‘civilized’ enough not to burn ‘bad’ or deviant translators at the stake, no one will want to deviate any longer” (68-9). In other words, the early church took a hard line on what was acceptable or not in translations of biblical texts and punished those who challenged its authority, and by doing so it created an orthodoxy which plays a significant role in the evolution of translation theories in Europe.

If we are to look carefully into the premises, any premises, or requirements of a “good” translation, it is not difficult to see that all of them are taught, i.e. they can never come to us in nature, for there is no such thing as nature without a culture. As Jacques Lacan has commented in Seminar XX, the most crucial and arguably the only thing that God did in Genesis is to name things.

Genesis recounts nothing other than the creation, from nothing, in effect—of what?—of nothing but signifiers. As soon as this creation emerges, it is articulated on the basis of the naming of what is. Isn’t that creation in its essence? While Aristotle cannot help but enunciate that, if ever there was anything it had always been there, isn’t what is at stake in creationism a creation on the basis of nothing—thus on the basis of signifier? (41)

The way that we signify and categorize the world shapes our perception of it, and this is what Lacan means by articulating that “reality is approached with apparatuses of jouissance” and “there’s no other apparatus than language” (Seminar XX 55). Reality is, to Lacan, propped up by fantasy, for our common everyday reality is an illusion that rests on the repression and overlooking of the real of our (illicit) desire. Social reality is, as Slavoj Žižek comments in *Looking Awry* (1991), “nothing but a fragile, Symbolic cobweb that can at any moment be torn aside by an

intrusion of the real” (17). Lacan has explained in Seminar XVII that “the coefficient of fabrication” perpetuates in our sensation of reality that the reality is constructed by our perception of it and this perception *per se* is an anamorphosis. This is why we may never know the thing-in-itself. As John Locke has put it in one simple sentence, “*Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu* (Nothing is in the understanding that was not previously in the senses)”. However, we, as subjects, are unaware of the construction, especially when it is a well-believed one, as we usually internalize and rationalize the majority’s standard as the better, the best, and eventually the universal law of a certain existence. In *Translation & Taboo*, Robinson has demonstrated the psyche of a “normal” translator (who is voiced over by the normative ideology of metempsychotic translation) and the archetypical three-step processes of rationalization: Repression, Denial, and at last Rationalization. The social and religious institute (i.e. the Church) celebrates metempsychotic translation and sets up restrictive norms to repress alternatives, first by direct punishment such as execution and excommunication, and later on by the mystification of counter-normative ideas as “irrational”, “not-worth-considering” or even “non-existent”. After the continuous process of repression and denial, not only the Church but also the people, who were long taught to repress and deny, rationalize the preferable premises (metempsychotic translation) as the “right” and inevitable way to translate.

However, regardless of the constant, enthusiastic denial and denunciation of the existence of translators’ subjectivity, which was and still is a common phenomenon among not only laymen but also translators, it is important to bear in mind that translator’s subjectivity has never been, or more precisely, cannot be totally rejected in the mainstream. Not only because it is, from the “normal” negative belief, the residue which will always haunt us as human translators but also because

human subjectivity and participation lie in the essence of metempsychotic translation. In Robinson's *Who Translates* (1990), he presented a sophisticated argument (through the investigation of spirit-channeling in ancient times) on the undeniable existence of translators' subjectivities beyond reason in target text:

[...] spirit-channels are never perfectly passive. Spirit-channels contribute to the channeling process too. Channeling in the spiritualist literature is much more of a meeting of minds than it is the total possession of a living body by a discarnate mind. As spirit-channels describe themselves, they are never the mere helpless instruments of the discarnate spirits; they are often highly active, engaged in interpreting the sights and sounds and feelings sent to and through them from what they describe as the spirit world. So far from being passive invisible conduits, in fact, spirit-channels in many cultures have even feared and revered as shamans, priests, even as gods and goddesses. (16)

Through a vivid explanation of the nature of spirit-channeling, Robinson argues that entirely passive translator has never existed even back in the ancient time, when Christians believed in the theory propagated by Philo Judaeus, the Christian myth of the 72 divinely inspired translators of the Hebrew Bible at Alexandria (the Septuagint). These translators, Robinson suggested, have never been thought of as "passive conduits or vessels", surprisingly contradictory to the dominating belief, sprung from this myth, that translators are empty machines of function other than passing the soul (meaning) of a text from one body (language) to the other. Translators are, according to the Christian legend, the origin of metempsychotic translation, respected mediums whose subjectivity cannot and should not be denied or neglected.

This dissertation is not only a paper on translation, or the application of psychoanalysis on English-Chinese translation; it is, simultaneously, a thesis on literature. I attempt to investigate and understand literature through translation, by

looking into other significant layers of meanings in a text through the interpretation of its *translatum*. After Blanchot and Derrida the elitist cosmopolitan notion that deeper understanding of texts moves, and moves *only*, through translation has become a popular, nonetheless controversial notion. Regardless of the disappointment and anger stemming from monolinguals and “pure” (English) literature scholars, it is nevertheless undeniable that translation can teach us something about literature as elite complex writings, and as a “sub-product” of cultural and political systems. If we are to consider the nature of translation, it is, to simplify, an exercise of reading and rewriting. Rewriting texts, i.e. expressing a certain central idea (soul) with diverse signifiers (body), or the failure of it, is, by nature, an act of interrogating the texts—an inevitable transgression: to (re)produce a translation is to push the source text beyond the otherness of language and culture. Think about the eternal futility of taming a foreign text: it is impossible to tame any exotic writing perfectly because, to start with, there is an otherness which cannot be completely internalized. Despite the famous saying from Shakespeare according to which “that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet”, we must not forget that languages do shape the way we categorize and interpret things. A very simple example is the term 人中, literally “human-centre”, which is exclusively generated to refer to the medial cleft extended from the nose to the upper lip (ending at the cupid’s bow) on human beings. This concept of 人中 is significant to the Chinese culture, for it plays a very important role in Chinese face reading. The depth and length of a 人中 is believed to foretell the number of children by implying the ease of fertility, which was crucial, especially to women, in ancient times. Although we have the word “philtrum” in English, it was not specifically created to

refer to human beings: there is a “dog philtrum” and a “cat philtrum”, and to refer to humans we will have to add the term “human” before “philtrum”.

Lacking of a special signifier for the “human philtrum” does not mean English-speakers cannot observe the cleft between the nose and the upper lip. Provided that their visual ability is intact, people who speak different languages should share the same vision when they observe the same object—it is total nonsense to suspect that English natives could not see the nasal cleft because they do not have a term similar to 人中, just as the fact that there are no suffix-implied tenses in Chinese does not mean that Chinese cannot tell the difference between day and night, or cannot articulate them. However, what I attempt to argue from the example of 人中 is that, when English-speakers look at a face, it is relatively less likely for them to focus on the depth or length of the cleft, for that part of the body does not signify anything significant to them.

Here, if we try to recall how Lacan interprets the relation between language and reality, we find the issue more complicated. As Lacan believes that language is the condition of the unconscious, the way that language works and how it constructs images or ideas will enormously influence how our unconscious works. The slip of tongue, for instance, of 人中 as the implication of a woman’s anxiety over infertility could occur exclusively in Chinese, while this complex concept would be impossible to transfer into simple English without the detailed explanation of the Chinese cultural background and the patent patriarchal structure in ancient times. As a result, there is something more than the superficial meanings of a linguistic term which could be translated directly and equivalently, which is the otherness of a source/target language.

During the process of translation, one may gradually get used to the solution of dealing with this otherness, yet no one can perfectly engulf the otherness in language and culture and turn it into anything completely belonging to the “self”, simply because it does not stem from and is not contained in the source language and culture. This otherness is always in-between and elusively ambiguous. It restlessly resists symbolization, while simultaneously representing both and none. If translation can achieve any function more than promoting and spreading a text to our foreign reader, it would certainly be providing one crucial layer of literary interpretation, a layer which is both excessive and deficient. And isn’t it the case that the metaphors in the two etymologies of “translation” and “transgression” are similar (“carrying across” and “stepping across”)?

1.2 Jeanette Winterson and Chinese translation

In this paper I take Jeanette Winterson as a case-study example, so as to raise the attention of translation as a means to understand not only her writing but also any other complex literary texts. And let me state categorically here at the outset that my primary focus is on translation, and specifically a heuristic and transgressive exploration of the possibilities of translation for the understanding of literature, and specifically of literature as an expression of the human psyche. This is not literary criticism: I am not interested in offering a comprehensive interpretation of Jeanette Winterson. Nor is it traditional translation criticism, either of existing Chinese translations of her novels (though I will do a little of that in passing), or of my own, in the ancient mode of “this is why I translated the text as I did.” I am not at all

interested in establishing, or even interrogating, “the right way to translate.” Nor, for that matter, is it traditional translation theory, in the sense of attempting to establish what translation is. What I do here is primarily Lacanian literary theory, using Lacan’s thought about language and the psyche to explore literature in the cross-cultural flows opened up by translation.

Winterson’s novels, starting from *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* in 1985, have always been complicated and challenging for not only common readers but also literary scholars to interpret. Her application of vocabulary, grammar and story structure is constantly elusive and ambiguous, which creates difficulty in understanding the texts in a traditional, linear way, and hence also in translating them.

Although it has long been recognized that absolute equivalence is unattainable in translation, Winterson’s novels resist translation in a much higher degree than most literary texts because her writing is *so* complexly saturated in the linguistic usage of the English language and the cultural background, especially the Christian and other myths, of the European countries. However, we cannot deny the fact that translating Winterson is an effective exercise in reading her, as it gives us an opportunity to contemplate her writing extremely carefully. Moreover, translation may help us learn more about literature as literature, precisely because it is so difficult.

In order to demonstrate how the complexity of literary texts may have an impact on translation, I would like to raise two interesting examples from Winterson’s writings: the first one is the term “the Word” in *Art & Lies*, a two-hundred-page novel published eighteen years ago but never translated into either simplified or traditional Chinese. The second one is an overt addition in the content

of the simplified Chinese translation of *Weight* (2005), which is a patently obvious ideological smuggling, uncommon and “perverted” for the traditional metempsychotic translation.

The first example “the Word” demonstrates how religious implications determine the perception of the same piece of text by two different ethnic and cultural groups. Raised by a pair of zealously religious Evangelist adoptive parents, Winterson has been familiar with biblical verses and stories since childhood. Her intimate connection with Christianity is profoundly reflected by her frequent invocation of biblical connotations in her writing.

In the first Sappho section of *Art & Lies*, Winterson quotes and comments on the concept of “the Word” (54-5), which originates from John 1:1 in the New Testament: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” In the Chinese translation of the Bible, the same verse is rendered: “太初有道，道与神同在，道就是神。” The Word is translated as 道 in Chinese, which is Dao. Dao in Chinese is “the way”, which as a result refers coincidentally to another verse in the New Testament, John 14:6, “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’”. And, more significantly, the character Dao is, for the Chinese reader, the same Dao in Daoism.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to deeply investigate the nature of Dao and its relation to languages as well as the Lacanian subject, so I would reserve a critical discussion about these issues to another occasion. Here, I highlight the translational problem of the Word and Dao in order not only to emphasize the difficulty in translating Winterson but also to raise an important dilemma in literary translation. It is more than the old-school argument over whether the translator should give priority to the source text or the target reader, to the literal content or the

implicit cultural references—no matter whether a translator goes for a literal or a cultural translation, the translation will inevitably mock both the writer and the rewriter.

If the translator favors a literal translation, the Christian connotation is lost; on the other hand, if the translator preserves the biblical connotation, its reference is still lost because the target culture modifies the cultural connotation. Christianity in Winterson's work is replaced by Daoism in most Chinese readers' minds, without any single hesitation, because we as Chinese are all raised by the culture in which Dao has everything to do with Daoism rather than Christianity. This example supports what I suggested in the introduction, that the production of meaning, i.e. the interpretation of text, depends far more on the reader than on the writer, and hence what "you" reads from my text tells me who you are but never who I am (provided that I am the writer).

For Winterson's English reader, the Word carries a biblical connotation; but for her Chinese audience, Dao would carry a Daoist connotation, which is arguably a more suitable translation of the Logos (Λόγος), "the Word" in Greek, since Dao in Daoism carries the meaning of a mystical, powerful entity. Although it is arguable whether the translation of Christianity into Daoism is *much more* justifiable than it superficially seems, for both are powerful and well-established religions in the two cultures, still we must not overlook the fundamental differences between the two religions: the most patent one, drawing the contextualization with Winterson's works, is their attitude towards sex. The Christian church takes a prudish stance and condemns sex as the original sin, for which we deserve to be burnt for eternity to redeem. However, Daoism suggests that sex is a necessary part of life because it believes in the harmony between *yin* and *yang*. Achieving this harmony through

sexual intercourse (especially when the woman is pleased and ejaculation is withheld) would, according to the teaching of the Daoism sexual practices—“the bedroom arts”—keep people in good health and help them attain longevity.

Based on this foundational difference between the Christian and the Daoist stances on sex, we could imagine how diverse the meanings of the English source text and the Chinese translation would be, when the Word and 道 appear in a novel with some certain variety of sexual practices, including homosexuality, incest and castration. This example speaks vividly to us on how the death of some cultural references is determined by numerous factors *outside* the texts, such as a society’s religious, cultural and political background, which has pretty much shown us why the search for an equivalent translation of literary texts is always a futile quest. Instead of seeking a way to achieve an equivalent translation, the metempsychotic translation, the “correct” translation, we should produce interesting translations, complex translations, creative multileveled translations which can teach us more about literature and help us understand an author—in our case, Jeanette Winterson. This is my foremost, basic belief and premise on which this dissertation is based. I embrace a heuristic approach to translation and I do not attempt to focus on the best way to translate Winterson (or a few, a small group of correct ways to translate it). My attention lies on the extraordinary productivity raised from the convergence of the creative Chinese translation of Winterson and Lacan, again applied through a heuristic rather than a dogmatic approach. Contextualization and consideration of the author’s cultural and historical background, or the lack of it, were not given and should not be given higher priority than the production and analysis of various exploratory Chinese translations.

The second very interesting example which demonstrates the complexity of Chinese translations of Winterson and how a translation may impact a source text is the smuggling of anti-capitalism in the Chinese translation of *Weight*, 重量, published by Chongqing Publication House in 2005. In this simplified Chinese translation of *Weight*, an additional assault on capitalism is smuggled into the discussion of knowledge and the future, radically patent. In the chapter “Boundaries”, on page 133 of the English version, the line “like all dreams the details are strange” is replaced by the following short passage summarizing Fukuyama’s idea of capitalism ending history:

历史的终结意味着科学的开端。历史的终结，一个具有煽动性的标题。这就是福山选择它的原因。他认为，历史由相互冲突的意识形态构成，现在资本主义已经成为全球的主导模式，因而历史被终结了。(124)

I have translated its meaning into English, thus:

The end of history implies the start of science. The end of history. A demagogic title. This is the reason why Fukuyama picked it. He thinks, history is constructed by a struggle between ideologies, now capitalism has become the international leading model, therefore history is ended.

Jeanette Winterson never commented on capitalism in *Weight*, and therefore this additional paragraph definitely seems a bit awkward. If we are to approach this translatum from a traditional metempsychotic view of translation, then this translator is definitely “deviant” since he “distorts” the source. However, instead of standing at the patriarchal viewpoint, I would like to step back and look at this excessive

paragraph from a different angle—would this idea be, in any way, similar to Winterson’s recurring motifs?

Gender is everywhere, especially when it is used in a metaphorical sense. It is about thinking patterns, and simultaneously about power difference. Isn’t capitalism a hegemonic ideology which oppresses alternatives, like communism? Ideologies such as capitalism and democracy become covertly totalitarian in the recent centuries in that they seem to be accepted by most people as the way things should be, including those who are oppressed in this system—and doesn’t this collide with the battle that Winterson fights for in her writings, i.e. the war against the dominating faces of the Other? If we are to approach the issue from this perspective, it is not difficult to see that the Chinese translator of *Weight* did not “deviate” from the “writer’s meaning”—in quotation marks because, as discussed in page 6, every image or idea that we perceive must go through our senses and mind, hence exists as our construction rather than the thing-in-itself. In other words, it is impossible for a (translator as) reader to really know the writer’s meaning; this “writer’s meaning” can only be the reader’s guess, i.e. a fiction. Rather than a “distortion”, the Chinese translator has, from a certain aspect, *reinforced* the “writer’s belief” by inserting additional content that would, in the eyes of the target reader, collide with or explain the “author’s motif”.

1.3 Jeanette Winterson and Lacanian Psychoanalysis

Another significant reason for me to have chosen Jeanette Winterson as a case-study example is that her recurring writing motifs fit a psychoanalytic research

approach. Winterson is somehow obsessed with the idea that languages form powerful, invisible boundaries that restrict human beings in every aspect. Throughout her oeuvre she keeps interrogating the nature of language and how it shapes our perception of body, sex and desire, as well as how language helps us tackle loss and sorrow. These topics, coincidentally (or not so), are some of the major research areas that certain renowned psychoanalysts, Jacques Lacan among them, have devoted their careers to investigate.

Lacan has placed unprecedented emphasis on languages, “the gift of Danaoi”, in the formation of the unconscious and hence the Other. His teaching highlights the relation between languages and sexuation, body, love, desire, jouissance, loss, knowledge, truth, the reality, the unconscious and so on, which are all Winterson’s recursive writing motifs. The similarity between their writing topics somehow promises their compatibility as well as the productivity from it. It would not be overenthusiastic or naive to expect Lacanian theories to provide us an insight into not only Winterson’s writing but also every single piece of literature which carries the themes suggested above, as well as the subject matter of translation and literary translation. Also, if we are to apply Lacanian psychoanalysis from a heuristic approach, it is not impossible for Winterson, or in a more general sense, literature and the study of translation, to provide us an insight into the understanding of Lacan’s teaching. This thesis, in other words, is based on a radically heuristic use of *both* Lacan and Chinese translation. My application of Lacanian theories, even if recognized as not absolutely “correct” (systematic, programmatic) to dogmatic Lacanians—since Lacan himself never translated this way and he constantly gave emphasis on the importance of the patient’s family and cultural background (which is contradictory to my Death-of-the-Author approach)—would nevertheless help us

understand (again) the Chinese translations of brief passages from *Art & Lies*, which would then help us understand Lacanian theories more complexly as it is the use of Lacan in transcending Lacan himself.

Winterson, as suggested previously, has always been fighting a battle with mainstream ideologies such as heterosexuality, Christianity, and history or science as the truth, which are, I argue, some of the dominating faces of the Other. These manifestations of the Other shape our unconscious, restrict our desire and embody themselves in the gaze of other human beings (or, in the eyes of a statue, a toy, a camera lens, etc.). Through the return of the disturbing gaze from the others, we as subjects are silently judged and questioned with penetrating accuracy. As a result, Winterson attempts to challenge and undermine the long-established systems in our society, “the-way-things-are,” which has long been internalized by the majority; and in order to do so she promoting another manifestation of the Other, the Other-as-anarch, the Other-as-child, etc., which would “liberate” us from the dominating dimensions of the Other. Yet, we must not forget that this “liberation” from the mainstream is, and can only be, a liberation in quotation marks, for this “liberation” from the, say, well-accepted ideology of heterosexuality implies the submission to another ideology, e.g. homosexuality or bisexuality, relatively less (outwardly) supported but still a(nother) manifestation of the Other. After all, there cannot be any liberation from the Other unless the subject abandons the Symbolic, which would make him/her impossible to communicate with.

However, in order to survive as an individual in a society with so many oppressive beliefs, it is the task of a writer, a translator, or even a reader, to interrogate the dominating ideologies so that we will notice how reality and the truth are constructed. There are various cultural norms that we have internalized as the

truth, and for a society and the human beings to progress we must understand that many taboos, many “unchangeable” rules, *are* culturally constructed hence are changeable. Some people criticize Lacan for pessimistically destroying our hope, since he denounces the stupid, unknowing subject as a helpless idiot who is entirely controlled by the big Other, but it is precisely because subjectification is not fixed that change, and therefore hope, is promised.

There is a Chinese proverb which I find to coincide with Winterson’s and Lacan’s belief in language, and the problems stemmed from it: 解鈴還需繫鈴人, “only the one who ties the bell (a metaphor for a problem) can take it off”. In the last few decades Winterson has been working out a ways to re-gain our freedom through language, the primary prison which confines us. The relation between language and reality, hence restriction and desire, and everything as construction, is so intimate that I firmly believe that psychoanalysis could help us to (re-)understand and (re-)produce Winterson, and, on a larger scale, to approach the subject matter of reading, understanding literature and translation more profoundly. This is how Lacan comes into the picture. Winterson’s writings are structurally and linguistically so complex that a linear perception of a coherent meaning is impossible. In order to translate or to read, to understand, her work, we will need to find out the meanings of the text—but whose meanings should we seek? A traditional reading method encourages readers to look for the writer’s meaning, the “correct” interpretation of the text, as they basically believe that the author has a quasi-theological power similar to God-as-Creator. (In Chapter 2 I will elaborate on the notion of the Other as Author-God in the reader’s intersubjectivity, and compare it with the postmodern notion of the Other as Text.)

However, as hinted in the previous sections, it does not sound feasible to attain the writer's meaning, as we can neither penetrate the author's mind nor access the thing-in-itself, the "outside-ness". It is, and can only be, our psychological (and therefore fictional) perception that we bring to the text, our imaginary construction of "the author's mind"; readers can never know anything about writers apart from, or without relying on, their own personal perception. This perception is, without doubt, constructed, hence restricted, by the reader's personal background on culture, politics and religions. It is never possible to find a writer's meaning, for it is impossible to look for anything not-self, or without going through the self.

A writer's meaning to a reader is, as a result, what the reader *presumes* as the author's meaning. As the subtitle of this dissertation has hinted, it is always the reader's interpretation of the writer: *read my text and tell me who you are*. When my reader leaves me criticism on my writing, from praise and critical challenge I will be able to tell how they interpret the text, in other words, how their mind is at work. For instance, in my Facebook status I once criticized the Catholic church for conniving at pedophiles' perverted sexual assault on children, and one of my acquaintances interpreted the word "perverted" as homosexual rather than pedophilic, regardless of the existence of the phrase "sexually assaulting young children" in the sentence. He wrote back a very long criticism on "my" prejudice against homosexuality, and his over-reaction leads to this question in my head—how could I ever predict that my reader would interpret "perverted" as homosexual instead of pedophilic, when I have never thought that way? Rather than seeking refuge from my author-ity as an author (to claim that I did not mean that), I simply explained to him that a person or an object possessing few attributes simultaneously does not equate the attributes to one another, and, if he was still unsatisfied with the "answer" (and he was not), he

should feel free to interpret my text any way he wants since meanings lie more on readers rather than writers. However, I could not help wondering why he, or his unconscious, would immediately read the word “perverted” as referring to homosexuality, as he is the only acquaintance of mine who did so. This very recent incident, unexpected and foolish, nonetheless nudges me to think profoundly about the reader’s intersubjectivity in reading ...

In the final paragraphs of the Introduction, I would like to briefly demonstrate the flow of this paper. This dissertation will start with an investigation on how the reader’s intersubjectivity influences the interpretation of texts, through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis in Chapter 2. I attempt to compare the effects of the author as Other on reading intersubjectivity to the effects of the text as Other on reading intersubjectivity, and will provide a careful explanation why the differences in the two Others do not bring about dramatic differences in the two subjectivities. Then, in Chapter 3, I will apply Lacanian psychoanalysis briefly on some of Winterson’s published novels. I introduce some key Lacanian concepts, such as *objet petit a*, together with few of Winterson’s complex writings, e.g. *The Passion* and *Art & Lies*. I attempt to explain the crucial role of *objet petit a* in repetition and obsession, and link it with Winterson’s recurring plot and the obsession to repeat and sacrifice, most patently shown in Atlas in *Weight*.

In Chapters 4 and 5, my experimental Chinese translation of brief passages from *Art & Lies* will be provided, following with a detailed explanation on how the application of Lacanian theories and their intimate relation with Winterson’s obsession (repetition) play their roles in the production as well as interpretation of the creative translations. Through my multilayered translation of the beginning sentences of the first Sappho chapter, I attempt to demonstrate how a translatum may

preserve multiple layers of meanings of the source text, particularly through the application of homophones and, most significantly, to show how the target text may create new (excessive) meanings to the text through the lens of psychoanalytic and critical theories. This ambitious research topic, I believe, may function as a strong refutation of the stereotype of translation as loss, or, from another perspective, may highlight the intimate relation between loss and excess.

2. The Author-God and the Text as the Other on Reading

(Inter-)Subjectivity

One major reason for me to have selected *Art & Lies* as my tentative experimental translation target lies in the literary complexity of the novel. The Sappho chapters in *Art & Lies* arguably constitute one of the most complicated and intertextual texts of Winterson's writings. To demonstrate the chapter's translatability, I have selected few specific keywords from the novel to carry out an experimental translation. The first few examples are from the beginning sentences of the first Sappho chapter, in page 51 of *Art & Lies*:

I am a Sexualist.

In flagrante delicto.

The end-stop of the universe.

Say my name and you say sex.

Say my name and you say white sand under a white sky white trammel of my thighs.

It is neither fatuous nor hyperbolic to suggest that the sentences above do not convey any coherent messages. Similar to many of Winterson's skillful writing, this very short passage is a conundrum formed by sentence fragments which have no obvious connection among each other. But could it be possible that the relation is written on the body of the text that it is only visible under a certain light? Apart from raising readers' interest and enjoying the pleasure of playing with language, one

reason for writers like Winterson to put down linearly unaccountable ideas, i.e. to render their texts as fragments, is that they want the words to function as a barrier which rejects external authority—no external authority can be exerted on the feminist/feminine text since it is only accountable to its own kind, only interpretable by its own language and logic—because when anyone wants to impose masculine logic onto women, Woman does not exist. As Lacan has theorized in “God and Woman’s jouissance” in Seminar XX:

Woman can only be written with a bar through it. There’s no such thing as Woman, Woman with a capital *W* indicating the universal. There’s no such thing as Woman because, in her essence [...] she is not-whole. ‘Woman’ (*la*) is a signifier, the crucial property (*propre*) of which is that it is the only one that cannot signify anything, and this is simply because it grounds woman’s status in the fact that she is not-whole. That means we can’t talk about Woman (*La femme*).¹ (73)

Women are the excess of and are unaccountable to the Symbolic as well as its masculine structure. To read this feminine, i.e. disruptive, text, readers can only refer one phrase back to the other, until the fragments collide and clash with one another and we hear the echoes. The external authority of the traditional common reader, who presumes, and is so confident with his assumption, that texts should follow the “normal” structure and grammar and can be perceived linearly is here implicitly mocked. The causality between two successive sentences, one of the most basic tenets of “normal” writing, has no guarantee in disruptive feminine writings. This writing style deprives not only the reader of his external authority over the text but also the writer of her “theological” *author*-ity—even the writer herself cannot limit

¹ In Lacanian psychoanalysis, something only “exists” when it can be fully inscribed in the Symbolic. As for something which cannot be completely articulated or categorized by the Symbolic, such as the Other’s jouissance which persists in mind as an ideal or fantasy yet does not exist in the reality (since it can never be articulated), Lacan uses the vocabulary “ex-sists”, which “persists and makes its claims felt with a certain insistence from the outside, as it were”. (*Reading Seminar XX* 35)

the possibility of the text. To put this in a mystic way, human agents do not triumph. Fragments do. Text does.

There have long been arguments on whether human subjectivity—of authors, translators and readers—exists in both writing and rewriting. The answer to this issue is, to me personally, extremely clear: no matter how hard some people try to ignore human's involvement in writing (especially religious texts) and translation, it is undeniable that, from the Kantian notion, our perception is and will *always* be limited by our senses and our very existence as *homo sapiens*. The subjectivity of authors, rewriters and readers cannot *not* exist in the interpretation and translation of the texts, simply because these kind of intellectual activities must go through our mind. Since our perception is restricted by our sense, we can never know anything without bias, i.e. without relying on *our* sense, *our* mind etc.

In Kant's terms, we may never know "things-in-themselves". Even for concepts like space, time, (the existence of) substance or causality, our experience of these kind of *a priori* concepts is restricted by human sensibility, hence cannot be used to measure the "things-in-themselves". For anything which appears in space and time, it only appears when it is sensed by our minds. In other words, there is no method to know anything without going through our sensibility. Therefore, the "things-in-themselves", the world as it is in itself, are forever unknowable, since for anything to be knowable it must have been processed by our sensibility, i.e. biased. In John Locke's maxim, "[n]othing is in the understanding that was not previously in the senses," including the interpretation of texts.²

The subjectivity of the readers, especially before the postmodern and poststructural wave, was significantly constructed and influenced by the Author. By

² Note that the "senses" in Locke's phrase is often taken to imply empiricism, which is to say, the individual's sensory contact with reality. I am taking the term here to imply phenomenology, which is to say, the individual's sense-based (but ultimately imaginative) *construction* of reality.

using the word Author with a capital A, I refer to the *abstract projection* of the authors as individuals in the mind of the readers, i.e. the readers' *psychological (hence fictional) construction* of the generalized *author-itative* figures of writers. This Author, which possesses "theological" superiority and power and is very similar to the big Other in Lacanian psychoanalysis, is first commented upon by Barthes in his significant essay "The Death of the Author" (1967). When it comes to the term "Author" with a capital "A", we can think of authors as Other on reading intersubjectivity from the readers' point of view. The reason behind this concept is that the Author is the readers' subjective psychological construction in nature, hence is considered as the intersubjective Other which is dramatically different from the *exact individuals* of writers or rewriters *as subjects*.

One of the arguments that I have been making since the beginning of this dissertation is that human subjectivity always exists in the process of reading, hence also of translating. Regardless of the notable celebration of "the removal of the Author" (Barthes 145) since the 1970s, an academic movement which prompts the autonomy of a text as well as its subjectivity and afterlife (which allows and calls for translation), human subjectivity has never been displaced in the study of literature. The phenomenon of the emphasis on the Text, no matter how superficially it seems to indicate an effacement or denial of human subjectivity, should not be considered equivalent to such an effacement. In the era of postmodernism and poststructuralism, the single theological author-ity of the Author-God which is "tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions" (Barthes, 143) simply has his role assumed by the Text as the big Other in the form of an impersonalized God—which is to say that both the Author and the Text are subjective constructs organized by the big Other. There is no Author and no Text outside the Other.

Let me be very cautious and move slowly in this argument—here, I am trying to compare the effects of the author as Other on reading intersubjectivity to the effects of the text as Other on reading intersubjectivity. The interpretation of the author as God over the text is the “traditional” reading style, which was an over-prevalent phenomenon in the history of reading. This “normal” reading style, which puts the writer on a pedestal, is still popular nowadays among the majority of non-specialists who have no expertise in literary studies or humanities. When a reader interprets the author as the author-itative God who decides, controls and knows (all of) the meaning of the texts, s/he hunts for the author’s meaning by going through the writer’s entire literary output, dictionaries, the writer’s interviews and columns or other publications, etc., so as to figure out the single correct interpretation of the text. The author is, in this case, similar to the omnipotent God who wields such total power over the text that if the writer says s/he does not (or, *ex post facto*, did not) intend a certain thing then that interpretation is a *wrong* and excessive *deviation*. Here, the reader feels awe at the control of the Author, the generalized powerful author-itative figure who is supposed to know everything in traditional beliefs on reading, i.e. the Author as the Other.

However, when the reader encounters the text as Other, she considers the text as either an opportunity to transform it into *her own* (i.e. to encounter herself in the finished product of her interpretation) or as a complicated system which instills awe in her. In this case, I call this sublime, “automatic” system (which has an afterlife, which chases after life) the Text, with a capital T. The Text functions as (another) Other of the readers which haunts us as a mystic, abstract, unfathomed energy and knowledge with its own life whose multi-dimensional space is totally beyond the reader’s imagination. The Text opens up countless opportunity to interpret written

texts, but exactly due to this promise of an infinite possibility of interpretation, authors and readers can no longer claim to know what we write or read. Our linguistic, cultural, political as well as academic background obstructs us from any ideal perception of the Text.

In the reign of the Author, there is one and only one correct interpretation of the texts; any deviations will be punished. But after the Author-God abdicated the throne in the Text's favor, texts can no longer be completely interpreted, as explained above, due to the demand of an afterlife and the *translatum*, i.e. a new and never-ending re-presentation which guarantees the unexplored space of the Text. This is what Walter Benjamin theorizes as "translatability" in his article "The Task of the Translator" (Benjamin *Illuminations*). In this paper, Benjamin introduces the concept of translatability, which governs translation:

Translatability is an essential quality of certain works, which is not to say that it is essential that they be translated; it means rather that a specific significance inherent in the original manifests itself in its translatability [...] Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original—not so much from its life as from its afterlife [...] For in its afterlife—which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living—the original undergoes a change. (71-3)

Benjamin believes that the continuous maturation of the text (through the collection of fragments) can lead to "pure language", which "no single language can attain by itself but which is realized only by the totality of their intentions supplementing each other", and therefore the "eternal life of the works and the perpetual renewal of language (74).

Therefore, thanks to the domination of the Text, the meanings of texts become ambiguous, unlimited and impossible to be fully (re)presented. There is no

longer any absolute standard of right and wrong when it comes to text interpretation, but only different interpretive layers or approaches. This atmosphere of reading skepticism, prevalent after the postmodern and poststructuralist wave, is enticing yet double-binding in nature. The thrift of this belief which denies any absolute claims may only rest on the basis of an absolute premise—that undetected interpretations must exist. For one to claim that these are not the only, or the only small group of, correct interpretations of a certain text, one has to make sure that there are potential interpretations which are not yet discovered—and this is an absolute premise for denying any absolute claims, thus double-binding. This logic is fundamentally very similar to the validation of the paradoxical claim “I do not know every/anything.” An affirmative preposition “I know I do not know every/anything” is a compulsory condition for the absolute skepticism “I do not know every/anything” to function. Built on a self-refuting premise, this paradoxical, absolute skepticism of text interpretation has put on the mask of Reason but secretly triumphs through the underlying mystic elements in its presumption.

At this point, it may be surprising that I reach the conclusion that the differences in the two Others (Author and Text) do not result in huge differences in the two subjectivities. At this moment you might be wondering: don't we all agree that when a reader interprets the author as God over the text, s/he searches for the author's meaning and feels awe at the author's control; but when a reader encounters the text as Other, s/he transforms the text into his/her own interpretation or feels the Text instilling awe in him/her, and therefore should render us the primary differences between the two Others as my searching for author's meaning, versus my decision to transform meaning into my own? The Author and the Text as Other are,

superficially, contradictory to each other; however, it is arguable that to a certain extent, the Text is not dramatically different from the Author.

To start with, the Text is, very much like the Author, a manifestation of what Lacan calls the Other-capital-O, what Žižek renamed the big Other, an abstract powerful unconscious force similar to patriotism or God. They do not exist ontologically and are “nowhere in reality”, but it would be both shallow and naive to suggest that these notions do not exist, for all the wars and murders in history, initiated and encouraged by “the Fatherland” or God, can function as excellent evidence of their existence. As Žižek has argued in *Enjoy Your Symptom!* (1992), “We cannot explain the very material reality of fights and sufferings without reference to it.” Billions and billions of people are willing to sacrifice everything, including their property, family and life for the glory of their religion or country, or for unconscious forces like freedom which wield tremendous power over us. Sacrifice, no matter how selfless and holy it seems, must refer back to the self, which is controlled by the big Other. In Chinese, there is an idiom 自編自導自演的戲, “a play which is self-written, self-directed and self-acted”, which is arguably one of the best definitions of the term “sacrifice”. In another mind-blowing book *On Belief* (2001), Žižek introduces the two common falsities of the concept of sacrifice: the first one resides on the underlying presupposition that one may only sacrifice something that one possesses, while the second one is that sacrifice rests on the notion of exchange, i.e. the subject sacrifices his property, honor, future or life so as to gain something back in exchange. In Chapter 3, I will provide a more profound investigation of the idea of sacrifice, as well as its relation to repetition, obsession and the big Other (pp. 50-68).

To summarize the discussion of the big Other briefly here, it is unwise to suggest that patriotism or God does not exist since they leave a huge impact on people's lives, but on the other hand they never exist ontologically. They only exist insofar as they are *mutually constructed* as a kind of *intersubjective*, collective and abstract "power" which has no actual form or body but is nevertheless strong and significant enough to construct, shape and restrict the way we see ourselves and the world. And, the Author and Text that I discussed previously lie in the exact same category with God or the Fatherland, which is "the Other" in Lacan's terminology. The Text is the big Other of contemporary readers, the formless God whose gaze rests on us, endlessly criticizing and barring us from every interpretation of the text, from our interpretation of the text, by pointing his finger at us and repeating his command: "this is not the right one" (because there is no right one to start with). Since there is no absolute correct interpretation of *any* text and there are infinite possible interpretations, the Text consequently overtops the human as another theological figure which forever questions and punishes us for our own subjectivity—we, as human beings as well as constructed subjects, are limited in the sense that our interpretation of texts is eternally bound by our educational and cultural background (hence blinds us to an all-directional interpretation of texts).

This is the second reason why I suggested that there is no dramatic difference between the subjectivities brought about by the two Others (Author and Text): When we think about our personal interpretation of a text and our quest of the search for meanings, the transformation of meanings into our own, the vantage point which regulates our actions and decisions, comes *not* from the text, but rather from our past English teachers, literature teachers or someone/somewhere else. If the Text is the (inter)Text(uality) that Kristeva defines in *Desire in Language* (1969), it is, again,

(only) the big Other. This perspective of seeing the Text as Other can explain the pleasure of the text theory suggested by Barthes, or, more precisely, can provide the Lacanian viewpoint of Barthes' postmodern reader-response theory.

Reading must obviously involve a reader, a person whose perception and bias will inevitably influence the re-presentation and the absorption of the messages, and this reader will, as Roland Barthes argues in *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), gain emotional reward in the process of reading. According to Barthes' theory, a passive reader who digests a *texte lisible* (readerly text) would gain *plaisir* (pleasure) by reading as a subject, while for an active reader who engulfs a *texte scriptible* (writerly text), he would be awarded a more extreme, intense and radical pleasure which Barthes termed as "bliss", and in French, *jouissance*. By reading actively, i.e. with a critical mind which constantly thinks and questions rather than submitting to the authority of the author and absorbing everything that one is told, the reader is allowed to break out of the subject's position (for a single split moment).

Barthes' theory of readerly and writerly textuality is reasonable yet not Lacanian enough. While agreeing with Barthes' conclusion that reading a writerly text yields *jouissance*, I intend to argue it from the opposite direction, i.e. that when a reader reads a writerly text, s/he never breaks away from the Subject's position but rather occupies the position of the Subject to the purest possible extent.

The reason that I suggest a contradistinctive approach to Barthes' theory is that while a reader is reading a readerly text, s/he is learning from the text. Engulfing the knowledge and attempting to internalize it into part of her or him, the passive reader is *constructing* the Other which controls him/her and simultaneously s/he is shaping the manifestation of the big Other which dominates him/her. In other words, while reading a readerly text, the subject is busy building up his/her Other. However,

a reader who is reading a writerly text is critically interrogating and commenting (in the mind) on the materials that s/he reads. This seems to be very simple, straightforward and obvious, but it would appear more complicated once I have raised this short but significant question: where does the basis of a critical reader's judgement originate from? There can be hundreds of possible answers to this question. It may stem from the parents or teachers whom the reader has come across with in the past, those important small others who have constructed and shaped the subject, or it may come from an inspiring book from a philosopher, or even (the internalized teaching from) a novel, a short story, a soap opera, or a children's book that the subject has been exposed to in childhood. What does this actually mean? All these examples which could possibly have constructed and influenced the subject imply that while a reader reads actively, s/he is *reproducing* the voice of the (dominate manifestation of) the Other which has *long possessed* him/her.

Here is a concise example: Imagine an uneducated old man raised in a financially disadvantaged family in an extremely patriarchal-plus-religious society, and a young woman who majors in humanities at university and was raised in a society where human rights and freedom of speech are securely protected by law and the mutual belief of the people. If we present a piece of a children's story to these two people, who are from very diverse educational and cultural backgrounds, they would very likely come up with different, even possibly contradictory, themes and morals from the same story, and, needless to say, diverse emotional responses to the texts as well.

Why do people respond differently, sometimes even contradictorily, in the interpretation of meanings and in emotions, to the same piece of text? One of the most patent answers is that these people are constructed by different faces of the

Other. For instance, a reader who is dominated by the Other-as-child and a reader who is dominated by the Other-as-parent would interpret the same piece of text differently. As a result, active readers do not solely absorb but also think and question critically when they read writerly texts, yet their worldview and the way their mind works *do not* appear from nowhere. Readers, if they are to read critically, must be dominated by certain ideologies—mainstream or peripheral, but still and all ideologies. This idea of all ideologies as constructions can, again, be linked back to Lacan's later teaching of syndromes: rather than the traditional belief that there is the "normal" state and different syndromes, Lacan suggests that "normal" is merely the norm of males—hence there are only syndromes. So, when it comes to reading a writerly text, readers actively respond to new messages by retrieving the internalized teaching of the Other, "normal" or not, which has already dominated them. In other words, when critical readers engage in the process of reading, they are reading through the angle of the Other, speaking and thinking through the voice of the Other. In one sentence, they are *reproducing* the Other.

This is why I argue that readers who read writerly texts are, in contradistinction to what Barthes suggests, occupying the position of the Subject in its purest sense, which is simultaneously how *jouissance* comes into play. This *jouissance*, yielded when a critical reader actively reads a writerly text, is the Other's *jouissance*. The Lacanian Subject enjoys being enjoyed by the Other, enjoys functioning as the agent of the Other and enjoys the entire domination by the Other. What Barthes calls the pleasure of the text in that sense is, therefore, what Lacan calls the *jouissance* of the Other. However, it is noteworthy that this Other's *jouissance* is, instead of solely belonging to the big Other, also enjoyed by the subject as a participant, an agent, a puppet. It is very crucial for us to realize the

subject's enjoyment, for it casts a positive light on this argument which might easily be misunderstood as utterly negative (e.g. the impossibility of liberation). And, as argued previously, on pp. 19 of Chapter 1.3, it is precisely because subjects are dependent on the Other, which promises hope and change, that fixation is theorized as temporary but not eternal.

Our discussion of a Lacanian perspective of the pleasure of the text theory should probably come to an end. However, I must insist that my argument does not mean Barthes is wrong in seeing the reader as breaking away from the position of the Subject when s/he reads a writerly text. Breaking from and occupying the position of the Subject are two sides of the same coin: Barthes focuses on the extent to which *jouissance* derives from the loss of meaning (and hence subjectivity) and I focus on the extent to which *jouissance* derives from the production of meaning; both occur simultaneously in the process of reading.

From the delicate investigation and argument provided above, we can see the clear relation between the Text and the Other, for the Text *is* the Other. Hence, it would be understandable why human subjectivity always exists in reading, no matter whether it is the Text or the Author that dominates the reading activity—both the theological Author and the transcendental Text are psychological constructions within our mind, therefore subordinated to human subjectivity.

I am definitely not the first person who has noticed this phenomenon. Another renowned academic who has argued the Text as the Other, though subtly and without any reference to Lacan, is Walter Benjamin. Benjamin is one of the scholars who is publicly known for his enthusiastic celebration of the Text. In his famous article “The Task of the Translator”, Benjamin’s mystic notion of pure language and the texts which provide for an afterlife, i.e. translations and (therefore)

re-interpretations, are apparently what I call the Text, the psychologically constructed “entity”, the mystic “power” which “exists” and only “exists” in human’s collective cognition. As Douglas Robinson argues in his unpublished paper, “Walter Benjamin and the Deep Ecology of Translatability”, this God-like figure of the Text, which has its own autonomy and afterlife, can be understood by the ecological conception as a part of social behavior. Taking Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” as the starting point of his argument, Robinson claims that:

Benjamin is concerned with human agents, at least some of the time—that his mystified discussions of the mind of God and pure language and the rest as superhuman or at least nonhuman agents are a kind of *metaphorical shorthand for an ecological understanding of human social interaction* that was available to Benjamin more as a largely inchoate felt orientation than it was as a well-articulated (or even articulable) social theory. (n.p., italics mine)

Instead of a truly independent supernatural entity, the all-knowing Text (versus the impotent, not-knowing human) is an ideology, constructed and sustained by our mutual, collective intersubjectivity which is formed by the impersonalized generalization of the small other.³ The Text in this case is a mutually recognized and approved “fiction” sustained by individuals’ intersubjective beliefs, which is similar to a series of other abstract values such as morals, religions and patriotism. Although this “fiction” does not exist ontologically anywhere in reality and its existence is merely based on its real effects (which are carried out collectively by human beings in a community), it nevertheless functions as a mysterious “force” which governs the way our society works. This mystic intersubjective entity is, to apply Lacan’s term, the big Other which “has a body and does not exist” (Seminar XVII, 66). This big Other, as Žižek summarizes in *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, “possesses no substantial

³ A more careful explanation of the small other, as well as its relation to the big Other and the Subject, is provided in the discussion of Schema L (pp. 66-9).

actuality [as] it doesn't exist as a Platonic world apart, yet neither can it be reduced to a nominalistically conceived 'abbreviation' for the multitude of individual, really existing entities" (52). Nevertheless, the Other dominates and regulates our actual lives by functioning as "the locus of truth", which is, as I argued before, by occupying the place of God, as in Lacan's description in Seminar XX, "the only place, albeit an irreducible place, that we can give to the term 'divine being' [...] God (*Dieu*) is the locus where [...] the *dieu* - the *dieur* - the *dire*, is produced. With a trifling change, the *dire* constitutes *Dieu*" (45). As a result, regardless of the superficial diversity, the power shift from the Author-God to the all-knowing Text does not make any difference to the involvement of human subjectivity in text production and interpretation.

"As long as things are said, the God hypothesis will persist" (45).

Given that human subjectivity is obviously engaged in the process of reading, it makes a lot of sense for us to apply psychoanalytic theories to the understanding of literature and translation. This is, I believe, an extremely useful and beneficial way to approach literary texts. Most literary pieces are structurally, syntactically, and semantically challenging for readers. For some complex writing such as the Sappho chapter of Winterson's *Art & Lies*, it is syntactically impossible to result in a logical piece of text if we are to analyze it through a traditional (in other words "masculine") linear interpretive lens. To perceive (and therefore translate) the text in a conservative way would only butcher the beautifully crafted text into a monosemous, flat-toned narration. If a translator is to rewrite and reproduce the messages, s/he must disentangle the semantic/linguistic knots and figure out the multiplicity of Winterson's esoteric writing. Therefore, Winterson's confounding text "forces" the

confused audience to not only understand but also *give* the text a meaning—but at the same time the text *refuses* external authority (i.e. denies the meaning that the reader gives it) as, first, it is almost impossible to interpret the text logically by using one single method of reading, and second, no single means of interpretation could cover the very high *multiplicity* of the text embedded in the fragments.

Yet, when it comes to a discussion of meanings, we should first ask whether the lines constitute a coherent meaning, or, to take a more radical approach, whether they constitute *any* meaning at all, if we are to celebrate the numerous layers of meanings of the text. As meanings are, first, based on difference and deferral and, second, generated in the reader's mind (hence mental constitutions), they are much more abstract than we suppose them to be. The best way to put it is probably as this, that meanings are *not non-existent*. They are (generated by) the big Other—they do not exist ontologically, but it feels as if they do. The double negations are probably the nearest to the truth. This is also why a number of scholars have symbolized the text as an onion—we cannot say that it does not exist, but to peel the layers off one would only find out that there is nothing in the core. However, of course, nothing is not necessarily negative. The void is not only part of an onion, but arguably the most precious kernel of this vegetable, analogous to the void in Kindle Eggs and the indeterminacy of meanings. This emptiness is the essential component, the condition, of the existence of the onion-text, while the existence of the text and its meaning is paradoxically marked by its non-existence.

Since meanings are not as stable and constant as they superficially seem, I argue that in order to translate Winterson's complicated texts we must adopt an innovative means of text interpretation. "I am a sexualist. *In flagrante delicto*. The end-stop of the universe" (51). The Sappho chapter of *Art & Lies* is so semantically

and structurally complicated that it creates difficulty of understanding, and hence translating, the text in a linear way. There are a few “problems” of interpretation that we must solve in order to understand the text—for instance, we must figure out the meaning of some ambiguous terms, such as “end-stop” and “universe”, so as to come up with some possible meanings for the expression “the end-stop of the universe”. In this thesis, I suggest the application of Lacan to the interpretation of the brief passages from *Art & Lies*. The Lacanian interpretation of the text, or, the Lacanian perspective of translation, should be able to provide valid and reasonable answers for these questions: What are the various possible meanings of “end-stop”? How many ways are there to interpret that phrase “the end-stop of the universe”, as well as the Medieval Latin expression “*in flagrante delicto*”? How, if possible, may we preserve the numerous layers of meanings of the source text in its Chinese counterpart through a heuristic use of Lacan’s theories, or even to create extra meanings to the target text?

In the next chapter, I will investigate the nature of transgression and provide a discussion of repetition, compulsion and sacrifice. Through the Lacanian concept of objet a, I attempt to link these notions to Winterson’s recurring writing motifs through a brief reference to a few of her published novels, particularly *Weigh*, *The Passion* and *Art & Lies*. I want to investigate the nature of transgression, for Winterson’s innovative use of some established technical terms (e.g. end-stop) can, to a certain extent, be thought of as a kind of “coinage”, which is against the “normal” way of using languages and therefore transgression. And, in Chapters 4-5, I will go into my experimental Chinese translation of *Art & Lies*, whose emergence and interpretation cannot be separated from Lacanian theories and one of Winterson’s recursive writing motifs, obsession.

3. The Compulsion to Repeat and Sacrifice: Jeanette Winterson and Atlas

3.1 Transgression

Language, the Symbolic. Grammatical rules are similar to the Law, guarding the way meanings and logic works. Disturbance in the established system is discouraged; improper challenge to the power of the Father is disapproved. However, wherever oppression exists so too does repulsion. There is always a small group of “liberated” people, “liberated” in quotation marks for they are free from the dominating syndrome only, who would react, respond and rebound when they are repressed. To escape from restrictions they break the rules, cast their steps over the bottom lines—while the boundary, without doubt, progresses with them at the same time.

Similar to the actual entity and the shadow, one never moves without setting the other into motion. The transgression leads to inevitable failure since at the exact moment that one steps beyond the Symbolic, the Symbolic surrounds and engulfs the “extra” immediately since the ability to be articulated through signifiers, or imagined as images, has already rendered the transgression into something proper. This is, as always, a tamed transgression—you transgress, and at the exact same split single moment you tame it. The Other tames it. Transgression never carries the essence of a real transgression as the definition of a transgression is the impossibility to transgress. Do I contradict myself? No, definitely no. Transgression, in an abstract (post)structural(ist) conception, can never transgress because when something beyond signification is suddenly made or turned articulable, the articulated “thing” is

not the previous “something” anymore.⁴ Whenever one tries to re-present something by a signifier, a painting, or any other concrete signs, symbols, sounds or strokes, that “something” is not the represented “thing” anymore. Representation is, patently implied from the spelling, a *re-presentation*. To re-present something is, therefore, to *re-mark*—again, re-mark is another interestingly complex word which implies something paradoxical from its spelling. A remark seems to be a supplementary element of a text, but the term “remark” is a *re-mark*: remarks mark the text again, mark on the text, *rewrite* the text, and therefore re-present the text. It is a supplement which takes over the centre, and is therefore similar to the concept of a representation. The re-presentation of something transgressive, as suggested above, will inevitably alter the “something” and cast a different light on it when articulated/signified. This is why Lacan believes that the truth can only be half-said, “*le mi-dire de la vérité*”. For any transgression, as long as it is articulable, it can never transgress. This is why I said the definition of a transgression is the impossibility to transgress, because definition *is* signification, and signification is a sheer re-presentation which can never *completely* refer to the actual transgression.

This can be reflected by new semantic meanings granted to old words, new coinages or creative sentence structures in languages. They are transgressive when they are first created, but isn’t it that the discourse sometimes engulfs new meanings or coinages into its long-established corpus or linguistic system, so that the speakers of that language can use the new lexis as a meaningful term, which especially stands for something that doesn’t exist or doesn’t mean in the first place? Our realm of

⁴ However, it is noteworthy that from a phenomenological point of view, it is possible to argue that transgression does exist since we may *feel* ourselves transgressing. Again, this feeling of transgression is similar to other unconscious forces such as patriotism, or the loyalty to an unseen, unheard and unproved god. These “forces” do not exist ontologically like gravity, yet they nonetheless speak, construct and constrain us. The feeling of transgression relates to guilt, morality, social norms and the Freudian superego, the gaze which constantly monitors us and judges us for our every single thought and action, and therefore ultimately the big Other. From a certain point of view, there can be no transgression when there is no big Other.

knowledge and perception is dominated by the King Zhou (紂王) of languages, the abusive king of the Symbolic—this is the hegemony of languages.⁵ For everything articulable it cannot transgress in the Symbolic.

Let us think of the phrase “Brokeback Mountain”, which did not carry any semantic meaning, nor even have any connotation of male homosexuality, before the publication of Annie Proulx’s short story in 1997. How about the term “netizen”, which did not exist before the emergence of the internet? These words did not exist at the beginning, hence were transgression when they were first created and used, but aren’t both terms considered quite common, and proper, uses of the English language now? Their meanings and implications are not capricious, for no formal dictionaries would provide dramatically different elaborations of the use and the meaning of these two terms.

A never-before-existing vocabulary, a new coinage, a peripheral term, was created—and very quickly it was assimilated and included by the centre. It is not only netizen or Brokeback Mountain. It’s every single new word. Or, more precisely, it is every single word. Netizen and Brokeback Mountain did not exist at the beginning, but the same is true of every other vocabulary item that we use. Languages do not stem from nothing, and they do change according to time. Which word was not arbitrary in the first place? Even for one of the most simple words, “you”, it was “thou” in medieval English. If we attempt to approach the matter of transgression and arbitrariness from this perspective, then all words and languages are transgressive in nature. However, that way would not leave us a fruitful conclusion. Rather than labeling all signifiers as transgressive (or not transgressive),

⁵ This Chinese term is related to my creative translation of *Art & Lies*. Detailed explanation on the cultural background of this king and its relation to the hegemony of languages is provided at Chapter 4.2.

I prefer taking both sides at the same time. New words were transgressions because they were never part of the established language, yet, on the other hand, they are not transgression because whenever they exist, they are inscribed by languages, signified, verbalized, articulated—by signifiers. By symbols. By sounds. By signs. By the Symbolic.

In other words, every transgression is a tamed transgression for what is articulated is not what it was, yet simultaneously every signifier, or every system of classification, can function as a means of transgression. Since the truth can only be half-said, there is always the unspoken half, the un-represented surplus, which Lacan categorizes as what we call the Real. The Real never stops haunting us as Subjects, for it is the remainder of signification. If the Symbolic is light (articulable, decipherable and interpretable), then the Real is the shadow that always follows the light. Transgression and propriety are therefore also similar to shadow and the actual entity—one never exists without the other. This is why even proper names and gender, the most fundamental constituents of a symbolic identity, are rebellious in nature (See Chapter 5 for details). To put this in Lacanian terms, transgression never exists but ex-sists.

If we are to look at the term “end-stop”, a specific term used in prosody for a grammatical pause at the end of a line of verse, it has no coherent meaning with illicit sexual behaviors or any universe. To interpret Winterson’s text, we should generate other meanings for this word in order to interpret the text smoothly, and in order to do this we will have to treat “end-stop” as a “coinage”—in this dissertation, I use the word “coinage” to refer to not only newly coined vocabulary but also old terms used with new semantic meanings.

Formed by the two very easy single-syllable units of English vocabulary, “end” and “stop”, the “coinage” (again in quotation marks, for there *is* an established meaning of this term, yet it is insufficient for the understanding and translation of the Sappho section in *Art & Lies*) does not seem too bizarre as the creation of coinages is not uncommon in literary writings. Some coinages, originally created to enhance the complexity of the texts or, similar to the word “netizen”, which is molded from the existing words “net” and “citizen,” following the established etymological rule (a citizen is a person who lives and participates in the city, and hence a netizen is someone who “lives” and participates in the net, having the internet as a metaphor of a concrete space), are generated to fulfill the need of having new reference to certain specific new concepts or items. Although many of these new words turn out enter a wider discourse and become part of our daily usage of language, they are fundamentally a disruption of the established “masculine” (for Lacan “fatherly”) Symbolic network.

Coinages are rebellious. It is difficult to tolerate coinages because they are alien terms constituted by the existing, familiar linguistic blocks; even harder to endure if they are “coinages” like “end-stop”, which are established vocabulary but adopted as if new words that the old semantic meanings are not suffice for the readers to understand the text, because this is the “wrong” use of the term, or an “improper”, “arbitrary” and “perverted” way to use it. Coinages are the bizarre, uncanny constructions built up from the intimate puzzle pieces that we get habitually used to. If translation *is* transgression, a translation which includes new coinages transgresses to an even greater extent because it generates foreign vocabulary, which steps beyond the proper symbolic rules that we are confined in.

When it comes to “coinages”, especially when they are old words with new semantic meanings (e.g. “end-stop”), people tend to develop a kind of anxiety, suspicion or even repulsion to them. They would often question the legitimacy of the new terms, and sometimes would even hate them with a passion. It is not difficult to understand that some people may get dramatically agitated by transgression, because it is “incorrect” to violate the norms, but what lies beneath it, the core of their contempt, wrath or disgust, is that the “coinages” highlight the paradox of the nature of languages: the feeling of “coinages” as deviation emphasizes the legitimacy of our “natural” use of languages, yet simultaneously draws the attention to the unexplainable legitimacy of our correct use of languages. They draw the attention to the naturalness as well as the arbitrariness of the norm, the Law, for naturalness and arbitrariness are two sides of the same coin. This is the secret which should never be articulated, and people often feel a deadly repulsion (or attraction, depending on which one is stronger) to “coinages” or any other props which point out this secret—that the big Other is inconsistent, constructed by humans and dead—and Subjects are willing to sacrifice themselves to cover up the impotence of the big Other.

The emergence of new coinages, or any other kind of “transgression” such as the use of homonyms and homophones (e.g. the wrong spelling of “there” as “their”, or 姓名 as 性明), leads to the *feeling* of awkwardness that we would, nine times out of ten, immediately know and feel is wrong. In other words, we may usually feel the arbitrariness of that new/wrong word, which simultaneously signifies the feeling of naturalness of our native language—that, for instance, “姓名” is “right” vocabulary for “name”, it is “the way things are”. As a result, when a coinage feels like transgression, it, on the other hand, emphasizes phenomenologically the naturalness rather than the arbitrariness of language, and it is because of the

existence of the naturalness (the “norm” of using a certain language) that we feel the bizarreness of the new coinages. This feeling of awkwardness, generated from the transgression which ultimately confirms rather than challenges the norm of the use and the construction of language, is probably one of the nearest experiences of the inconsistency of the Symbolic that we may have. Although Lacan, working from Saussurean structuralism, suggests that the Symbolic itself is inconsistent, this very logical conclusion—that all Symbolic constructions are created by human beings, and therefore can never be perfect; there is no reason why “dog” should refer to a dog rather than a cat—seems to be impossible to be put under experiment in the sense that we as subjects may not phenomenologically experience this arbitrariness of language, for language is the condition of the unconscious and is the language of the Other; what language can do, at most, is to let the subject experience, for instance, the arbitrariness of a new coinage or any other kind of transgression, but the most basic language must be at work for us to notice those arbitrariness.

Or, another scenario that we could come across with the arbitrariness of languages is the moment that our norms get challenged. For example, a traditional reader could actually say Winterson’s use of “end-stop” is wrong or invalid, because “end-stop” has an established semantic meaning in prosody—yet, if another reader who is more exposed to the postmodern and the poststructuralist means of thinking asks the traditionalist why “end-stop” should mean what it means in prosody, the latter could not provide any reason apart from it is the way things are, the norm, the rules, and would highly get extremely annoyed by the “lunatic” thinker who questions the majority. The traditional reader would be agitated, not because he is correct but precisely because he cannot justify why he is correct—people frequently feel an extreme repulsion to transgression, not (solely) because transgression is

“wrong” but most crucially because they cannot justify why transgression is wrong. If we try to think about it, people tend to get much less agitated when it comes to a matter of “facts”, but get far much more annoyed when they come across with disagreements in more abstract ideas such as morality or social norms. However, no matter how “liberated” one is, there are still some certain kinds of norms that one would submit to, for Subjects may never totally abandon the Other—they are just spoken by the different manifestations of the Other—and therefore there is still and always some certain degree of “naturalness” in any critical thinker’s mind.

In other words, we as subjects may never directly feel the arbitrariness of language, and this is another way to explain why we are always biased—when it comes to the way our minds work, we may never escape from the inherently inconsistent Symbolic constructions. The arbitrariness of the Symbolic, in this sense, is similar to the Lacanian subject, in that the solid existence of the two of them are impossible to be put under any test. However, this does not make Lacanian psychoanalysis less reliable or plausible, for art does not require scientific proofs like experimental data, as numbers only dissect art. The proven “facts” that we encounter in scientific experiments are, again, within the Symbolic reality, thus restricted by human subjectivity. As Lacan has repeated in his seminars, the truth can only be half said, as there is always a residue haunting the articulated Symbolic realm.

As for the analytical-philosophical perspective on gender, masculinity and femininity have more to do with the structural and thinking patterns—construction and destruction—rather than the actual men or women. Therefore, if we are to approach the subject matter of coinages from this angle, the act of creating coinages is theoretically a feminine act, as it disrupts the masculine Symbolic order—again, femininity as a *disruptive thinking pattern* rather than being like an actual woman.

There are at least two significant reasons why thinking femininely in this argument does *not* and *cannot* equal to thinking like a woman. The first reason is that an actual woman can be voiced over by patriarchal or feminist ideologies which make the woman not “feminine” enough: there are women as patriarchal agents and women as feminists, and they cannot both be “feminine”, regardless of our definition of “feminine” as either “submissive and weak” or “thinking and acting out of the well-being of women”. In other words, the phrase acting or thinking “like a woman” can be extremely ambiguous, because it is impossible to define what quality a woman should possess in order to be “woman enough” or “woman-like”, without going through biased ideologies. Second, for an actual woman to think and speak she has to submit to the Symbolic order and let the Other speak her, which is therefore *spoken through* by something masculine (for gender as metaphors). In other words, the femininity in transgression stems from the disruption of an established system or norm, hence creating new coinages or engaging in any other form of transgression refers to thinking, writing or acting disruptively, which does not make a person more “like a woman”. Actual women are, similar to men, also controlled and constructed by lots of (masculine) ideologies.

Transgressions challenge the masculine Symbolic order of languages as well as of (the worship of) reason. Norms are a mutually-approved arbitrariness. The “proper” way of structuring a sentence is merely the most common way of language speakers have of doing so. Behind the absolute rules, there is nothing more to prop it up. There is no necessary reason why Reason is the way it is now.

After the moment that coinages and their comrades highlight and challenge the arbitrariness of the Symbolic order, its authority becomes hilarious. The creation of coinages by combining two existing vocabulary items is one of the most severe

assaults on the inconsistent Symbolic order, since it is an unknown generated by two knowns, by, in our case, “end” and “stop”, two extremely simple monosyllabic English vocabulary items whose usage we have mastered since childhood. The emergence of an unknown from two unknowns is acceptable; the production of an unknown from the combination of one known and one unknown is understandable. However, it is much harder to accept an uninterpretable result generated by two well-known and well-established linguistic elements, because a certain degree of uncanniness lies in there. As the worst assault among the three, coinages generated by the combination of two standard vocabulary mock the inconsistent and arbitrary Symbolic order. If the masculine homage to Reason and the Symbolic is a kind of idolatry, the production of new coinages and “coinages”, the repurposing of an established technical term, is iconoclastic.

3.2 Repetition, the Beginning and the (Excess) Void in Limitation

Jeanette Winterson is somehow obsessed with the interrogation of boundary and desire. Her love and hatred of limitation is beyond the imagination of her general readers that they are merely represented by one or two of her novels that have boundaries as the obvious writing motif, such as *Weight*. If we approach her oeuvre with a critical eye, it is not difficult to notice that Winterson never ceases retreating to these subject matters, as if forced to repeat the same quest through different characters' names, settings and narrative strategies. In her 2005 novel *Weight*, Winterson confessed her uncontrollable addiction to questioning the essence of limits

and boundaries, which are apparent to “any fool [...] that these things were only rules and taboos—customs made to keep people in their place” (104):

I chose this story above all others because it’s a story I’m struggling to end. Here we are, with all the pieces in place and the final moment waiting. I reach this moment, not once, many times, have been reaching it all my life, it seems, and I find there is no resolution. I want to tell the story again [...] I return to problems I can’t solve, not because I’m an idiot, but because the real problems can’t be solved. (137)

There is no exaggeration in suggesting that Winterson has the compulsory obsession of returning to limitation. She loathes it, but simultaneously as a subject Winterson enjoys and desires it. She keeps on telling the same recurring story of restriction and desire while she is, as symbolized by Atlas, “[f]orever to be the same person[, f]orever to perform the same task,” (69) because the process of perverted repetition yields Winterson *jouissance* as a subject.

Unexpectedly for most “normal” people, obsession is a choice. “The ancients believed in Fate because they recognized how hard it is for anyone to change anything” (*Weight* 99). We love to push the responsibility over to Fate since “the burden is intolerable”. An enormous amount of energy and effort is required in order to break the gravitational pull of the past and the future—Atlas persuaded himself that there is no choice. He deceived himself that no man can escape his fate. However at the moment that he picked up the golden apples for Heracles, he was shown the truth—he could have chosen differently, but he did not. He is, just like Winterson, “always leaning on the limit of [him]self” and can never get beyond the limitations because he never wants to. This is proved at the end of the story: when Atlas lets his hands go and puts down the earth with the monstrous weight,

NOTHING happens. And there was no burden and with Laika the dog he walked away (*Weight* 150-51).

It is noteworthy that Winterson repeats the consequence of Atlas putting down the world for three times on one page:

“Nothing happened”.

“Nothing happened”.

“Write it more substantially—NOTHING”.

What exactly has happened to Atlas at the end of the story, and how are we supposed to understand this ending with Winterson’s own quest to explore boundaries and desire? To answer the first question let us read the three sentences very carefully: in the third representation of the consequence, the word “nothing” is not only put in both italics and capital letters in order to give emphasis to it, but also Winterson put down the word “substantially”—what does that mean? It refers to Nothing as an entity, the sister of Nobody in *Through the Looking-Glass* (2000), a sequel of the popular children’s literature story *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll has wittily presented a language play on linguistic categories: by understanding the quantifier “nobody” in Alice’s “I see nobody on the road” as a proper name which refers to an actual person, the King exclaimed in amazement and replied “I only wish I had such eyes [... t]o be able to see Nobody!” (196)

In the final chapter of *Weight*, Winterson has put down the consequence of Atlas rebelling against from his fate very clearly: this is a substantial manifestation of the result of his transgression—NOTHING, as something, happened. This Nothing has prohibited the cycle of repetition from recurring endlessly. It puts a stop

to Atlas' compulsion to sacrifice and enjoy—both occur simultaneously since he yields *jouissance* from the never-stopping process of grief and suffering. The masochistic impulse to seek the excessive pleasure through suffering. The death-drive. But Winterson did not write a full stop for her own story. Unlike Atlas, she did not put a prohibition on her quest on pain and *jouissance*, as literally implicated by the name of the last chapter of *Weight*: “I want to tell the story again”.

Atlas' story is Winterson's story. Although *Weight* is not an autobiography, it nonetheless contains authenticity as “there is always exposure, vulnerability, in the writing process, which is not to say it is either confessional or memoir. Simply, it is real” (xv). Atlas' obsession to sacrifice and enjoy is, undoubtedly, Winterson's compulsion to repeat the myth. Suffering from the same fate, both of them attempt to seek an excessive pleasure, or, in the more accurate and technical term from Lacanian psychoanalysis, *jouissance*, throughout the process of repetition.

Repetition is painful and perverse because it brings a surplus pleasure. As theorized by Lacan, the subject's desire of repetition is based on a chase after the *objet petit a*, the cause of desire which illusionarily appears in the objects of desire but is never graspable for human subjects. In Žižek's terms, *objet a* is an inherent impediment which “prevents the circle of pleasure from closing [and thereby] introduces an irreducible displeasure”. The psychic apparatus “finds a sort of perverse pleasure in this displeasure itself, in the never-ending, repeated circulation around the unattainable, always missed object” and this “pleasure in pain” is what Lacan refers to as *jouissance*, the French for “enjoyment” which has a (lethal) sexual connotation (*Enjoy* 48). For the intimate relation between death and sexual orgasm is clearly reflected by the French term *la petit mort*, the little death, a French euphemism for “sexual orgasm”. A similar relation is also observed in Chinese

culture: we have the idiom 欲仙欲死, which indicates sexual ecstasy by comparing sexual orgasm to divinity and death. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, sexual behavior is a process which leads to jouissance—the subject shifts from desire to the domain of drive through the rhythmic enjoyment of being, and at the moment that the subject yields jouissance, he escapes partly from the Symbolic (from having the object of desire to being the object of desire), and this can be seen as an ephemeral effacement, i.e. death, of the subject.

We need to talk about the Chinese translation of Jeanette Winterson, or the general subject matter of translation, with repetition because to translate is to repeat (the source text), and we may argue that both translation and repetition are, from a certain extent, derived from *objet a*. It is crucial to remember that *objet a* is nothing but an entropy. In *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, Žižek has theorized *objet a* as “nothing but a certain curvature of the space itself” when he explains the Freudian drive: “The space of the drive is such a paradoxical, curved space: the *objet a* is not a positive entity existing in space, it is ultimately nothing but a certain curvature of the space itself which causes us to make a bend precisely when we want to get directly at the subject.” Anyone who “possesses” *objet a*, for example, the lady in the courtly love tradition, is “nothing at all, a pure semblance which just materializes the curvature of the space of desire” (49). This leads to an interesting deduction that it is the emptiness which makes *objet a* useful (i.e. functional)—since the Symbolic which governs the “reality”, e.g. all Symbolic fictions, including the Text, is itself a negative, bodiless entity. And given that “to translate” in Chinese is 翻譯 (*fānyì*), with the first character 翻 meaning “to turn over”, we may again think of translation as a means to repeat (the source text) in order to chase after the excessive pleasure from interrogating the never achievable *objet a*.

In Seminar XX, Lacan explains how language relates to the never-fulfillable desire. In his comment on this expression of the relation between the signifier and the signified, S/s, and the phallus, he equates the phallus with the bar between S and s, because that barrier implies “a great deal of slippage between what I say I want in words or tell myself I want and the actual object I aim at.” This slippage is what has set desire at work—desire can never be fulfilled because “[d]esire’s object will not sit still; desire always sets off in search of something else. Since desire is articulated, made of the stuff of language—at least this is Lacan’s contention, his certainly not being a naturalistic notion of desire—it has a very tough time designating any kind of exact signified or meaning, pinning something down” (Fink 37). In other words, the satisfaction of desire (which Lacan labels as the “phallic jouissance” since this pleasure always fails to satisfy, while “phallic” is the synonym of “fallible”) is always disappointing because the articulation of desire is always intruded by language, and the nature of it (i.e. signification) marks its fallibility.

When the Subject is barred (i.e. castrated), *das Ding* (the Thing) is generated. As the most intimate but simultaneously alien object, as central to but also exterior to the Symbolic order, the Thing (and *objet a*) is, once manifested, never able to “return” to Lacanian subjects and form the impossible imaginary fullness with the mOther. Patients who suffer from obsession unconsciously desire to regain the Thing, in which is manifested mostly the compulsion to enjoy and the compulsion to sacrifice. As suggested before, repetition is a kind of obsession, and Winterson retells the exact same story of the interrogation of boundaries because she is obsessed with the pain in the structure of the cycle; she perversely enjoys returning to the problem not because she is an idiot but not because the real problems cannot be solved either—it is because she does not want the problem to be solved. It is only

when the problem is never solved that subject can always come back to work on the problem. This is the only means to ensure “the valuable, fabulous thing” is still there waiting for her to chase after and gamble for.

We are not always conscious of it, not always aware of what it is we hide from prying eyes or that those prying eyes may sometimes be our own [...] Gambling is not a vice, it is an expression of our humanness [...] The hardship is a man-made device because man cannot exist without passion. Religion is somewhere between fear and sex. (*The Passion* 73-94)

This is her religion. This is her passion. “Passion out of passion’s obstacles” (71). I said she loathes and loves boundaries, for Law is desire. In Chapter 2 of *On Belief*, Žižek elaborates on Lacan’s teaching on limitations and desire: the Symbolic Law “only elevates into a prohibition the quasi-natural obstacle to the full satisfaction of desire” for “it is not the Law itself that bars the subject’s access to jouissance—it simply makes a barred subject out of an almost natural barrier” (*Écrits* 696). As a result, the true Law or prohibition is theorized by Žižek as not imposed by external agency such as virtue or reason but by desire itself. This is Winterson’s obsession to repeat. “To avoid discovery I stay on the run. To discover things for myself I stay on the run” (*The PowerBook* 3). She must keep telling the same story, as she yields jouissance through writing and never finishing the one story—so that she can tell the same story again. As a result, her novels are personal story books which were not created to impress any potential readers: women, intellectuals, homosexuals, anti-Christians; she wrote them for and to herself, because there is a real problem that she wants and does not want to solve. It is through the compulsory repetition that Winterson manifests her subjectivity, that her action is her subjectivity and solving

the problem of limitation is to deprive her of her subjectivity. As she has put it in the introduction to *Weight*,

Choice of subject, like choice of lover, is an intimate decision. Decision, the moment of saying yes, is prompted by something deeper; recognition [...] these returns, begin the unconscious connection with the subject, an unconscious connection that waits for an ordinary moment of daylight to show its face. When I was asked to choose a myth to write about, I realized that I had chosen already. The story of Atlas holding up the world was in my mind before the telephone call had ended [...] Re-written. The recurring language motif of *Weight* is 'I want to tell the story again'. (XIV, italic mine)

This is not her choice as a subject. This is a choice made by her unconscious so that she could be a subject. If anything has chosen the myth of Atlas, it is the big Other.

4. The Hegemony of Language, the Void and the Forbidden

Fruit: Objet a, the big Other and Repetition

Through the referencing of a number of Winterson's novels in Chapter 3, I have briefly explained the Lacanian concept of *objet petit a* and have demonstrated its crucial role in repetition as well as obsession. Now, in this chapter and the next, I will provide my experimental Chinese translation of the first three sentences in the first Sappho chapter in *Art & Lies*, and attempt to explain my translation through the application of Lacanian theories, and their intimate relation with Winterson's obsession to repeat the interrogation of boundaries.

I have translated the first three sentences of the Sappho chapter thus:

I am a sexualist.

私是聖論者。

In flagrante delicto.

偷食果時被人捉到。

The end-stop of the universe.

語紂的沒端。

Although a translator could translate the most patent meaning of a polysemous vocabulary and list the rest of possible interpretations in footnotes, as if they were optional, one of the very important and special features of literary pieces is that they usually leave a significant ground of freedom for readers to invent, interrogate and interact with the meanings of the work, and coinages definitely play a vital role in this perspective.

In my experimental translation, I attempt to demonstrate a means to not only preserve the numerous layers of meanings of polysemous terms like “end-stop” and

“universe”, but even provide some additional (in other words, “excessive”) meanings to them through the application of “coinages” and homophones. My experimental Chinese translation contains both Cantonese and Mandarin pronunciations as well as sentence structures, while one of the Chinese characters, 私 (self; private), is even considered from the Japanese perspective as a kanji, the pronoun of “I”, written as わたし (pronounced “watashi,” means “I” in Japanese) in Hiragana.

As explained clearly in the introduction, this dissertation is written based on the foremost objective of the production and interpretation of an interesting, creative and complex translation. The project is, again, *not* an attempt to search for the “best” or the “correct” way to translate Winterson into Chinese, or any literary texts into any language, according to traditional translation norms, for the reproduction of the most patent meanings of individual sentences is not a translation means which promises a significant ground or new avenue of intellectual inquiry, especially when it comes to the investigation of human subjectivity and translation. This thesis takes a heuristic rather than a correctness-based approach to translation (and to the application of Lacanian psychoanalysis), and therefore the whole argument is devoted to the exploration of a creative multiple-layered target text, from which we may think more profoundly about some important Lacanian concepts (such as the restriction of languages, the void, the phallus etc.), rather than the “best” or “most defensible” way to translate Winterson into Chinese. In other words, I am not attempting to translate Winterson “correctly”—as I’ve suggested, correctness is based on traditional translation norms, the metempsychotic aspect—or to apply Lacan in a dogmatic, systematic or programmatic way.

To begin our discussion of the experimental translation, I would like to look at the third sentence 語紂的沒端 first, and then go back to the second and the first

ones, since these two sentences contain tricky syntax, for instance the Cantonese phrase 偷食果時被人捉到, as well as the interesting use of the kanji 私. After a thorough discussion of these three phrases, I will look into the term 性明 in Chapter 5, my experimental translation of “name” from the fourth and the fifth sentences of the Sappho chapter.

4.1 The end-stop

Let us start with the third sentence, 語紂的沒端. Before providing an explanation for my experimental translation, I would like to look carefully into the term “end-stop” in “the end-stop of the universe”. As mentioned in the early part of the thesis, “end-stop” is a prosodic term which refers to the grammatical pauses at the end of a line of verse. In poetry, a long sentence is often split into two lines labelled as “run-on (sentences)”, and if we consider the universe as a line of poetry, “the end-stop of the universe” can actually mean the ongoingness of the universe, with the run-on sentences in poetry as a model of endlessness—even when there is an end-stop at the end of a line, nonetheless the poem continues. On the other hand, the universe as a line of poetry could also suggest the analogy between the literary text and the world, the intimately intertwined relation between truth and fiction, which again collides with Winterson’s recurring motif of questioning the authenticity of truth in the manifestation of science and history, and hence can also be linked to Lacan’s perception of self and Other (which are again superficially contradictory but fundamentally intertwined). However, this “standardized” meaning of “end-stop” is somehow insufficient and incomplete—the term “end-stop” patently *can* be

interpreted as more layers of meanings, if we are to consider it as a “coinage” formed by “end” and “stop” separately (rather than “end-stop” as one vocabulary). Combined by these two very easy monosyllabic English vocabulary items, “end-stop” should carry at least three plausible meanings.

Since the former term in this “coinage” is “end”, the first possible interpretation is a spatial limitation. The end-stop of the universe can, therefore, stand for the geographical boundary of the universe. The second possible interpretation is a temporal limitation, a stop. This temporal restriction of the universe can be temporary or permanent, though it is relatively difficult to imagine a permanent stop of the universe. But there is something which would never revive after a stop, such as a heartbeat (doctors do restart stopped heart beats, but that’s artificial—the heart itself can’t start back up!). So, a permanent stop of the universe could therefore be understood as the death of the universe, or, of course, an ephemeral halt of the universe. The third very possible, but relatively less direct meaning of the term “end-stop” is the beginning, or the continuity after the temporal impediment, the stop, because “end-stop” can be interpreted as “to end the stop”. From this perspective, the end-stop of the universe is the beginning or, more precisely, the continuity of the universe which therefore can be linked to the power of birth or growth, which is 生 in Chinese. This character 生 (birth) is the essential part of the constitution of the character 性 (sex) since there is a direct relation between growth and reproduction (often implied in ancient Chinese texts including the *Daodejing*), and this can function as a valid linkage between the “end-stop” and *in flagrante delicto*.

The three (among the) possible meanings of the polysemous term “end-stop” demonstrate the self-contradiction in this vocabulary: “end-stop” stands for an

extremity, limitation and death yet simultaneously implies the emergence and continuity. The paradoxical nature of the coinage is a mark of ambivalence in Winterson's writing, which emphasizes the ever-changing and arbitrary nature of the world of words. This ambiguity in "end-stop" becomes a huge challenge to translators. To preserve the multiplicity of coinages, I propose to create a similar coinage in the target language, in this case, Chinese. The major reason that I am against a metempsychotic translation (of the most obvious layer of meaning of the text) is that the method of rendering a coinage into the most obvious meaning and jot down the rest of the numerous possibilities down as footnote is a horrible way to butcher a piece of literature (by which we would generate an insipid, flat-toned monosemous narration). The multiplicity and paradox in "end-stop", or any other new coinages created by writers, is the core of the newly made words, such that if multiplicity is leached from the text, the essence of coinages would be lost.

As a result, we must encounter the difficulty of translating a polysemy into another language system, the more complex the vocabulary the more tricky it will be. There is a question embodied in most translators' mind, which is how it is possible to preserve, if not all, as many plausible layers of meanings as possible in the target text. It is true that we cannot preserve all possible meanings for all words and phrases when we attempt to render them into another linguistic and cultural system, but we do not necessarily have to retreat to the stereotype of "translation as loss" as an oversimplified excuse to this phenomenon.

There are, without doubt, many possible explanations of why equivalent translation is impossible. Cultural backgrounds and connotations are one of the very obvious reasons, while differences between sentence structure and linguistic systems are another. One other major reason is that there are infinite possible interpretations

of a piece of text, based on the family, educational, cultural, religious as well as political background of the reader. As a result, it seems not possible to produce an equivalent translatum, as the possible meanings of the source text itself is unlimited. However, it is noteworthy that the unlimitedness of interpretation is, as suggested in Chapter 2, not entirely unlimited, for it is very unlikely for a reader to interpret the word “dog” as a kind of cheese or pencil. Meanings are organized by languages and constructed by the Symbolic, hence restricted by the Other. Similar to the big Other, meanings are not non-existent: they do not exist ontologically, yet exert influence on subjects as a kind of unconscious “force”. This “force”, if it ever “exists”, can only “exist” psychologically in our mind—it is mutually constructed as an abstract entity, and therefore meanings are collective, which is why a “standardized” meaning of a certain word would not vary dramatically from one person to another. We must bear in mind that although meanings conveyed by texts are much less restrained than what we believed in the age of the Author, it does not mean that there is completely no restriction or orientation of the meaning of a word. In other words, the afterlife of the Text does not develop independently from human readers’ subjectivity.

One simple argument which could demonstrate the flaw of unlimited interpretations of the Text is that if it were true, equivalent translations would not only be possible, but *all* existing translations would be equivalent to their source texts, and all texts would be equivalent to other texts. If a source text may “carry”, or more precisely, evoke, unlimited possible meanings, does that not mean that we may also have *unlimited plausible interpretations* of the target text? Therefore, if it is true that the Text has an unlimited afterlife which leads to an infinite possibility of interpretation, then when we accuse a translatum of not being identical to, i.e. not carrying all the possible meanings of, the source text, it was only us as restricted

subjects (by the manifestation of the Other which constructs us) who could not read other possible meanings of the translatum. If there can be unlimited interpretations of the source text and unlimited interpretations of the target text, then certainly the two *cannot be non-identical*? And, if we expand this argument further to an extremely radical degree, all words should carry the same meanings since there is an unlimited interpretation of a vocabulary. In other words, the meaning of “cat” and “dog”, “dead” and “alive”, “comb” and “coffin” and “lecture” and “postcard” would nonetheless be the same, or, they should *at least* share *one* layer of meanings which are the same.

But of course, this is not the general case for language uses. The failure of this argument, therefore, is already very obvious to us. Our discussion at this point has again entered the mystical labyrinth, which is similar to the pure language formed by fragments (i.e. human beings as biased and restricted subjects can never see the whole picture of the fragments, yet this does not mean that the pure language does not exist), and to solve this crux we may want to go back to the previous argument, that we should bear in mind that the concept of “unlimited interpretations” which bars us from any complete understanding of the text originates from the Text, and the authority of this Text is fundamentally based on a self-refuting presumption. Nevertheless, let us move back to the creative translation of “end-stop”.

Taking “end-stop” as an example, I translated it as 沒端, a new Chinese coinage which conveys all three meanings simultaneously without the aid of any footnote. 沒端 is a Cantonese homophone of the vocabulary item 末端, which means “the extremity” or “the terminal”. The first character 末 is “last” and “final”, while the second character 端 means “end”, “extremity” as well as “the tip”. When it comes to the meaning of a tip, 端 is not restricted to the concept of a final end as

we have vocabulary such as 開端, the start or the beginning, which is literally “start/open-tip”. And 末端 is the opposite of 開端, which is literally the “end-tip”.

I have replaced the character 末 in 末端 by its Cantonese homophone 沒 in 沒有, which is “not-having” and “not-being” (which can be followed by both concrete and abstract nouns or verbs, i.e. money, happiness or actions such as cry: 我沒有哭 is I did not cry). 沒 is “without”, not possessing something, or “not”, the negation. Borrowing the homophone 沒 to replace the character 末 in 末端, the new coinage 沒端 can, as a result, phonologically stand for “the extremity” but can simultaneously be interpreted as literally “without-tip” or “no-tip”, hence stands for the beginning or continuity.

As for my experimental Chinese translation of “end-stop”, the most interesting part here is that the new Chinese coinage 沒端, apart from being able to convey both the paradoxical meaning of limitation and liberation, the extremity and continuity, it can even carry one more extra layer of meaning that the original term “end-stop” does not and cannot possess. Besides being self-contradictory, “end-stop” is self-limiting in the sense that the existence of a stop is the condition of an “end-stop”. If we approach the issue from this perspective, the liberation engendered by the third meaning of “end-stop” is just a husk; “to end the stop” implies the necessary existence of a stop. In the world of an “end-stop”, the stop always exists for the basis of all possible liberation and continuity rests on the stop—a stop whose existence is to be ended, a stop which can never be ended. The stop is ended. The phantom of the stop, never. The residue always haunts.

However, in my experimental Chinese translation, my coinage 沒端 carries the (excessive) fourth layer of meaning, which is not restricted by the self-limiting

feature of “end-stop”. For the English “coinage” “end-stop” has to be inevitably bound by the existence of the stop, 沒端 is without any tip, stop or extremity, and therefore can be interpreted as the void. 沒 is without, hence non-existence or nothingness. 沒端 is, as a result, a realm which has no tip, no corner, no delineation, no restriction, a.k.a. a limitless space. It is both limitlessness and nothingness, since the void is the only possible existing limitlessness—there is no limit because there is no construction in the first place.

4.2 Of the universe

After this brief discussion on the ambiguous coinage “end-stop”, there should be no argument that “the end-stop of the universe” can be interpreted as either the limitation or the beginning/continuity of the universe (or, of course, both at the same time!). However it is very important to ask, what is “the universe” in the first place? If we are to check in any English dictionary, a universe is usually referred to as “the cosmos”, “the macrocosm”, or even, in some of them, “the totality of known or supposed objects and phenomena throughout space”. So, there is no doubt that we may understand “the end-stop of the universe” as the end or the death of the cosmos, the limitation of the totality of the known—doesn’t this resonate with the nature of a(ny) coinage, as we have explained previously, the production of the uncanny, alien and bizarre unknown issue from the knowns? If we approach this direction from the psychoanalytic perspective, the known would then be the consciousness or everything within the Symbolic realm—if “the end-stop of the universe” is the limitation of the consciousness, then could it not stand for the hidden side of the

coin, i.e. the unconscious? And, if “the end-stop of the universe” is the limitation of consciousness or of the Symbolic, could it not be directly related to “*in flagrante delicto*”, as this Latin phrase carries a heavy connotation of adultery, thus sexual intercourse, *la petite mort* and the ephemeral disappearance of the Subject? (Moreover, “*in flagrante delicto*” can also be interpreted as the presence of the big Other, as I will show in section 4.3.)

As we should remember, “end-stop” can be interpreted as not only a limitation but also a beginning/continuity—if we approach the expression “the end-stop of the universe” from this perspective, it could then stand for the beginning of the Subject, as false being, the ego, the consciousness, or of the Symbolic, and hence would have a direct relation to the big Other, the formless God whose presence penetrates the discovery of the immoral sin, “*in flagrante delicto*”. Even if we ignore the role of the big Other in the discovery, the moment of realization of the illicit sexual behaviour *per se* is probably very similar to the shocking and traumatic liberation of the repressed, analogous to the decoding of the unconscious, which can be linked to the painful and exciting—it is exciting because it is painful, the surplus pleasure achieved from displeasure—rebellion against the consciousness, the Symbolic, the masculinity.

The word “universe”, apart from the “standardized” meaning of the cosmos, can also be interpreted as “uni-verse”, an antonym of “multiverse” which carries the connotation of a single dimension, since *uni-* is a Latin prefix which means “one”. To approach the term “uni-verse” from this perspective, it can be related to a “single-directional thinking”, an insular and dogmatic perception of things, which can be further expanded to a totalitarian uni-verse. As a result, “the end-stop of the universe” can stand for the limitation of prejudiced totalitarian dichotomy. If we

consider this reading of “the end-stop of the universe”, the ending of naive, biased binary opposition altogether with “*in flagrante delicto*”, the latter phrase, about sex and hence reproduction, can then link to the possible emergence of new life, new belief and new idea. “*In flagrante delicto*” can, therefore, become the hope.

Similar to my translation of the term “end-stop”, I was eager to come up with a Chinese translation which would incorporate most of the possible meanings. First, I wanted to preserve both the meaning of the cosmos and a simple-headed narrow-mindedness in the term “universe”. Second, I was hoping to render the target text with a richer meaning than the source text (think of the surplus meaning of “the void” in “end-stop”), in the sense that the writer’s perception of language and naming (or, more precisely, any kind of signification) as limitation. I therefore translated “universe” as 語紂, which is both a Cantonese and a Mandarin homophone of the term 宇宙 *yǔzhòu*, the universe. The first character 語 is language and speech, while the second character 紂 is from the name of the most notorious king in Chinese history, King Zhou of the Shang Dynasty (商紂), historically known for his dishonor and cold-heartedness as the worst (or the best?) example of a corrupted king in China. There is an idiom 助紂為虐, literally “to assist Zhou to abuse”, which means standing by idly while an (abusive) authority treats powerless minorities unfairly. As a result, in Chinese culture, the character 紂 has a totalitarian, hegemonic and abusive connotation. And, if the term 商紂, Shang Zhou, is King Zhou of Shang, then following the same logic, our Chinese coinage 語紂 can stand for King Zhou of 語, which is of course language. Therefore, the homophone 語紂 could mean, firstly, the cosmos, since it is a homophone of 宇宙, the universe—the phonetic pronunciations of both terms in both Cantonese and

Mandarin are exactly the same. Secondly, 語紂 can be interpreted as the universe of language, since 語紂 is a 宇宙 (universe) formed by 語 (language). Last but not least, 語紂 can be the King Zhou of language, it can also stand for the (abusive?) hegemony of language. But what is “the hegemony of language”? I have considered different possibilities from the psychoanalytic perspective and have come up with a few plausible interpretations of this expression:

To start with, it could mean the big Other who controls and speaks through the barred Subject. Let us look at the Lacanian Schema L (Figure 1) for a more careful illustration of the Other (and its relation to the Lacanian Subject). This graph is presented in an article in Lacan’s collection *Écrits* (2006), “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’”, which is designed to elucidate the intersubjective dialectic of the Subject, through the demonstration of the relations between the Subject S, the small other a’, the ego and the big Other A.

Figure 1: Schema L

Source: Lacan, Seminar on “The Purloined Letter”, *Écrits*, p.40.

The top left hand corner, S, is the stupid unknowing subject. Subverting the traditional view of a “subject”, Lacan theorizes it as someone who does not know rather than someone who knows. As Lacan says in Seminar XX, “there’s no such thing as a knowing subject (*il n’y a pas de sujet connaissant*)”. (126/114) The unknowing Subject, like Oedipus, acts without knowing in the conscious sense why (he murders his father and sleeps with his mother). If we are to trace it back to Schema L, the Subject is constructed and controlled by various self-perceived others whose influence is demonstrated with strings in the z-shape as illustrated in the figure. The party who exerts direct influence on the subject S is a’, the small other, which is usually embodied by human beings in real lives, such as the subject’s parents, teachers and friends, or even important men whom the subject has never met in daily life but is significantly influenced by, especially ideologically, such as political giants or influential philosophers (e.g. Karl Marx or Slavoj Žižek). However, this specular small other, embodied as the important or inspirational people of the subject, is not literally the “other” since the subject can never really understand anyone besides himself (this self as the ego, the false being), as our perception forbids us to penetrate other people’s minds. In other words, this small other is merely the subject’s perception of the other, i.e. how I think my parents or teachers think of me, and hence is precisely speaking the subject’s subjective psychological (hence fictional) construct. This fictional construct is, however, strong enough to superimpose on the subject, which affects both the subject’s self-perception (the ego) and the subject’s perception of the perfect self (the ideal-ego), which therefore has an absolutely un-neglectable power which can regulate and restrain the subject’s behaviors and, most significantly, thoughts. The small other a’ controls the subject through the imaginary relation which imposes an illusionary

effect on the ego, a, which is located at the lower left hand corner of the schema. We, as subjects, see ourselves occupying the position of the ego (instead of the hopeless, idiotic Subject who knows nothing but is spoken through) and this is what Lacan terms as “a structural anamorphosis of human’s psychology”. Lacan has once put it in a tactful and ironic tone that “[the subject] may believe the ego is him”, which is utterly a structural misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) in the human’s psyche. Since the formation of the ego is based on the reflective image of the other, Lacan indicates the nature of identification, in Seminar I (1953-54), as misrecognition: “Although based on the recognition of the specular image, the ego can be conceived as ‘a capacity to fail to recognize (*méconnaissance*)’” (153).

The lower right hand corner of Schema L is occupied by the big Other A, which is an ontologically absent but phenomenologically present, impersonal projection of the small other a’. It can be reasonably interpreted as cultural norms, beliefs, ideologies or the mysterious voice which speaks us; the big Other is structurally similar to the small other in the sense that they can both be the subject’s psychological (i.e. fictional) constructs. Both the small other and the big Other are the introjected otherness or outsider who plays an influential role in the subject’s self-perception. In other words, Lacan has theorized human subjectivity as an imaginary construction which relies on the introjected specular other. The subject is, dramatically contrary to how we normally think of it, nothing but a stupid puppet who knows nothing, who has its strings in the hands of the massive, unseen big Other which is like “a formless god [...who...] has a body and does not exist” (Seminar XVII, p.66). This Other is directly related to language as, for Lacan, the unconscious is “the discourse of the Other” and is “being structured like a language” (67). Language is, in Lacan’s exact words, “the condition of the unconscious”. What

does this imply? The significance of the Other originating from language lies in the fact that the Symbolic order is a human construction in the first place, hence inconsistent. This explains why Lacan has theorized the big Other the “dead” dummy in contract bridge, *la mort*. This Other seems to be an all-knowing, all-powerful Other but is actually incomplete, inconsistent and impotent—and this is how Lacan interprets obsession. Rejecting the common perception that sacrifice relies on the notion of exchange, Lacanian psychoanalysis explains sacrifice as “a gesture that enacts the disavowal of the impotence of the big Other”. In *On Belief*, Žižek has followed the teaching of Lacan in order to explain why the compulsion to sacrifice is both superfluous and fake: “at its most elementary, the subject does not offer his sacrifice to profit from himself, but to fill in the lack in the Other, to sustain the appearance of the Other’s omnipotence or, at least, consistency” (70).

As a result, the big Other is the (impotent) abusive figure which controls and speaks through the stupid subject and therefore can be implied by “the hegemony of language”, i.e. 語勢.

The second possible link to the hegemonic power of language is the lethal factor in the formation of the Lacanian subject. The process of alienation during subject-formation involves a *vel*, the Latin way to put down *either/or*. In Seminar XI, Lacan provides a classic example of his *vel* of alienation, which is the mugger’s threat: “Your money or your life!” (212). Obviously, one’s freedom of choice is restricted here because the only freedom one may achieve is to choose death. If a person chooses to keep hold of his money, his life will be taken from him, then his money. In other words, by choosing life and letting go of the money he will still be alive, but if he chooses money then he will lose both (not just one or the other). This is similar to the struggle between the subject and the Other. In the Lacanian *vel* of

alienation, the subject is the money which “immediately drops out of the picture [...] in his or her confrontation with the Other,” which is symbolized by life in the mugger’s example (Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 51). For a subject to exist insofar as it can be spoken of and spoken for (though never completely), it must be beingless, since to incorporate into the Symbolic, the subject must have given up being for meaning/thinking. “While alienation is the necessary ‘first step’ in acceding to subjectivity, this step involves choosing ‘one’s own’ disappearance” (*Lacanian* 51). In other words, the disappearance of being for meaning is an inevitable consequence of the intrusion of language. This is Lacan’s definition of his subject: “either I am not thinking or I am not” (Figure 2).

The Spaltung Diagram in Seminar XI

Figure 2, Seminar XI

As this choice between being and meaning is, after all, a choice made when one is deprived of the freedom of choice, Lacan’s *vel* of alienation and its lethal factor can also be understood as “the hegemony of language”.

The third possible implication of “the hegemony of language” is the power of disavowal that languages grant to humans. As we do not have enough space in this paper to go through this topic in depth, I will just mention it very briefly here. Language is full of traumatic inconsistency since the relation between the signifiers and the signified is arbitrary, in other words, the real may intrude in the superficially stabilized reality through the inconsistency—what you claim is A can actually be B. The emergence of language creates the possibility of lying, and therefore the suspension of belief. Moreover, language creates the power of negativity, since there is no negativity when there is no symbolization. Both of these can be linked to anxiety and (the core of) trauma for human beings.

As a result, I have translated the phrase “the end-stop of the universe” into the pun of 宇宙的末端 (the extremity of the universe). The original “end-stop of the universe” could mean the limitation of the universe, the continuity of the universe as well as the limitation or/and continuity of a flat-toned world(view). However, with my new coinages we have formed the pun 語紂的沒端 (the no-tip of the king Zhou of language), which carries at least four additional meanings: the first one is the void, or the endlessness, of the universe, since 沒端 is without-tip. The second meaning is the void of the Symbolic as 語紂 can be understood as “the universe of language”; the void of the Symbolic is known as *objet a*, the cause of desire, the surplus as well as a lack which rests on or is manifested as different objects of desire but is never possibly grasped. (It is important to bear in mind that the translation of “the end-stop of the universe” could stand for *objet a*, as this interpretation of the phrase can be linked directly to the translation of the expression “*in flagrante delicto*”, as I will explain in section 3.3). The third possible interpretation of 語紂的

沒端 is the limitation of the Symbolic realm, which hence is a reference to the Real.

Last but not least, our polysemous Chinese translation of “the end-stop of the universe” can also stand for the continuity of the hegemonic abuse of language; and as for the hegemony of language, we may refer to the big Other, the lethal factor in the Lacan’s *vel* of alienation and the power of disavowal and the suspension of belief granted by languages, all of which I have clearly explained in the previous paragraphs. And, from this perspective, if we focus on the last interoperation, the pun 語紂的沒端 can therefore mean the excess (e.g. the power of disavowal) originates with the emergence of languages.

Combining the Chinese translation of the “end-stop” and “uni-verse” together, we generate the phrase 語紂的沒端. Because of a—if you will allow me to use this word—clever utilization of homophones, a discrepancy between the inured “inherent” meanings of the terms (originating from the phonetic pronunciation) and the literal meanings that the written characters stand for is created. This tricky tactic of using homophones and puns has translated the ambivalent and paradoxical nature of the phrase from the source text to the target text. My Chinese translation of “the end-stop of the universe” can not only preserve the multiplicity of the source text to an extremely high degree, but also generate new, additional (excess!) meanings for the reading of the target text.

4.3 *In flagrante delicto*

“*In flagrante delicto*” is a (medieval) Latin phrase. First recorded in 1772, this phrase has gradually been incorporated into the English language and is now

well-known by all educated speakers of English. As an ablative case which is formed by the adjective *flagrans* (flaming/blazing) and the noun *delictum* (offense/crime), this expression cannot be translated into any simple English equivalence, as the verb is missing. However, to achieve the closest translation, the phrase “*in flagrante delicto*” could be rendered in English as “in blazing offense”, which means being caught red-handed in the very act of committing an offense or a crime. Not restricted to sexual transgression but often associated with adultery, this Latin phrase indicates the discovery of an illicit behavior, usually in the midst of sexual activities. In other words, this expression is about a discovery, which has a sexual connotation in its ideological baggage.

Since “*in flagrante delicto*” is not English, I don’t consider it problematic to translate this expression into a language besides written standard Chinese, as this phrase itself is already “standing alone” in the source text. To preserve the feeling of uniqueness and the impact of emphasis, we may consider keeping this phrase in Medieval Latin rather than rendering it into standard written Chinese. However, the difficulty in preserving the exact same phrase in target texts is that most common Chinese readers do not know Latin, not even those who have attended tertiary education: in both Hong Kong and mainland China, business and science majors have almost no reason, nor chance, to learn a dead language, and as for arts majors who are supposed to be interested in languages, English, French, Spanish, Japanese and Korean are nonetheless more popular choices among students. Although “*in flagrante delicto*” has entered the English corpus, non-native speakers over here usually learn English as a second language for academic, business or communication purpose, and therefore our syllabus for general English education tends to focus on pragmatic and “useful” knowledge (e.g. English grammar, writing formal business

letters or proposals etc.). For arts majors, I suspect that only part of the literature students would know the expression “*in flagrante delicto*”, and I would not have expected linguistics or cultural studies students to have heard of this phrase. As a result, only an extremely small number of Chinese scholars would understand Latin, and nevertheless the cultural force of the phrase would definitely be very different for them than for their counterparts among source readers. Therefore, I believe that in order to adapt the text for the target reader, we should translate the expression into a language which is easier for general Chinese readers to understand.

Finally, I have decided to translate the expression “*in flagrante delicto*” into Cantonese, under the thought that it may collide with my previous Cantonese homophones in “end-stop” and therefore gives an integral feeling to the entire piece of writing.

The Cantonese translation of “*in flagrante delicto*” is 偷食果時俾人捉到. 果 *gwo2* (fruit), is phonetically similar to the character 個 *go2* and is often borrowed in (informal) written Cantonese texts, since 果 is an officially accepted Chinese character but 個 is merely adopted in Cantonese to imply “that”, which is rarely included in the corpus of Chinese input programs.

個時 together as a vocabulary item in Cantonese means “at that time/moment”. 偷食 is to eat something (usually food) forbidden secretly, which is a Chinese euphemism for having illicit sexual behavior. 偷食 is, therefore, highly related to transgression and sin. 人 is human, but is considered a general 3rd-person pronoun in this example, which means others, other people. 俾人捉到 is a passive form of 捉 (catch), literally “being caught by others”. As a result, the expression 偷

食嘢時俾人捉到 means being caught by others while eating (something forbidden) secretly, i.e. being caught in the midst of illicit sexual behavior.

To eat something forbidden is to engulf extra food. In most cases, this extra is a twin brother of a lack, like two sides of the same coin, as, if there is not a lack in the first place, the person does not have to eat something that s/he is not supposed to eat. This action of having extra food is very likely to be linked to repetition and the oral drive, which is externalized when the gap between the goal of eliminating hunger and the aim of satisfaction becomes obvious. This oral drive is, in a certain sense, similar to the sex drive, and in this case there is an apparent similarity between excess food and excess sex, excess jouissance. This relation between eating and having sex, which are both considered biological needs (for sexually reproductive animals) driven by basic instincts, is noticed not only by our Chinese ancestors (e.g. Confucius said, 食色性也, both appetite and desire are nature) and in our culture (e.g. 偷食) but also in the Western culture, as implied by the use of languages—for example, metaphors of food for other humans, especially women, seems to be a prevalent phenomenon in both Chinese and English language speaking countries. In Cantonese, for instance, a pork chop (豬扒) is an ugly woman, a vegetable (菜) is a girlfriend while a king crab (in Cantonese, “long leg crab”, 長腳蟹) is a woman with a pair of long legs; in English, a lollipop is an attractive young girl, a cheesecake is a half-naked female photographic model and a tart is a sexually immoral or attractive woman. From the above examples, I suspect that the noticing of similarities between appetite and sexual desire is universal.

One interesting common feature shared by the appetites for food and sexual desire is that, as suggested in the previous paragraph, the gap between the goal and the aim would externalize drive, and therefore lead to repetition. The drive here is, as

theorized by Lacan, partial and lethal since it is structured around (and originated from) *objet a*, the lack in the Symbolic network which both triggers and disrupts the circuit (which leads to repetition). And here, *objet a*, as the core of repetition and as the void (which is the essence here because a lack or a loss is the condition of desire and drive), actually refers back to our Chinese translation of “end-stop of the universe”, which could mean *objet a*, referencing to the Real and the void as explained in the previous section.

Another interesting little point that I am eager to draw your attention to concerns the two preconditions of the desire. Two factors must exist for desire to present: one is the lack, and the other one is the prohibition. Let us first look at the significance of a lack. Since a lack or loss is the required presumption for the existence of desire or drive, the Subject actually wants the lack to be there so that s/he can continue to desire. As in Žižek’s interpretation of Freud’s *fort-da* game, it is the presence rather than the absence of the mother which creates anxiety: “it is not that, anxious about losing my mother, I try to master her departure/arrival; it is that, anxious about her overwhelming presence, I try desperately to carve out a space where I can gain a distance toward her” (59-60). The Subject desires the lack because without the absence there can be no desire or expectation of the mother’s returning. In other words, the satisfaction is denied (temporarily postponed, as the Subject believes) but desire is sustained. Instead of the usual idea of loss creating anxiety, it is that anxiety occurs when the place of loss is taken, i.e. when the loss is not there. Žižek applies this idea to emigration, arguing that those who are leaving their countries feel upset not because people and memories from their hometowns are irreplaceable and they miss them, but because they understand deep in their hearts that their home countries will be replaced by a new foreign town very soon and they

will not miss their own country anymore—the once familiar place will turn foreign and the feeling of the loss (of the “root”) will disappear very soon. In Žižek’s theories, this is what truly evokes anxiety. In other words, it is the presence rather than absence which brings distress.

Also, desire arises because of the presence of the Law (which functions as prohibition), the *nom du père* (name of the father), which sounds very much like the *non du père* (no of the father). Desire is aroused through the acceptance of the Phallus, the Law based on the power of the Phallus, the Name of the Father which can be linked very easily to the No of the Father, the prohibition. For Lacan has theorized the Phallus as an empty signifier, so that desire arises from the acceptance of an empty signifier which stands for a lack. Again, we can refer this back to the emptiness or the void of the Symbolic universe, i.e. 語絀的沒端.

Based on the argument above that, first, it is the presence which evokes anxiety and, second, prohibition is the condition of desire, I suggest that in the imaginary situation of (the discovery of) adultery—the meaning of *in flagrante delicto*—is not restricted to sexual transgression, hence definitely not restricted to adultery, in which two parties are willingly involved in the sexual intercourse, which is why rape would also be considered in the later part of this discussion (pp. 83-4). However, adultery is certainly included and referred to by this Latin phrase; therefore, the argument that I am raising now is not unrelated to our discussion of the text as well as the translatum. Adultery is *not* the *only* one but definitely one of the *possible* interpretations of the phrase. As one of the layers of meanings, it is still worth our attention to investigate how far this argument can go—the idea that couple involved actually pervertedly wanted to 俾人捉到, be caught by the third party (general). They were secretly eager to be caught by the other and, I argue, the Other.

It is normal for us to question immediately who would want to be caught *in flagrante delicto* when their reputation, career, marriage or family may be destroyed, but this is exactly how the unconscious works, it always functions in an absurd, “abnormal” and “perverted” way—which is why those streams of thoughts are repressed by our consciousness. The “sinners”, in adultery, desire to be witnessed and caught by the Other when they 偷食 since the discovery of the transgression gives the ultimate significance, the ultimate meaning, to the action of 偷食—this is a specific scenario set up for the big Other. If I do not possess any lack, why would I have to take the risk to 偷食? This is a delicate performance to show the audience, the Other (in the physical manifestation of the others) that “I do not have the *agalma*”,⁶ i.e. there is a lack in me, so that I can continue to desire.

In the above discussion, the phrase 偷食果時俾人捉到 was analyzed as 偷食/果時/俾人/捉到, in which 果時 is considered as one term, a homophone of 個時, “at that moment”. However, this Cantonese expression can be interpreted by a diverse sentence structure, as thus:

偷食 (v.) / 果 (n.) / 時/俾人/捉到

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, 果 refers to “fruit” in standard written Chinese. If we interpret the sentence from this structure, then 果, the fruit, would become the object of the verb (偷)食. The phrase would then become: at the moment

⁶ In the early stage of Lacanian teaching, the term “*agalma*”, meaning an ornament, a glory or an offering to the gods in Greek, is adopted as almost an synonym of the Lacanian *objet petit a* when *objet a* was considered an imaginary part-object but not yet theorized as the leftover, the void. In Seminar VIII *Le transfert* (1960-61), Lacan used the term *agalma* altogether with *objet a*, for the fact that they are extremely similar in nature: the *agalma* is, according to Plato’s *Symposium*, a precious object hidden inside a worthless box, analogous to the *objet petit a* as the valuable object-cause of desire which we seek in the big Other. The *agalma* is the objet of desire which props up the fantasy that desire is fulfillable; in other words, it props up reality and the (superficial) consistency of the Other.

that (someone) 偷食 the fruit, s/he is caught by others. Since 偷食 is to eat something forbidden in a secret manner, the fruit that one 偷食 is a forbidden fruit, the forbidden fruit, which carries the biblical connotation of both knowledge and sex. Here, the sexual connotation resonates with the euphemism 偷食, which reinforces the sexual implication of *in flagrante delicto*. Knowledge, as Lacan elaborated in Seminar XVII, is a means of jouissance. When knowledge is at work it produces entropy, a loss—this entropy comes from the use of signifiers to achieve jouissance, therefore if the signifier (the phallus) is the stopgap to loss but the person pursues *objet a*, i.e. loss, through it, then that act destabilizes the system of knowledge. In plain English, most people use knowledge to answer questions and fill in gaps of the reality so that they have a stable understanding of the world; however, for academics, knowledge is not a stopping point but a tool which leads us to more questions. In this sense, knowledge is entropic to a stable belief system. So, knowledge can remind us of loss, which can therefore refer back to the term “末端” in the third sentence. Moreover, it is the love of truth which is embodied in knowledge, while the love of truth is the love of what truth hides, i.e. the love of castration. And, as for sex, Lacan has put it in Seminar XX again and again (which later on becomes one of his mottos) that there is no sexual relation. The impossibility of sexual relationship refers to the idea that the big Other is the 3rd party which always has to situate between the two people—and doesn't it explain for itself why 偷食果時 the person actually wants to, or even have to, 俾人 (3rd party general, i.e. others) 捉到?

The other part that I would like to devote time to discuss regarding the phrase “*in flagrante delicto*” is the nature of forbidden sex. Putting this phrase in consideration with the next one, what conclusions can we draw? What is the end-stop of the universe? Is the forbidden sex a limitation (the forbiddance implies limits and

boundaries in nature), a liberation (transgression as a liberation from the limitation), or both? When it comes to adultery, we could approach it from three dimensions: its nature, its product and its by-product.

There is no doubt that the nature of forbidden sexual behavior is transgression. Adultery, or any other means of sexual “crime” such as incest or rape, is a transgression of social norms, morality, authority, the Law and, last but not least, the Symbolic order. All the limitations here have something to do with patriarchy and masculinity. Adultery, when it is consensual, is an assault on hierarchical and patriarchal beliefs not only because it functions as a sign of celebration or an illicit achievement of women’s sexual freedom against the patriarchal authority and laws; and when it is nonconsensual, in other words, rape, it is still a severe assault on patriarchal values and beliefs because from a patriarchal point of view the woman who is raped is stolen or corrupted (violated) by the rapist, as a thief, from the father or the husband—in other words, the father or the husband *is illicitly deprived of his property* by men who are not situated in the hierarchy of the family, hence is not only an assault on the victim but also her male family members. This explains why in an extremely patriarchal society, people tend to assault women as a kind of revenge on their male family members. For example, acid attacks on women are relatively more popular in the Middle East, where people believe that disfiguring a woman’s face brings not only shame on the entire family but also a huge financial burden to the father, if the woman is not yet married (for it is unlikely for her to wed in the future).

Therefore, although rape is the entire opposite of women’s sexual freedom, the act of rape is nonetheless an attack on the established patriarchal law, morality and norms simultaneously, since if women are property, rape is theft. Rape is,

therefore, an extremely patriarchal protest against not only women but also the “powerful” men (who “own” the women as daughters or wives), hence, against the established, “normal”, “well-accepted” patriarchal law. Therefore, no matter whether it occurs in the form of adultery or rape, illicit sexual behavior *is* an assault on the established patriarchy, not only because it usually celebrates women’s sexual freedom but also due to the inextricable fact that it transgresses established norms (hence the masculine way of positing, labeling, defining and organizing things, including the masculine Symbolic).

As a result, illicit sexual behavior implies the transgression of masculine boundaries in the sense of the patriarchal marriage system, in both adultery and rape. Some patriarchal societies try to make up for the “flaw” in the system by marrying the rape victim to the rapist, yet this is to justify the means by the end; there is no doubt that both the victim and the woman’s family is violated in the action of rape (e.g. the father may have planned to marry the daughter to another family with a better financial situation, and the rape would determine the plan and force not only the victim but also the family to “choose” the “only” way), and this again makes the action of rape transgressive and rebellious.

If we are to understand why forbidden sex is a transgression of the Symbolic, we have to consider the second question: what is the product of illicit sexual behavior? The very direct product of sexual intercourse is sexual orgasm—*la petite mort*. Instigated by the shameful, forbidden desire, two people share each other’s body (through the Other’s presence, as Lacan insists in Seminar XX, there is no such thing as sexual relationship because “sexual difference is a function of one’s position with respect to the Other”—which is why the general pronoun of the third party (plural), must exist in my translation) and passion, the mixture of sweat and fluid

(which leads to the possible emergence of an excess new life—I will come to this when we discuss the third question, the by-product of sexual intercourse). A disgraceful sin, a sinful disgrace, destined to end with the production of jouissance. Isn't the yielding to jouissance a process of the Lacanian Subject's disappearance (from the Symbolic order), switching from the mode of having to the mode of being? From desire to drive, from the masculine Symbolic to the feminine, fathomless Real, isn't this an (ephemeral) attempt of Symbolic suicide? The extinguishment of the Subject occurs simultaneously when sexual orgasm starts in that split single moment...

Sex, reproduction, leads to the (possibility of the) emergence of new lives. But for most illicit sexual behaviors, pleasure (or in the more specific term, jouissance) rather than reproduction should be the main reason for people to commit the act. In most cases, getting pregnant from adultery is, if not horrifying, at least worrying and distressing news, since this brings dishonor to both the woman and the (future) kid. So, one possible by-product of forbidden sex is a child whose paternity is unknown. Without the acknowledgement of the father, the child cannot inherit the surname and property of the father (as we see the relation between the words "property" and "proper": only "proper" individuals can inherit the paternal property). The existence of this child is an excess in a patriarchal society; repeating to haunt the impotence of the Father, the child would remain a surplus. This embryo, a metaphor of the bud of new ideas and new directions, poses a threat to the Law. Remember (the Lacanian interpretation of) the Oedipal complex: the child desires to be the object of the mOther's desire and hence competes with his father, and gradually realizes that instead of becoming the object of desire it is better to possess it, and as a result the child identifies with the Father (who the Subject believes is the target of

the mOther's desire), in order to determine what the Father has that makes the mOther desire him. After entering the Symbolic order through this transference (identification with the Father), the child Oedipally murders the actual father's embodiment of the role of the second Other (the Name of the Father, whose gaze witnesses the Subject's entry and interaction within the social Symbolic system of normative behavior, as well as his barring from the non-Symbolic self) in order to encounter the Other in anyone or anything, and thence enter a highly complex and ever-changing social network. In other words, a child, especially an excess child, functions as new, alternative ideologies, imposes a threat on the Father, the masculine way of positing, depicting and constructing things. A child whose patricidal impulse can never be tamed.

If we return to the idea of the new life as new ideas, doesn't it sound more persuasive for it to fight against the long-established authority, morality, the Law—the uni-verse? And if we are to return to the metaphor of the embryo with mysterious paternity as a by-product, doesn't translation occupy the same position as well, in that both are a surplus? Translation is an excess in the sense that it is something extra (additional to the source text), something generated by the after-life of a text—and, if we are to understand "*In flagrante delicto*. The end-stop of the universe" with the notion of translation: doesn't it mean that translation, the surplus of the source texts, can function as both a limitation of the universe (of knowledge and belief) as well as a liberation from the totalitarian single-mind-thinking, all depending on the role of the translator? If we are to combine the reading (or translation) of the two phrases "[i]n flagrante delicto" and "[t]he end-stop of the universe" together, we could have achieved something more than all the possibilities that I have raised in the above

paragraphs—for example, we may incorporate “the end-stop of the universe” into “*in flagrante delicto*” by rendering them as 偷食語紂的末端果時俾人捉到.

In this (re-)presentation, the object of eat becomes 語紂的末端, which is the void, *objet a*, the excess—and therefore can’t we understand this sentence as “eating the forbidden void secretly and being discovered by others”? The idea of eating the void immediately reminds me of Kafka’s short story “A Hunger Artist”—isn’t the hunger artist in the story eating the Nothing, and isn’t this the manifestation of a pure drive, partial and lethal? And isn’t it how it is linked to *objet a* and repetition? Kafka’s work is known for the reference to the concept of the abject, while the relation between the abject, the uncanny and the Real is quite obvious. All these three concepts are about something beyond the Symbolic order, the traumatic core of the uncertainty, which would therefore initiate repulsion and fear. Coming across with the abject, the uncanny and the Real would have a traumatic effect on the Subject, and therefore evoke jouissance. It is crucial to remember that rather than just an extreme pleasure, jouissance is a deadly (dis)pleasure, which perversely leads to an illicit pleasure. In other words, the idea of jouissance includes both attraction and repulsion, both exist but which one is stronger would depend on the situation and on the Subject. Some people would find sexual orgasm enticing, some may find it horrifying, while still others would find both.

If we approach the Chinese translation of “*in flagrante delicto*” and “the end-stop of the universe” in this way, doesn’t it mean a secret desire (forbidden yearning for a pure drive) to be discovered by the big Other? And since drive correlates to the Real of the Mother rather than the Symbolic of the Father, can we possibly see it as the positing, defining, symbolizing and hence limiting Symbolic’s discovery of the

disruption of the deconstructing Real? A transgression which yields jouissance, which refers directly to our other example of interesting Chinese translation, 性明.

4.4 I am a sexualist

Sexualist in Chinese is 性論者, literally a sex-theory-person (a person who believes in sexual theory), or 性主義者 (a person who supports sexualism). Apart from the foreignness this construction carries (for the pattern of X-theory-person is a direct translation of X-ist from English, i.e. X-ism person—a person who supports X-ism), the term 性論者 is not very special. But, one interesting point here is that the character 性 (sex), in Cantonese, shares the exact same pronunciation with the character 聖, *sing3*, which means holy, sacred or saint. Although they are not homophones in Mandarin, Cantonese is phonetically more similar to the older language that ancient Chinese used when compared with Mandarin. (This has explained why many poems written in the Tang dynasty only rhyme in Cantonese but not Mandarin.) The homophones here imply an exquisite relation between sex and holiness, which is against many stereotypes of the “traditional” Chinese as conservatives who see sex as a crime or sin. In other words, 性論者, a sexualist, is a 聖論者, a person who believes in the theory of God or someone who worships the sacred holiness. Didn’t some tribes from ancient cultures regard reproductive organs such as the phallus and the vagina as symbols of mystic sacred power so that they carved them into statues so that they could worship them? When it comes to the discourse of religion and holiness, sex is linked to both the origin of power and the

concept of contrition and repentance. As for the origin of power, it is proved not only by the archeological evidence of giant statues or rock carvings—we may also tell this from the use of language. In Chinese, the character 性 sex also stands for natural property and deposition, while in ancient Chinese, 性 was seldom used as sex but more often adopted as “nature”, which is very similar to *physis* in Greek. From the constitution of the character 性, it is not difficult to see its relation to the notion of (the power of) birth and growth since the right component of this character is 生, which is life or birth. And of course, the other meaning of the character 性, sex, has an extremely intimate relation with birth and growth through sexual reproduction.

When we talk about repentance, the moment of the discovery of a sin, *in flagrante delicto*, is simultaneously the moment of condoning a sin. The conscience is at work: the guilt that persists in the process of adultery is (and can only be) alleviated when one is caught red-handed, “in blazing offense”. The nightmare about the crime could only stop recurring after the sin is revealed and condoned. So, the main point is about discovery. Why is the act of discovery so special? “To avoid discovery I stay on the run. To discover things for myself I stay on the run” (*Powerbook* 3). For Jeanette Winterson, discovery is something that we both long and are afraid to achieve. It is about consciousness and the unconscious, the hidden truth and the Other’s desire; it is a struggle between the inclination to achieve pleasure and the innate death-drive. When we have nightmares which reveal the real and let the reality drop, we always wake up immediately before the painted veil is left so that we can continue to dream. This is what Lacan describes as the fantasy propping up the reality. We awake in order to continue to dream, which is, in Žižek’s explanation, to escape the real (the “psychic reality”) of our desire. To avoid discovering what does not collide with our fantasy, we stay on the run. But at the

same time our consciousness tells us that we want to discover so we stay on the run. Both wanting and not wanting to discover, we stay on the run.

And now, I want to talk about my choice of the first character 私 in my experimental Chinese translation of “I am a sexualist”, 私是性論者. As mentioned in section 4.3, the 私 here is the Japanese Kanji for “I”, pronounced as わたし (watashi). This is a gender-neutral first-person pronoun used in formal or polite contexts, though in informal or causal contexts it is usually perceived as a feminine pronoun. One reason for me to choose to adopt a Japanese Kanji instead of a Chinese character for the pronoun “I” that I want to bring emphasis to this word, “I”, the starting word in the first Sappho chapter in *Art & Lies*, for it is arguably one of the most transgressive words in the Symbolic, similar to proper names.

What does the shifter “I” stand for when I articulate the word “I”?

“I” in the sentence “I am a sexualist” is an enunciating subject, the one “who may take pleasure in speaking or find it painful to speak, or who may make a slip while speaking. The enunciating subject is the one who may let slip something that is revealing as to his or her feelings, desires, or pleasures.” (Fink *Reading* 24) If you still remember the Schema L that we investigated in section 4.2 (Figure 1), the enunciating subject “I” is the ego situated at the lower left hand corner. The ego arises as “a crystallization or sedimentation of ideal images, tantamount to a fixed, reified object with which a child learns to identify, which a child learns to identify with him or herself” (Fink *Lacanian* 36). What is interesting about the notion of “I” is that when a person speaks, s/he thinks that s/he is situated at the place of the ego in Schema L. The enunciating subject always believes that s/he knows what s/he speaks, it is him or her who has chosen which certain vocabulary to use in a sentence so as to convey what s/he thinks—but of course this is an illusion. All

psychoanalysts believe that apart from the ego talk (which is conscious, intentional and alienated by the nature of language), speech is also controlled and shaped by the Other's discourse—any slip of the tongue or jokes reveal the unconscious, or in Freud's words, “the truth has spoken”. In other words, the enunciating subject thinks that s/he is the ego, but the place that s/he actually occupies is the top left hand corner, S, for the stupid, unknowing Subject. This is how my word play in 私 comes into the picture.

The kanji 私, わたし for “I” in Japanese, is also a standard written Chinese character. In the Chinese language, the character 私 is “illicit”, “private” or “secret”. For example, 私事 is personal/private matters, 私自 is to do something secretly without the approval of authority, while 私吞 is to illicitly engulf benefits or money (in corruption) while 走私, “run-secret”, is to smuggle. Interestingly enough, the character 私 simultaneously carries a sexual connotation: for instance, the word 私處, literally “private/secret part”, refers to the sexual reproductive organs for both male and female. 私病, “private illness”, is sexually transmitted disease. So the intimate relation between the ego, the character 私 and the context is getting very clear—for 私 is a secret, the secret which has to be kept away from the ego for eternity is that s/he is the Subject. Here I am not saying that we may never understand the psychoanalytic concept of the Subject, for many scholars in this field have written so much about a “subject”, or in the English speaking countries a “patient”, an “individual” or a “client” (in some schools of psychology), as a noun referencing the analysand. The “subject” in such contexts is, of course, *le malade* (the patient, i.e. the sick person) who says “Doctor, I have a problem” or, if we are to think deeper in this matter, it can be not only the face of the patient but also the

whole defensive persona developed by the analysand to block access to the big Other. However, this is not the Lacanian subject for it is, in Fink's words, "neither the individual nor what we might call the conscious subject (or the consciously thinking subject), in other words, the subject referred to by most of analytic philosophy" (*Lacanian* 36).

If we are to think of the subject from this perspective, we can never truly experience the Lacanian subject by ourselves, i.e. to experience myself as the subject, for whenever we think, we think as the ego. The notion of our experience as Lacanian subjects can therefore only be an abstract, imaginary psychological perception—I have to be able to think (consciously) before I know that I am and this being in "I am" can, as a result, only be the false being, the ego. I can only think (consciously) of the notion of (myself as) a Subject after I can think (consciously as the ego). More precisely, it, the big Other, has to think me before the establishment of the ego (hence the sense of self) because the Other is the origin of the language in which the subject exists. This is why Lacan has implied the impossibility of demonstrating the existence of the Lacanian subject in Seminar XXIII, "the subject is never more than supposed". In other words, ourselves as the subjects can only be our assumption, i.e. our psychological construction raised from the conscious thinking, the ego. Therefore, the idea of the Lacanian subject to us can be a very tricky one—we can articulate it in English, in Chinese, in Japanese, or any other languages that we like and we may "explain" it by seeking refuge from the deferring of the signifying chain, but after all we cannot really know or realize, or in a more suitable term, experience, what the subject means or what it is—it is not that the Lacanian subject does not exist (nonexistent), but its nature is, I argue, analytically unthinkable. This is why I label it as a secret: the notion of the Lacanian subject can

only remain a secret to us, and this is the secret of the ego that s/he does not know that s/he occupies the position of the subject, for it is forever beyond our to sense or mind to really know this fact.

The second reason that I translated “I” as 私 is the context. Since the character 私 in Chinese may connote an illicit action, we may see a very apparent connection between it and the second phrase “*in flagrante delicto*” (which denotes illicit sexual behavior). Also, “illicit” may refer to the idea carried by the pun of 性 and 聖 that sex *is* holy—in my Chinese (Cantonese) pun, a sexualist is someone who believes in or practices the theory of God. Moreover, it is also illicit as well as secret that what we thought of as a very natural, very personal (私) sexual relationship does not exist, or for it to (somehow) exist God must participate (the irony and the contrast of the sacred holiness and the dirty deed!)—the Other must be situated between the man and the woman in order for a sexual relationship to “function”. And if we link this back to catching red-handed as a scenario set up for the Other (to believe that I do not have the *agalma*), we may think of it this way that the secret of adultery is that its ultimate meaning lies in the discovery “*in flagrante delicto*”.

5. The Restriction of Language and the Alienation of the (Divided) Subject: Proper Names and Sexuation

One of the most crucial theoretical concepts that I intend to highlight through my exploratory translation is the restricting and alienating ability of language. To investigate the limitative nature of language, I want to discuss the essence of two vital constituents of the Subject's Symbolic identity: proper names and gender. In the first paragraph of the Sappho section in *Art & Lies*, Winterson emphasizes the relation between language, through the form of proper names, and sex, in its manifestation of the delicacy of the body. These are the fourth and the fifth lines of the first Sappho chapter, on page 51. "Say my name and you say sex. Say my name and you say white sand under a white sky white trammel of my thighs." These two lines have recurred in the later part of the same chapter, as thus: "The word and the kiss are one. Is language sex? Say my name and you say sex. Say my name and you say white sand under a white sky white trammel of my thighs" (66).

One significant concept embodied in these two lines is that by articulating a proper name, a signifier, the speaker has articulated sex. In other words, there is an exquisite relation between names as signifiers and sex that Winterson intends to highlight. Therefore I asked myself, is it possible to show the intimate connection between names and sex in the translation? Can I do anything more than merely putting the literal meanings of these two sentences in Chinese? To think of an innovative translation to demonstrate the intimacy between names and sex, we have to understand how Winterson thinks of names, and I will be investigating this in carefully later in this chapter. To accentuate the notion that to articulate a name is to articulate sex, I translate the term name into 性明, *xìngmín*, which is a Cantonese as

well as a Mandarin homophone of the vocabulary item 姓名 for name in Chinese. My experimental coinage 性明 is formed by two characters: the first one is 性, which is formed by the radical of the heart and the character 生 for birth and growth. As mentioned in section 4.4, while a sexualist is a 性論者, the character 性 is sex/sexuality and nature or temperament, and can at the same time stand for “gender”, which is 性別. The second character of my coinage is 明, an iconic character formed by 日 (sun) and 月 (moon). 明 means brightness (光明) as a noun when it is combined with the character 光 (light). But while the character 明 is interpreted as a verb, it can mean to ‘understand’ when it is combined with the character 白 (white), to form the word 明白 (understand).

5.1 Proper Names, Naming and Translation: Restriction and Rebellion

The homophone 性明 is, as explained above, coined in order to enhance the link between proper names and sex, a significant theme adumbrated by Jeanette Winterson in *Art & Lies*. When it comes to obsession, Winterson is not only obsessed with telling the same story of boundaries and desire, but is also obsessive about the nature of names and the issue of naming, for naming is a means of restriction in both Asian and Western myths. In one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature, *Journey to the West* (西遊記), there are two characters whose assaults depend on proper names. One is the Pagoda Bearing Heavenly King (托塔天王), Li Jing (李靖), whose pagoda absorbs people who answer him when he calls their proper names, while the other one is the antagonist, the Golden Horned

King (金角大王), whose purplish-reddish Gold Wine Gourd works the same way as Li's pagoda. When it comes to children's stories from the West, one of the most popular fairy tales about names is, without doubt, Rumpelstiltskin from the Brothers Grimm collection. The imp Rumpelstiltskin, who had an agreement with the queen while she was trapped in the dungeon about claiming her first child, left the baby uninjured when the queen knew his name. Therefore, we may see that the concept of naming as power is prevalent and universal in different cultures, and Jeanette Winterson is definitely one of those who find this idea fascinating.

As we may observe from Winterson's novels, she has felt a tendency to play with the names of her characters since she first started her writing career in the 1980s. In her debut *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985), Winterson playfully names her protagonist Jeanette so as to imply the semi-autobiographical nature of this Bildungsroman. Moreover, in the same novel there is another character whose name is Winnet Stonejar, an anagram of "Jeanette Winterson" that it is formed by the exact type (though not token) of letters. In *Oranges*, Winterson depicts a situation of Winnet being spied upon, tricked and controlled by a sorcerer. At first, the sorcerer threatens Winnet by declaring that he knows her name, which makes Winnet extremely scared because "[i]f this were true she would be trapped. Naming meant power. Adam had named the animals and the animals came at his call." Later on, the sorcerer persuades Winnet to lower her defenses and dine with him. She asks how she knows she can trust him, and he says "[b]ecause I don't know your name." The two of them ends up playing the game Hangman and Winnet says to him, "if you can guess my name, I'll be yours." And of course he guesses her full name successfully, based on the riddle that she has given him, and she becomes his apprentice (138-140). From the above scenario, we know that Winterson is fascinated by the idea of

naming, and that she believes to a certain extent that knowing a certain person's name is power—hence proper names may function as a form of limitation.

Naming, i.e. granting a person or an object a name, concerns power difference. It is always the ones who occupy the higher level in a hierarchy that name those who are, relatively, “inferior”—the most radical examples are that masters name slaves and owners name pets. More subtle examples include the naming of children by parents and wives taking their husbands' surnames in marriage: in traditional patriarchal culture, it is very normal, for normal is the norm of males, for a woman to inherit the husband's surname so as to imply that she is married into the family. The person who is named always occupies the lower position in the power difference, which means that, or is the reason why, s/he is restricted.

In other words, any naming ceremony, i.e. the action of naming, is more than giving a person or an object a reference term per se. It can be interpreted as an indication of a relationship—for instance, it may demonstrate the extent of someone's possession of power over me. Simultaneously, names can be regarded as an indication of the degree of possession of knowledge about a certain person, for intimacy influences formality (i.e. usually the better that you know me, the less formally you will address me). When this relation between names and possession develops to the highest degree, it is through the act of naming that one declares possession—children have a tendency to name their beloved toys, yet they do not name just any toys; they only name the ones that their dear mothers purchased for them, because the naming ceremony declares that the specific toys belong to them.

Because there is never a valid explanation why a certain person or object has a certain name, names, or any kind of significations, are always arbitrary; to name a certain object is to establish an arbitrary relationship between a signifier and a

signified; and yet the arbitrary relationship is established so well that the proper names get deep down to the root of our being, that we feel so natural when someone addresses us by calling our names. This is, to a certain extent, a hegemonic subjectivization that the identity as well as the mind of the subject is constructed (and hence limited) so much by our discourses that we have identified with and internalized the alien signifiers as part of us—when we address the other person or vice versa, proper names are not only necessary but come to us very directly and naturally—we rarely stop and think, or feel awkward, for calling someone by his name unless the name is a new one (e.g. newborn babies, or when an older person’s name is changed for some certain reasons). As a result, there is an irreducible gap between the “internal” (phenomenological, feeling-based, experiential) and the “external” (objectivizing) aspects of the theory of naming. Regardless of where the idea of the name originates from, blessings, names of saints or grandparents, to call someone by a proper name is to (naturally) reflect and reinforce the internalized arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified, which implies that a certain person is a subject (of that name). What is a subject? The Lacanian subject is the S in the top left-hand corner of Schema L; it is the unknowing stupid subject whose existence can never be demonstrated. If we are to look into the spelling of the word “subject”, we may see it as sub-ject, for *sub-* is the prefix for “under” and *-ject* is eject, being forced or thrown out in a violent manner. A subject is, therefore, a dummy who is thrown under tides of power and forces, and here of course I mean the small reflective others and the unconscious big Other, as again demonstrated very clearly in Schema L (Figure 1), an elucidation of the intersubjective dialectic of the subject.

The top left-hand corner, S, is the (divided) subject, which is directly influenced by a', the small other in the upper right-hand corner, which is usually embodied by human beings in real life yet is merely a subject's psychological (hence fictional) construct. At the lower right-hand corner there is the big Other A, which is an abstract and impersonal projection of the small other a'. Both a' and A are the introjected outsider(s) who play(s) a critical role in the subject's self-perception (the ego, a) and hence dominate the subject, S. This invisible big Other originates from language and the Symbolic order, controls the subject by functioning as his/her unconscious, which results in the alienation of the divided subject. (The split subject is situated between 'being' and 'thinking' in the *vel* of alienation, meaning that either S is not thinking—thinking in the sense of unconscious thought, and thus results in a false being, or S is not.)

So, we as constructed subjects are restricted and alienated by language. But why is a proper name a very special signifier which restricts us more than any other? Bruce Fink has provided us a clear explanation in *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language And Jouissance* (1995):

The empty set as the subject's place-holder within the Symbolic order is not unrelated to the subject's proper name. That name is often selected long before the child's birth, and it inscribes the child in the Symbolic. A priori, this name has absolutely nothing to do with the subject; it is as foreign to him or her as any other signifier. But in time this signifier—more, perhaps, than any other—will go to the root of his or her being and become inextricably tied to his or her subjectivity. It will become the signifier of his or her very absence as subject, standing in for him or her. (53)

Until this point it is not difficult to see the boundary: proper names keep subjects under restriction. But how to get free from this intolerable burden? To go beyond the restriction we need translation. Jacques Derrida has raised a

groundbreaking point on the nature of proper names from a translation perspective in “Des Tours de Babel” (1979/1985). In this article, Derrida argues that names do not belong to any system of languages, i.e. they are the rebellious signifiers which resist a total submission to the Symbolic. He denies the translatability of the proper name like this: “It comments, explains, paraphrases, but does not translate. At best it reproduces approximately and by dividing the equivocation into two words that where confusion gathered in potential [...] ‘Peter’ in this sense is not a translation of *Pierre*, any more than *Londres* is a translation of ‘London’.” In other words, Derrida suggests that when we come to proper names, it is not about good or bad translation; instead, there is *no* translation. Not even the primordial proper name “Babel”, which is “at once proper name and common noun, [signifying that] confusion also becomes proper name and common noun, the one as the homonym of the other, the synonym as well”, has ever been translated (109-110).

If Lacan believes that proper names are signifiers partly responsible for the alienation of the barred subject, then Derrida believes that names are signifiers of the indication of the alienness and the otherness of the system of language. Due to the Symbolic deadlock that the proper name “remains forever untranslatable, [it] may lead one to conclude that [proper name] does not strictly belong to the language, to the system of the language, be it translated or translating” (Derrida 109-10). For Derrida, untranslatability as the fundamental attribute of proper names marks them as the improper and riotous elements of language, which remind us of the defect of the imperfect Symbolic order; they are something which remains forever foreign, alien, and other, something locating outside the system of languages and beyond the Symbolic order. They symbolize both a restriction and a rebellion.

5.2 Gender and Sexuation: The Empty Signifier

性明. 性 is a constituent of 性明, implying that sex/gender is a component of a name. Gender, in Chinese, is 性别; 别 is difference, therefore 性别 is sexual difference. What is the nature of proper names? As mentioned in the previous sections, names give definitions to and restrict subjects, but surreptitiously resist a total submission to the Symbolic. This is the same for sex, gender, and sexual difference.

Here is the Lacanian graph of sexuation (Figure 3):

Figure 3: Graph of Sexuation

For Lacan, the difference between masculine and feminine subjects is based on the phallic signifier, ϕ , but strictly speaking there is no sexual difference. As Lacan himself has put down in Seminar XX, sexual difference, if any, is merely a constructed fantasy whose authenticity is based on the phallic signifier, which is basically an empty signifier that stands for nothing. As a result, this empty signifier

inevitably refers to no meaning but failure in symbolization. In other words, rather than a biological fact or a cultural construct, sexuation is a trauma of symbolization, an eternal deadlock which implies the impossibility of symbolization, hence the haunting presence of the Real which can never be captured in the Symbolic order.

The phallus is the signifier of the lack. We may think of the phallus as a Symbolic stopping point before Symbolic loss. For example, a man purchases a ridiculously expensive sports car as a symbol of his physiological manhood—this sports car supports the narrative of his identity yet it ultimately symbolizes the lack (here, the lack in his manhood is not equivalent to a lack of manhood; the man may feel manly to a certain extent, yet there can still and would always be a certain degree of lack in his manhood because the physiological manhood simply does not and cannot exist ontologically. However, when we approach the argument from this perspective, we may come to a very interesting conclusion, which is: there is nothing which has no lack. Why would I say that? Think about something which exists ontologically—for us to be able to sense it or think about it, it must be symbolized to a certain extent, which means, there must be a remainder left behind which is not included in the symbolization; and surplus is, without doubt, the twin sister of lack—the residue in signification implies the lack in the signifiers (that they are not possible to symbolize everything 100%), and therefore whatever symbolized must carry a lack, just like phallic jouissance must fail. And as for some mutually existing concepts, what Žižek called the big Other, it is a formless God without a body, i.e. ideologies which “exist” in our mind or unconscious as forces but do not exist ontologically—and this would again be a kind of lack. In other words, there is nothing without lack). The reason behind this is that the car implies not only his manhood but his insecurity about it: we only need to supplement something that is

not enough; rather than being very proud of his manhood, the man is worrying that he is not manly enough and therefore he seeks refuge through the car. The same logic applies to women who are obsessed with makeup. Women who attempt to achieve a prettier or sexier look through makeup, instead of feeling content with their physical appearance, (either consciously or unconsciously) believe that they are not gorgeous enough, and it is the feeling of worry and insecurity which drives them to purchase cosmetics. If we think from this perspective, the real job that a marketing strategy or advertisement does is *not* to show the potential customers how good they would look or feel after using a certain product, but rather to construct the stars or models as a fantasy, an ideal which is *so* much better than the audience that the potential customers would feel insecure or inferior and then would buy the product to fulfill their needs. This reminds me of the Say's Law (Jean-Baptiste Say) that it is the emergence of an excessive supply (product) which retroactively triggers the demand (lack).⁷ Rather than selling through the concept of identification (i.e. I will look like Kate Moss if I buy this lipstick), it is the other way round, the advertisements are raising our desire to purchase a product by differentiating and alienating us from the artist or character in the ad through the renouncing of our insecurity. This interesting example points out an important point in our discussion, that (1) a supplement is adopted to fulfill the lack and (2) a lack can be retroactively created through the emergence of a supplement. Therefore, the intertwined relation between a supplement and a lack is much more complicated than we usually assume. This can help us understand Lacan's teaching of desire and repetition. To Lacan, desire is

⁷ It is now believed that the Say's Law is flawed. Both situations of supply creating demand and demand creating supply exist, due to lots of external factors (e.g. inflation, a large scale of immigration). However, some people argue that the definition of "demand" should be purchasing power rather than simply wanting (therefore a product must be put on sell before a potential customer may buy it), and some suggest that the definition of supply should be counted in a greater scale (hence when someone works to earn money to purchase something, the work that s/he does is always a kind of supply to some other products or to the society).

aroused by *objet a*, a lack which emerges (with *das Ding*) in the intrusion of language—and Lacan suggests that we have language first, prior to anything for a subject, and then it creates the lack (because of the slippage between the signifieds and the signifiers), and then we chase after all kinds of possible things (for us to be able to perceive these “things” we need to submit to language and hence no matter how we approach these “things”, our experience is still restricted) hoping to return to the state before castration. In other words, it is again the supplement (i.e. language, for it does not come to us “in nature”) retroactively creating a lack which has to be constantly attempted (and failed) to be fulfilled by chasing after (something created by) this supplement. In other words, the sport car, as the symbol of manhood, paradoxically symbolizes the man’s lack in it for it is the very lack which motivates his search for symbols so as to compensate for the lack. And since a perfect symbolization is impossible, every form of symbolization has phalluses and gender is no exceptional case.

5.3 性明

From the above paragraphs, the similarity between proper names and sexuation should be made extremely clear, i.e. the reasons of the coinage of the term 性明 should be fully justified. Both proper names and gender are conspirators in the alienation (and thus formation) of the Lacanian subject. By reinforcing the wholeness of the fragmented subject, proper names and gender simultaneously grant the subject a Symbolic identity and restrict it. Aren’t these two actions always happening together, both granting a Symbolic identity as a kind of symbolization, and

restricting that identity, so that symbolization always fails? Both proper names and gender are the essential constituents of the construction of a Symbolic identity, yet they surreptitiously rebel against the Symbolic, i.e. refuse to submit completely to the Symbolic order: the former through its untranslatability and the latter through the empty signifier. Proper names and gender are both situated at the border of the Symbolic, contemplating the verging on the fathomless Real which yields jouissance. As we are told by Lacan, the movement between two registers (the Symbolic and the Real) yields jouissance, which can be understood as a necessary outcome of defying the Symbolic, hence an indispensable follow-up similarity between proper names and sexuation.

Both proper names and gender are constructions of the Symbolic yearning for a minimal escape from the big Other to the abyss of the fathomless Real. Isn't that how proper names and gender are similar to literature and translation, always urging for a flight from lukewarm familiarity to the fertilizing, enticing yet terrifying otherness of the new? And doesn't this sound very much like sexual climax, *la petite mort*? The longing for the loss of the Symbolic identity can be read as a longing for Symbolic suicide, in other words, for death, or madness—and isn't it the reason why most non-scholars (or some over-conservative academics) tend to accuse us of being hysterical and insane when we present homonymic translations like 性明 to them?

From the ancient Chinese culture and philosophy, all the ten thousand things are constituted by *yin* and *yang*, with *yang* parallel with masculinity, the sun, day, left and life, while *yin* is parallel with femininity, the moon, night, right and death. If we are to read the character 明 iconically, isn't the 月 (moon) in it much bigger in ratio than the 日 (sun)? And can't we reasonably see it as the capture of the split single moment of *yin* dominating over *yang*, of death over life, of the feminine,

unstable and disruptive Real over the masculine, stable and positing Symbolic? Also, the character 明 itself is constructed by 日 (sun) and 月 (moon), which again can be read as a symbolization of *yang* and *yin* (hence men and women), which refers back to the character 性 (sex/gender) in 性明.

Moreover, 明 in its verb form is “to understand”. When we consider 明 with 性, and altogether 性明, it implies that to understand name as sexual difference and restriction, as well as to notice the restrictive plus rebellious nature of proper names and sexuation (i.e. to understand them as fundamentally empty cultural constructions which fragmentize and alienate us as subjects), is intellectually smart enough to really 明, understand, what names and languages are.

Therefore, 性明, more than a sheer acoustic Chinese homonym of 姓名, is in fact both a semantic and dynamic iconic manifestation of the rebellious nature of proper names and sexuation, a picture of the moment of the verging on the absent Real, and hence Symbolic suicide.

6. Conclusion

This dissertation is a Lacanian perspective on literature, translation and the activity of reading. Through the investigation of reader's intersubjectivity and an attempt plus discussion of the psychoanalytic approach to translate Winterson's *Art & Lies*, I have sought to argue the following points:

- (1) The emergence and transmission of meanings are never unidirectional. Contrary to the mainstream belief that, having been put by writers into the texts, meanings sit there waiting for a reader to perceive them, the approach I have adopted here sees readers as playing an equally important, or arguably *more* influential role, in the construction of meanings.
- (2) A psychoanalytical approach to translation may help us rethink the definition of the term "translation". When the production of a translatum through alternative means may result in a target text which carries more potential layers of interpretation, we may want to question the mainstream ideology of a metempsychotic translation.
- (3) The challenge of the definition of a "translation" evokes our consideration of the task of a scholar and the need of a perpetual undermining and overthrowing of the centre, which ensures the development and progress of our knowledge.

6.1 The Construction and Transmission of Meanings

There is no doubt that authors have a huge influence on the transmission of meanings through the text. When we are presented the phrase, for instance, “the end-stop of the universe”, it is quite unlikely that a sane reader will be reminded of bulldogs or cheese. However, I insisted on using the word “transmission” rather than “construction” when I described the relation between authors and texts, because meanings are constructed by readers rather than writers. Although authors’ influence on texts is unarguably enormous, it is on the other hand not as dramatic as people commonsensically believe. As I have demonstrated clearly in this thesis, the construction of meanings occurs in the minds of readers, making meanings readers’ psychological (hence fictional) construction and the projection of the writers (rather than the individual writers *per se*) and therefore are definitely intertwined with readers’ (inter)subjectivity. The traditional belief, which is very popular in the mainstream, about not only translation but also the construction and transmission of meanings is refuted in this dissertation.

If metempsychotic translation is really the way things are, then meanings are the essence of texts and languages are merely the carriers. Translation and reading are therefore both mechanical processes and:

- (1) Equivalent translations can be achieved;
- (2) Human subjectivity is not involved in the process of translation;
- (3) It is possible to know the meanings or intentions, i.e. the mind, of writers through reading, since it is writers who *put* the meanings (soul) into the texts, and therefore
- (4) Meanings are solely dependent on writers. Readers’ only job is to decode those meanings and therefore be subordinate to the author-ity of the writers, If

a reader interprets something different from the intention of the writer, it must be a mistake or a deviation.

But of course, our understanding of meanings and translation has proved all the four conclusions above wrong. As I have explained with concrete examples in this paper:

- (1) It is impossible to achieve an equivalent translation due to both linguistic and cultural limitation;
- (2) Human subjectivity is involved in the process of reading, and
- (3) It is impossible to read the mind of the writers, and
- (4) Meanings depend more on readers than writers precisely because they are not really “transmitted” through a medium (language) but are *created* in the mind of the readers (under the limitation of the writers, of course, as we won’t interpret “end-stop” as a keyboard).

In other words, even though the writer has definitely attempted to direct the reader’s mind to a certain way of thinking, the “space” that we may move around in the construction of meaning is not as restrictive as people usually think. This notion of the generation of meanings as somewhere between the writers and readers is not an innovative one—however, I would like to take this thesis as my first step in the investigation of the construction and transmission of meanings, and most importantly to explain how a large number of language users in a linguistic and cultural group can understand a certain word in a very similar way while some readers may interpret the text differently or even contrastingly. I am hoping that the answers to these questions may explain the ultimate question in the construction or transmission

of meanings, which is, how writers may restrict the interpretation of meanings in the readers mind when meanings are the psychological constructions of the readers.

6.2 Reading Psychoanalytically as an Alternative Translation Strategy, and the Task of a Scholar

A psychoanalytical approach to translation can produce target texts which carry *more* meanings than the source texts, as carefully demonstrated by my experimental Chinese translation of *Art & Lies*. One problem that I expect to encounter in my research direction is that the majority, who are so contently and comfortably situated within the centre while naturalizing it (unconsciously) as the normal way that things should/must be, will resist it as opposed to what Douglas Robinson calls metempsychotic translation: Surely it is XYZ, everyone agrees that it is XYZ and certainly you want it to be this way, don't you? It is hegemonic, and therefore "correct" and "natural," to assign the author total author-ity, and to regard as flawed a translation that deviates from authorial intention, whether by adding to or subtracting from the source text.

Ultimately, what they articulate is that a translation is flawed just because it is *not* the source text. All translations are bad translations because they are not the originals. While critics rarely say this outright, and might even be inclined to deny that any such view undergirds their claims, I argue that this simplistic orientation to translations is in fact surprisingly common. If I am right, surely it is our duty as scholars to identify and root out such assumptions. Although metempsychotic translation is *very* tempting and "plausible" as it occupies the position of the centre,

my remarks about readers' intersubjectivity and the logic at work behind metempsychotic translation strongly suggest that this approach to translation is hugely flawed (see Chapter 6.1 for the summary of the unreasonable conclusions reached by metempsychotic translation). To stand against the mainstream is undoubtedly a difficult task, but our roles as academics deny us the luxury of neglecting the facts to stay in the comfort zone when we know that the centre is wrong. For scholars, hiding one's head in the sand like an ostrich is a dangerous and idle response to uncomfortable observations. Here, instead of suggesting that translating through the incorporation of critical and psychoanalytical theories must be the "right" or the best way to translate, I am attempting to highlight the necessity to experiment and explore, to discover new methods and new ideas, when what we have at hand in the centre is full of mistakes and inconsistency. This is the only way for us to improve and make progress.

When it comes to the criticism that the Chinese versions I have offered of the first three sentences of the Sappho section in *Art and Lies* do not constitute a translatum as I have "deviated" too much in my psychoanalytical translation of Winterson, I would like to emphasize the linkage between the source text and the target text through the utilization of homophones—if my translation is not a translation, there was no need for me to keep the meaning of "end-stop", "universe" or "*in flagrante delicto*" in my Chinese translation. And second, I would also like to prompt my readers into the thinking activity of the nature of "translation"—what is the definition of "translation"? If you think that my translation is not a translation, regardless of the obvious relation between the source text and the target text, then what is a translation? A piece which is highly equivalent to the target text? A piece in which "deviation" only exists in obligatory shifts? If you believe that a translator

should translate a text as closely as possible to the source text, you are then spoken by the Author and, as explained in this dissertation, meanings and interpretations depend relatively more on readers than writers. Why would you still want to restrict translation or reading to the author's meanings, when (1) we may never know the author's exact meanings in the first place, and (2) different readers can read different meanings from the same piece of text? If two readers interpret the theme of a text in a contrasting way, which one is the meaning of the text? Depending on the writer? But can't the writer lie about his/her intention, or can't s/he simply not notice all the possible interpretations of the texts? The Pixar team said the cartoon Wall-E does not carry any messages of environmental protection but is only a romantic love story of two robots—do you believe that? Does it mean that we cannot read anything more than a love story in this film? Barthes criticized the hegemony of the Author in the 1970s—why would we want to go back to the time before that? Isn't it progress that we all want?

Real progress and development can only be made through the endless challenging and overthrowing of the centre, especially when we see the inconsistency and incompleteness of the mainstream. Many people follow the dominant beliefs because they are not intelligent or blessed enough to understand or be exposed to alternative ways of thinking, but as for academics, our task should be to constantly push the periphery to the centre in order to achieve authentic progress and approach the truth.

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