Dialogism in Translation:

Revisiting Gary Snyder's "Cold Mountain Poems"

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ABSTRACT

Literary translation concerns the recovery of meaning and how we conceive ourselves as engaged with interlocutors across cultures. In this respect, the American poet-translator Gary Snyder's translation of "Cold Mountain Poems" offers abundant evidence of "dialogization" and open-endedness to lend itself to a Bakhtinian analysis. Given that it remains an unexplored angle, in this article, I look into Snyder's approach to the Chinese Buddhist poet Han-shan through sympathetic co-experiencing and visualizing strategy, as well as how his translation is "against enclosure in a text" from the perspective of the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. This article also argues that Snyder's engagement with the Buddhist concept of interpenetration has influenced his literary renderings, by which means Snyder has created a third space of exchange in a larger, worldly context.

KEYWORDS: Cold Mountain Poems, Gary Snyder, literary translation, Mikhail Bakhtin, intertexuality, Buddhism

1. Introduction

In the 1928 introduction to Ezra Pound's *Selected Poems*, T.S. Eliot (1954: 14) made his famous statement that "Pound is the inventor of Chinese poetry for our time". Often quoted as praise, it also suggests the limits of Pound's pseudo-translation of classical Chinese poetry with its dazzling opacity rather than a clear window onto the East. Decades later, the American poet-translator Gary Snyder took a different poetic journey from Pound in his translations of the twenty-four "Cold Mountain Poems". The poems were originally written by the eighth century Chinese Buddhist monk Han-shan (literally meaning "cold, chilly mountain"), while Snyder's renderings dissolve Han-shan's original texts as self-contained entities and make them fluid with multiple levels of meaning.

Cross-cultural interpretation as a hermeneutic activity concerns the recovery of meaning and how we conceive ourselves as engaged with interlocutors. In this account, the Russian language philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's signature concept of dialogism and his exploration of the self/other relation provide a valid critical model to apply to certain intellectual challenges. Well-known for his study entitled "Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics" (1929), Bakhtin holds belief in a mutual relation between meaning and context, and the idea that language is not static but evolves dynamically. As a wide-ranging and suggestive writer, Bakhtin has influenced Western schools such as Neo-Marxism, New Criticism, structuralism, deconstruction, and historicism. Although he never wrote much on translation, his thoughts in combination with other approaches illuminate the discussion of texts' potential for translation.

The dialogue is a significant trope in all of Bakhtin's thought. For Bakhtin, there is no existence, no meaning, no word or thought that does not enter into "dialogic" relations with the other, that does not exhibit intertextuality in both time and space (Roberts 1994: 254). Snyder's translation of "Cold Mountain Poems" offers abundant evidence of

"dialogization" and open-enddeness to lend itself to a Bakhtinian analysis, which remains an unexplored angle for an understanding of Snyder's work. In this article, I intend to fill the gap with a close reading of Snyder's translation while consulting relevant theories on translation studies and comparative literature. First, I look into Snyder's approach to Han-shan through "sympathetic co-experiencing" as a Bakhtinian way of passing boundaries. Then, I focus on Snyder's visualizing strategy in "Cold Mountain Poems". I propose that Snyder has Americanized Han-shan's Cold Mountain as a rewriting that is "against enclosure in a text" (Bakhtin 1986b:169). Julia Kristeva's radical term of intertextuality together with Snyder's ecopoetic vision is useful here for the analysis. I conclude by arguing that although it is not Snyder's conscious decision (there is no evidence showing he ever read about Bakhtin), Snyder's aesthetic impersonality throughout his poetic career has demonstrated a unique connection between Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia and the Avatamsaka Buddhist philosophy of interpenetration, and this explains Snyder's ethical position.

Furthermore, this study shows the potential for the application of Bakhtin's perspective in translation studies. Reading Bakhtin and the Buddhist philosophy of "interpenetration" together shows how Snyder has moved from the initial literary or aesthetic point of departure in translation to philosophical issues of ethics and alterity. Moreover, Bakhtin's concept of superaddressee reiterates the theme of hope for discursive contexts, and maybe less obviously, allows space for discussion of what the deepest sense of a "good translation" entails.

2. "Sympathetic Co-experiencing"

Among different ways that "the other" has been theorized, this study takes how the "dialogic" demands a translator comprehend both the source culture and the target culture as "the other". The identification of "the other" is associated with the concept of "contact zone". It is a site for linguistic and cultural encounters, which in Mary Louis Pratt's description (1991: 34) is a "social space where cultures meet, clash and grapple

with each other". Likewise, the postmodern Marxist geographer Edward Soja based his construct of Thirdspace on Homi Bhabha's Third Space Theory, in which "all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (Rutherford 1990: 211). In Soja's explanation (1996: 57), Thirdspace is "an-Other way of understanding and acting to change the human life" that is appropriate to the new scope and significance involved in "the rebalanced trialectics of spatiality-historicality-sociality". The existence of interstitial zones and hybrid identity challenge the legitimacy of established borders. As Maurizio Ascari (2006: 221) notes, "the postmodern suspicion of binarism and of fixed boundaries has also helped to radically reshape the humanist view of identity". In this regard, this study explores how Snyder's "Cold Mountain Poems" become a hybrid construction of meaning and how the profound orientation towards the other in this process characterize an ethical experience.

A certain dialogic relation does exist in the encounter between Han-shan and Snyder. Han-shan, a Buddhist poet who flourished in the Tang dynasty, around 627-650 AD[1], remains a mysterious figure in Chinese literary history. Han-shan is not only a pen name, but is also the name of a small mountain in southeastern China where he allegedly lived (Chung 2011: 541). His outlook is Taoist and Buddhist, and he has been known among Buddhists and Taoists since his collections were published during the Tang Dynasty. The poems of Han-shan remained out of the classical Chinese canon, however, mainly because he uses a type of language which is rough and colloquial, far from refinement, and the content of many of his poems is popular Buddhist ideas (Chung 2011: 547). Nevertheless, more than twelve hundred years later, this Chinese recluse poet who loved mountains appealed strongly to Gary Snyder, who discovered Han-shan when he took a graduate seminar course on classical Chinese poetry taught by Chen Shih Hsiang at the University of California, Berkeley (Suiter 2002: 161). The rich mountain experiences in Han-shan's poetry enhanced Snyder's sense for the scene, as Snyder writes in the unpublished preface to "Cold Mountain Poems": "the purely physical side

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[1] A traditional belief is to historically consider Han-shan as a real man. The scholar Hu Shi dates him ca. 700-780. See Jacob Leed "Gary Snyder: An Unpublished Preface", p.180.

of this intensity—the constant imagery of cold, height, harshness, isolation, mountains—is available to anyone today: I have spent much time in high mountains, and feel at home in the land of Han Shan" (Leed 1986: 179).

Born in San Francisco of working-class parents in 1930, Snyder is an American poet, essayist, lecturer, environmental activist, and a practicing Buddhist with a thorough knowledge of Chinese and Japanese languages. Snyder grew up in different places in Washington, Oregon and California, but no matter where he lived, he had always kept a close relation to nature as an active mountain climber. Snyder describes the mountain climbing experience as "a powerful teaching for me. It was an initiation by all of the great gods of the land here. And so I began to write poems" (O'Connell 1987: 312). Snyder encountered Chinese poems in translation at nineteen (Snyder 1999: 295). The nature imagery in the landscapes matches his inner moods and offers him a sense of reverence for this mystery of a real world. Snyder's translation of the Chinese Buddhist monk Han-shan's idiosyncratic poetry "Cold Mountain Poems" first appeared in the magazine *Evergreen Review* in 1958 (Chung 2011: 542). Before this publication, it already had an impact on Snyder's friend, Jack Kerouac, who dedicated his largely autobiographical novel *The Dharma Bums* (1958) to Han-shan and quoted three of Snyder's drafts of "Cold Mountain Poems" in the novel. In the last fifty years, Han-shan has been widely read by American college students and poetry lovers, and has become an icon for counter-culture youth (Chung 2011: 542). His style of writing, as adapted in Snyder or other later translators' versions, has also been imitated by several American poets (Chung 2011: 563). This special cross-cultural phenomenon across time and the Pacific Rim poses important questions about translating a radical form of cultural and literary otherness within the general discipline of world literature.

In Snyder's description (2009: 35), Han-shan was "a mountain madman in an old Chinese line of ragged hermits". This is probably different from the Han-shan in real history, whose thoughts are more integrated like most literati in classical China, who

never really roamed around, based on the information that one can gather (Chung 2011: 549). Although in contrast, the fundamental ideas and levels of meaning in the original work are conveyed with a particular sense of lucidity in Snyder's remolding of the American Han-shan. To understand the success of the reception of Snyder's translation in the United States, apart from other social and cultural background, it is first necessary to recognize that Snyder and Han-shan share similarities and a kind of spiritual affinity, as Snyder himself acknowledges:

> I was able to do fresh, accurate translations of Han-shan because I was able to envision Han-shan's world, because I had much experience in the mountains and there are many images in Han-shan which are direct images of mountain scenery and mountain terrain and mountain weather that if a person had not felt those himself physically, he would not be able to get the same feel into the translation— it would be more abstract. I think that was part of the success of those translations— a meeting of sensations. (Chung 1977: 94)

This sympathetic co-experience, in Bakhtin's observation, is "a fundamentally and essentially new valuation, a utilization of my own architectonic exposition in being outside another's inner life" (1990: 103). We can only be outside of other's experience rather than our own experience, but boundaries are still passable. Bakhtin claims that aesthetic activity proper begins at the point when we *return* into ourselves, "when we *return* to our own place outside the suffering person, and start to form and consummate the material we derived from projecting ourselves into the other and experiencing him from within himself" (Bakhtin 1990: 26). With a sympathetic co-experience, Snyder enriches his literary ontology to enter Han-shan's world and make it re-presented.

In his early essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", Bakhtin points out that aesthetic activity is rooted in the relation between the self and the other. The discussions of this relation have been seen scattered throughout Bakhtin's career. In his late fragments from the 1970s, Bakhtin claims that "I hear voices in everything and dialogic relations among them" (1986b: 169). In other words, what is essential in dialogism is that there is no utterance without relation to other utterances. For Bakhtin, a literary

work is a site for the dialogic interaction of multiple voices. "Dialogue" here does not only refer to the ordinary verbal interaction between two individuals, but also the "open-endedness" of the world in a tension-filled environment:

> I cannot manage without another, I cannot become myself without another; I must find myself in another by finding another in myself (in mutual reflection and mutual acceptance). Justification cannot be *self*-justification, recognition cannot be *self*-recognition. I receive my name from others, and it exists for others (self-nomination is imposture). Even love toward one's own self is impossible. (Bakhtin 1984b: 287-88)

To live means to participate in dialogue. In dialogue, a person participates wholly and throughout life, and one can invest the "entire self in discourse and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium" (Bakhtin 1984b: 193). This self/other relationship embedded in the interaction of Snyder and Han-shan does not exist in a vacuum but in historically and socially grounded languages, which depend on real *individuals* known as authors, and the ties between writing and the world.

Snyder (1980: 73) believes that "poetry is our life. It's not that poetry has an effect on it, or a function in it or a value for it. It is our life as much as eating and speaking is our life". The creation of poetry, therefore, is "the real work", which is "what we really do: to make the world as real as it is, and to find ourselves as real as we are within it" (Snyder 1980: 81-82). In "Cold Moutain Poems", Snyder and Han-shan exist as real individuals and textual relations at the same time. In other words, the dimension of life sometimes is not external of the texts. The flesh-and-blood personality lies behind every utterance. The history of Western thought, as Bakhtin notices, has been marked periodically by perspectives that have rejected the validity of bodily, lived experience in favor of abstruse theoretical constructions—Platonism being the archetypal example (Gardiner 2000: 47). Bakhtin's primary interest at that formative stage in his intellectual development was to "get back to the naked immediacy of experience as it is felt from within the utmost particularity of a specific life, the molten lava of events as they

happen" (Holquist 1993: x). This idea is fully developed in Bakhtin's other important concept of "carnivalesque", which focuses on the traces of otherness in the most insignificant of utterances in everyday life. As Michael Gardiner (2000: 66-67) points out, "alterity" in the context of the carnivalesque turns out to be the bodily intertwining of self and other. In the belief that poetry and life are interwoven, Snyder contributed to return "Cold Mountain Poems" to life and the traces of otherness, which must be grasped on its own terms, as an "experiential and sensuous given" (Bakhtin 1993: 4). Through "sympathetic co-experiencing", Snyder makes translation become a highly existential process.

3. Visualizing Cold Mountain

Among all kinds of difficulties in literary translation, translating poetry from Chinese into English is undoubtedly a tricky task. It is not merely because Chinese relies on characters instead of an alphabet to build words, or because Chinese poetic images are often expressed without verbs, but also due to the differences in philosophical and aesthetic outlooks between China and the West. According to the study of Wai-Lim Yip (1997: 16), the success in a Chinese poem to a great extent depends on the sparseness of syntactic demands, which helps the poet to highlight independent visual events in coextensive spatial relationships. In the meantime, every Chinese character represents a single spoken syllable (may be a single spoken word, or may represent one part of a polysyllabic word). Although Chinese has never been a monosyllabic language, classical Chinese is positively telegraphic. As J. P. Seaton notices, "most written Chinese was as close to being monosyllabic as writers could make it. Within poems and prose pieces the drive toward verbal economy also set a premium on extreme grammatical simplicity" (2006: 3). The inseparability between language and worldview raises the question of how a language of rigid syntactic rules, like English, can approximate and represent the Chinese mode of presentation and its aesthetics. In this respect, Snyder's renderings of "Cold Mountain Poems" show how his translation does not play an instrumental role, but rather a constitutive role in reconstructing meaning.

The following analyses contain my development of these ideas. Through close reading, I strive to examine Snyder's translation within Bakhtin's conceptual framework of textual dialogism and how a piece of writing in classical Chinese can persist beyond its originating moment in a meaningful and powerful way. I start by comparing Snyder's translation characterized by his visualizing strategy with Red Pine's version as a representative reference when necessary.

The grammatical strategies in "Cold Mountain Poems" indicate the interlocutor's shift of attention to visionary experience. In a letter to his friend, the linguist Dell Hymes in 1976, Snyder explained his method of translation as follows:

> I get the verbal meaning into mind as clearly as I can, but then make an enormous effort of visualization, to "see" what the poem says, nonlinguistically, like a movie in my mind, and to feel it. If I can do this then I write the scene down in English. It is not a translation of the words, it is the same poem in a different language, allowing for the peculiar distortions of my own vision—but keeping it straight as possible. If I can do this to a poem the translation is uniformly successful, and is generally well received by scholars and critics. If I can't do this, I can still translate the words, and it may be well received, but it doesn't feel like I should. (Snyder 1980: 178)

As Yue Daiyun (2016: 267) points out, Western poetics tends to stress substantial analysis, using linguistic semiotics for conceptual accuracy and clear reasoning, while Chinese poetics gives prominence to a type of nonverbal sense of meaning that goes beyond words, with a focus on analogous perception and sudden apprehension. [2]

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[2] Through Chinese history, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism have conditioned and informed as the three "teachings". Yue (2016: 266) notes that more than a century before Aristotle, Confucius had offered a wide range of poetics concepts and defined the meaning of literature by emphasizing its relationship with ethics and society. On the other hand, the Daoist spirit of "dilution and letting things take their own course" is combined with the Buddhist doctrines of "emergence from nothingness and solitude", which together form an important source of traditional Chinese poetics. People's comprehension of the space is often expressed in the "super-linguistic imagery" of the poem, as Yue notices, the unique Chinese poetic milieu "took the interconnectedness between heaven and man as well as communion with nature as its loftiest state, and the symbolic space created by language, and at the same time transcending language itself, as the focus of its research" (2016: 267). For more discussion, see Yue Daiyun "The Question of Discourse in the Dialog Between Chinese and Western Poetics", p. 265-274.

Chinese relies heavily on visual elements, and its poetic images are built upon concise phrases. Chinese poetry, hence, challenges the translator to provide enough syntax to connect the characters. Most of Han-shan's poems are *lüshi*, one of the most important classical Chinese verse forms. These regulated verses are made of eight lines and each line contains five characters. It is technically demanding, but the strict rules of the *lüshi* made it even easier to write good verse. If those characters are literally translated into English, it would often read as a series of nouns. Accordingly, Snyder's translation carries strong and clear visual elements that offer his readers twenty-four mental snapshots of Cold Mountain. Snyder's method stands out in the following comparison with Red Pine's version:

可笑寒山道，而无车马踪。

联溪难记曲，迭嶂不知重。

泣露千般草，吟风一样松。

此时迷径处，形问影何从。

Snyder (2009: 39): Poem 1

The path[3] to Han-shan's place is laughable,

A path, but no sign of cart or horse.

Converging gorges—hard to trace their twists

Jumbled cliffs—unbelievably rugged.

A thousand grasses bend with dew,

A hill of pines hums in the wind.

And now I've lost the shortcut home,

Body asking shadow, how do you keep up?

Pine (2000: 37): Poem 3

The Cold Mountain Road is strange

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[3] The italics here and hereafter in the poems are mine for emphasis.

no tracks of cart or horse

hard to recall which merging stream

or tell which piled-up ridge

a myriad plants weep with dew

the pines all sigh the same

here where the trail disappears

form asks shadow where to

In this opening poem, Snyder starts every sentence in the first six lines by presenting his readers with a series of accurate and neat images: "a path", "converging gorges", "jumbled cliffs", "a thousand grasses bend with dew" and "a hill of pines". The final two lines move from concrete descriptions of nature to inner reflections, indicating the connection between nature and abstract concepts. By comparison, Pine pays more attention to the rhythm but softens the images. While in the original Chinese the third to the sixth lines start with nouns (i.e., images), Pine moves a few nouns ("merging stream", "piled-up ridge") to the end of the sentences. Pine also adds detailed translation notes for most of the 307 poems in his complete translations of Han-shan's surviving poems. For Poem 3, he writes a note of 182 words that offers background information about his traveling experiences in the area where Han-shan used to live and explains how the two references are indebted to another ancient Chinese poet, Tao Yuan-ming. Different from Snyder's "visualizing" method and literal rendering of the Chinese syntax, Pine adopts the translation strategy of following a regular unidirectional linguistic model to move the messages from Chinese to English.

In his 1923 essay "The Task of the Translator", Walter Benjamin puts forward the remarkable concept of "pure language", which can be achieved through "literal rendering":

> A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to

shine upon the original all the more fully. This may be achieved, above all, by a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator. (Benjamin 2008: 81)

The strength of Chinese poetry lies in the fact that it illuminates "vivid shorthand actions and processes in nature" (Olsen 2001: 28). In the above example, Snyder's emphasis on the visual is characterized by the Poundian idea of images, which stresses simplicity and clarity of expression in the symbolic representation of images. Compared with Pine's version, it is a more literal rendering that stresses words rather than sentences. In the meanwhile, it is "transparent" in a readable way without grammatical oddities that Benjamin has made a case for. The economy, or elegance shown in Snyder's translation is not only a feature of classical Chinese, but has almost always been regarded as a mark of superior literary style in English too.

On the other hand, Snyder's experiences as a regular mountain-dweller and his ecological mindset make the visualizing strategy achievable. From the perspective of Bakhtin, translation is the product of a dialogic triangulation between the source text, the translator, and the target text audience (Kumar and Malshe 2005: 116). The shaping and objectifying of the other's emotional content, in Bakhtin's idea, is accomplished through the intentional and consistent use of the "surplus of vision", which means "a visual advantage I possess in relation to the other by virtue of my external position in the process of empathizing" (Bakhtin 1990: 12). Snyder refers what he has experienced to Han-shan as a necessary condition for a productive projection in Han-shan's world. This surplus of vision allows him to center Han-shan as the other and leaves space open for both aesthetical and ethical choices. The surplus of spatio-temporal objectivity is necessitated by its externality. With his ecological mindset, Snyder keeps a distance from the mainstream American culture. In this manner, the visualizing process in his translation becomes possible. In Bakhtin's idea, only with the outside perspective can one see "the clear blue sky against whose background their suffering external image takes on meaning" (1990: 53). Given that Snyder understands Han-shan's words in a dynamic process with his "surplus of vision," the visualization frees him from temporal

and spatial constraints. As he recognized in an unpublished preface to "Cold Mountain Poems", this strategy allows him to "make an intellectual and imaginative jump into the mind and world of the poet" (Leed 1986: 179). By actively entering into Han-shan's world, new understanding comes into existence. Through the dynamic conception of images with the visualizing strategy and the literal rendering of the Chinese syntax, Snyder shows the possibility of approaching an intellectual and emotional complex in his historical encounter with Han-shan.

4. Intertextuality: Translation as Rewriting

Having discussed Snyder's visualizing strategy and how it makes the "jump" of meaning possible, this section explores the issue of "translation" and intertextuality, arguing Snyder's "Cold Mountain Poems" is a type of rewriting that rejects the enclosure of meaning. Chapman (2019: 6) argues that "all texts, not just those usually called 'translations', are involved in a continuous process of translation. Therefore, 'afterlife' names a condition of textuality as such". In a similar vein, Bakhtin believes that a text contains no absolute, fixed meaning, and his critical strategy deals with "rescuing" a given text from the sedimented dominant meaning. It challenges ideological closure by opening up the text to an abundance of different reading that "strives to expose and develop all the semantic possibilities embedded within a given point of view" (Bakhtin 1984a: 69). In Bakhtin's late notes under the title "Towards a Methodology for the Human Sciences", he claims that he is "against enclosure in a text" (1986b: 169). Bakhtin regards dialogic texts as being always contemporary and semantically infinite, which are open to new discourses, new social circumstances and contexts.

Out of her study of Bakhtin, the literary critic Julia Kristeva (1986: 37) proposes a more radical version of "intertextuality": "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another". Kristeva sees any text as inevitably related to other texts in a matrix of plural and provisional meaning, and the

notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity. The notion of any subjectivity is dissolved, as Kristeva (1986: 56-57) claims, the one who writes is the same as the one who reads. Since one's interlocutor is a text, one is no more than a text reading itself as it rewrites itself. Playing with the paradoxes, Kristeva makes writing become multiple in its very constitution.

Bakhtin tends to see a text as a part of the broader social, cultural, and historical textuality, while Kristeva views a text as independent of historical location. Nevertheless, for both of them, a "translated text" is constantly being rewritten. André Lefevere (1992: 9) recognizes that translation is the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting: "it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin". Snyder's translation becomes such a property of negotiation and rewriting. For example, in Poem 2 (Snyder 2009: 40):

重岩我卜居，鸟道绝人迹。
庭际何所有，白云抱幽石。
住兹凡几年，屡见春冬易。
寄语钟鼎家，虚名定无益。

In a tangle of cliffs I chose a place—
Bird-paths, but no trails for men.
What's beyond the yard?
White clouds clinging to vague rocks.
Now I've lived here—how many years—
Again and again, spring and winter pass.
Go tell families with silverware and cars
"what's the use of all that noise and money?"

Red Pine (2000: 37): Poem 1
Towering cliffs were the home I chose
bird trails beyond human tracks
what does my yard contain
white clouds clinging to dark rocks
every year I've lived here
I've seen the seasons change
all you owners of tripods and bells

> *what good are empty names*

Snyder's last two lines are bold adaptations from the original, considering Han-shan lived in an age without cars. In his letter to Herb Fackler, Snyder explains that besides his accurate line-for-line translations, "there are a few substitutions, i.e. 'silverware and cars' for equivalent but culture-bound symbols of affluence in the T'ang dynasty" (Leed 1986: 177). Compared with Pine's choice of words which follow the original, Snyder's spontaneous alternative version conveys his understanding of the Buddhist ideas through Han-shan's poem in the contemporary context. Moreover, his translation turns out to be a direct attack on American consumerism in the 1950s. Here, Snyder seemed to undertake the task of a poet, rather than the task of a translator, who constructed the last two lines in his immersion in the movement of language, instead of the fixed language of the original poem in Chinese. In Octavio Paz's understanding of translating poetry, this kind of creative reconstruction process "is dismantling the elements of the texts, freeing the signs into circulation, then returning them to language" (Bassnett 1988: 66). Snyder is such a translator, who visualizes the original poem and composes some other lines creatively. Using "silverware and cars" as culture-bound substitutions of wealth in the Tang dynasty, Snyder brings his translation close to home by setting Han-shan in the mountains of California rather than Han-shan's own Cold Mountain. Considering the other parts of this poem follow Han-shan's original lines, it is still a translation rather than another poem inspired by Han-shan. Providing a liberating way to look at translating, it answers the vexed question of whether a translation is an inferior copy of the original.

The example of "silverware and cars" demonstrates how Snyder has engaged the social, historical context in his translation. In the preface to "Cold Mountain Poems", Snyder invites his readers to imagine Han-shan and his sidekick Shih-de in a contemporary American setting: "they became Immortals and sometimes run onto them today in the skidrows, orchards, hobo jungles, and logging camps of America" (Snyder 2009: 35). These "immortals" are like Kerouac's Dharma bums, or "marginalized figures,

members of a sub- or counter-culture and representatives of an oppositional politics" in the words of Kern (1996: 236). They manage to transcend the limits of time and space and live vividly in Snyder's American West Coast language. Bakhtin attempts to find a means of describing the continued life of writing in history through the "re-accentuation" within the historical process (Bakhtin 1981: 421). A dialogue with an "other", or with Han-shan in the case of Snyder's "Cold Mountain Poems" must convey information of some sort. If we check the term again, "dialogization" designates the condition of subjects as users of language who are involved in symbolic exchanges with other speakers (LaCapra 1983: 312). The textual process cannot be confined within the bindings of the book, rather, it has a powerful referential function in creating alternative realities with the world in which we live. In this account, Snyder's translation of "Cold Mountain Poems" shows how the historical life of a classic becomes an uninterrupted process of social and ideological re-accentuation. Rather than a barrier, the historical distance between Han-shan and Snyder becomes an opportunity, offering a new space in which the unrealized possibilities of Han-shan's words are made to speak.

Meanwhile, Snyder not only Americanizes Han-shan's voice, but also Americanizes the landscapes depicted in the poem. The landscape in "Cold Mountain Poems" is seen as a mixture of East and West, not merely due to Snyder's visualizing strategy but also attributed to his choice of words and direct colloquial West Coast American diction, which introduces American elements into the ostensible Chinese setting of the poems.

> *杳杳*寒山道，*落落冷涧滨*。
> 啾啾常有鸟，寂寂更无人。
> *淅淅风吹面*，*纷纷*雪积身。
> 朝朝不见日，岁岁不知春。

Snyder (2009: 47): Poem 9
Rough and dark - the Cold Mountain trail,
Sharp cobbles - the *icy* creek bank.
Yammering, chirping - always birds
Bleak, alone, not even a lone hiker.
Whip, whip - the wind *slaps my face*

Anyi Sun, Dialogism in Translation: Revisiting Gary Snyder's "Cold Mountain Poems", 129-158

> *Whirled and tumbled* - snow piles on my back.
> Morning after morning I don't see the sun
> Year after year, not a sign of spring.

> Pine (2000: 59): Poem 35
> The trail to Cold Mountain is *faint*
> the banks of *Cold* Stream are a jungle
> birds constantly chatter away
> I hear no sound of people
> gusts of wind *lash my face*
> *flurries* of snow bury my body
> day after day no sun
> year after year no spring

Han-shan's original mountain is rewritten with the mountain landscapes of the American West Coast in Snyder's English translation. For instance, the words that Snyder choose in Poem 9 are tougher and sharper than the original Chinese: "杳" in Chinese means dark, deep and far away, while Snyder translates it as "rough and dark"; "落落", which in Chinese describes a scene with many stones, becomes Snyder's "sharp cobbles"; "冷涧", the "cold creek", comes to be the colder "icy creek". "风吹面", with the literal meaning "wind blows [in] the face", becomes "slaps my face" in Snyder's exaggeration. "纷纷", as a depiction of heavy snow falling, turns out to be "whirled and tumbled" snow in Snyder's Cold Mountain. In other words, a few geological features described in Snyder's "Cold Mountain Poems" never existed in Han-shan's mountains.

Comparatively, Pine uses the words and phrases "faint", "cold", "lash my face" and "flurries of snow", which are closer to the original text. This difference may stem from the fact that Snyder relates Cold Mountain to his own mountain experience and his attitudes towards nature and wilderness. He writes in *The Practice of the Wild* that:

> The wilderness pilgrim's step-by-step breath-by-breath walk up a trail, into those snowfields, carrying all on the back, is so ancient a set of gestures as to bring a profound sense of body-mind joy. […] The point is to make intimate contact with the real world, real self. *Sacred* refers to that which helps take us (not only human beings) out of our little selves into the whole mountains-and-rivers mandala

universe. Inspiration, exaltation, and insight do not end when one steps outside the doors of the church. The wilderness as a temple is only a beginning. (Snyder 1990: 93-94)

The voice and landscape in Snyder's translation is a mixture of Han-shan's mindset and Snyder's experience of the West Coast of America. In Kristeva's use of Bakhtin to develop the notion of "intertextuality", the production of meaning is the result of purely textual operations independent of historical location and leads to a peculiar notion of liberation against the singular meanings and certainties of bourgeois culture. In her essay "The Bounded Text", Kristeva (1980: 36) writes of intertextuality as "a permutation of texts", by which she means that "in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another". As such, dialogic texts are always in a state of creativity and productiveness. They pose a threat to any unitary, authoritarian, and hierarchical conception of society, art, and life (Allen 2000: 27). As a transcultural ecopoet, Snyder has never been limited to Han-shan's original texts. To understand his translation as dialogic texts, we have to take Snyder's ecopoetic vision into consideration. Snyder (2008a:174) holds the idea that "'wild' alludes to a process of self-organization that generates systems and organisms". For him, "nature's writing has the potential of becoming the most vital, radical, fluid, transgressive, pansexual, subductive, and morally challenging kind of the most terrible things of our time—the destruction of species and their habitats, the elimination of some living beings forever" (Snyder 2008a: 171). To some extent, Snyder's reading and rewriting of Han-shan are independent from historical background and become a literary system, where the absorption and transformation of Han-shan's words is seen as intertextual and self-organized at the same time, vital and organic with its full potential.

Kristeva's idea of intertexuality also reflects the common ground between post-structuralism and deep ecology. The American physicist, systems theorist and deep ecologist Fritjof Capra explains in *The Tao of Physics* that the world is "a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole" (Capra 1976: 71). In

Campbell's interpretation, deep ecology and post-structuralism both criticize the traditional sense of a separate, independent, authoritative center of value or meaning: both substitute the idea of networks (Campbell 1996: 131). This idea of wholeness and interconnectedness echoes the Buddhist philosophy of interpenetration, which will be discussed in the following section. Snyder's rewriting of Han-shan's original texts is seen as conditioned by a postmodern sensitivity. By breaking historical distance and the frontier between art and land, Snyder's literary representations yielded new ways of seeing the world that we inhabit, and also the text, today.

5. Beyond Boundaries: Interpenetration and a Third Space of Exchange

Yet in discussing Snyder's translation, which is sometimes a transparent mirroring of Han-shan's source text, for instance, by keeping the original Chinese syntax without verbs, while sometimes it is a complete rewriting (i.e. the "silverware and cars" example), in both cases, I am more interested, here, in understanding the aspect of Snyder's translation that involves what Bakhtin calls "outsideness", rather than in summarizing the suppositions about his language use as a translator. Seeing translation as a "dialogic" activity helps us to be aware of the tension and potential in Snyder's renderings of "Cold Mountain Poems". Rather than a secondary activity, translation is a process that involves "active understanding" of both intralingual and interlingual subtleties. The Bakhtinian notion of "outsideness" is significant for translation, since the creative understanding depends on "a translator's ability to situate the self in the position of 'the other' and then return to his or her initial position to fulfill the task" (Kumar and Malher 2005: 116). By comparison, "passive understanding" is monologic that allows only one singular perspective to exist. It makes translation impossible, "as it erases the difference between the self and the other" (ibid.). In Bakhtin's terms, "the word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of

complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group" (1981: 276). Bakhtin sees every cultural act as living essentially on the boundaries. The critical construction of his theory of dialogue provides a significant perspective for translation studies: translation requires a "live-entering" into the territory of the other.

In 1996, Snyder finally published his original poetry collection *Mountains and Rivers without End* in its entirety, an ambitious project that began in April 1956. This collection marks the culmination of Snyder's career as a poet and offers clues on comprehending Snyder's thoughts. The Snyderian art shown in his early work "Cold Mountain Poems" reaches a new level in the thirty-nine poems in the volume, in which the poet's singular voice is often missing but replaced by a kind of collective utterance. The poems also call society's attention on how their ignorance has pushed other cultures, for instance, Native Americans, to the margins and lost their voices. In this collection, poetry turns into a form of "speaking through". This cultural role of the modern poet, or the premodern shaman, is in accord with Snyder's understanding of a poet's role as a "spokesman". He further expressed his opinion in an interview:

> The power of a great poem is not that we felt that person expressed himself well. We don't think that. What we think is, "How deeply *I* am touched". That's our level of response. And so a great poet does not express his or her self, he expresses all of our selves. And to express all of ourselves, you have to go beyond your own self. Like *Dōgen*, the Zen master, said, "We study the self to forget the self. And when you forget the self, you become one with all things." And that's why poetry's not self-expression in those small self terms. (Snyder 1980: 65)

The whispers of "the others" offer a structural principle and form certain dialogic relations in *Mountains and Rivers Without End.* Snyder explains how Chinese hand-scroll painting calls for responses in the note that he writes for the opening poem "Streams and Mountains Without End": "the East Asian landscape painting invites commentary. In a way the painting is not fully realized until several centuries of poems have been added" (Snyder 2008b: 161). In this way, texts mature over time with

comments, replies and influences. Crossing boundaries is an attempt to see what the other reality is. In the collection, Snyder frames particular images and ideas together and makes it a book of responses from "the others". With the poet's identity becoming subordinated and opening to the realm of otherness, the poetic impersonality shows a different view and tendency of literature.

Snyder's interest in Buddhism led him to Han-shan. Snyder sees the aesthetics of Chinese poetry has been very much involved with Chan, a Chinese school of Mahayana Buddhism, the origins of the Zen tradition. He also notices that Chinese classical poetry offers human beings "a window into the nonhuman" (Snyder 2008a: 92). This relates to the Buddhist doctrine of "non-self", which basically means that the permanent self, soul, or essence does not exist in living beings. Snyder (2007: 10) once explained this point using the Buddhist language: "if a Bodhisattva [enlightened being] retains the thought of an ego, a person, a being, or a soul, he is no more a Bodhisattva". Bakhtin (1984b: 287) shares a relational outlook: "to be means to be for the other, and through him, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory: he is wholly and always on the boundary". Moreover, Bakhtin holds the idea that "the word is never your own word, but always in part the word of another, for whom in turn the word is never their own" (Dentith 1995: 93). As Simon Dentith (1995: 93) observes, "if torn from the social location in which dialogue occurs, Bakhtin too can be made to sound as though we all speak in a hall of mirrors". Here, I suggest that this hall of mirrors is significantly associated with Snyder's engagement with the concept of "interpenetration" in Huayan Buddhism.

Among different schools in Mahayana Buddhism, apart from Chan/Zen, Snyder is deeply drawn into the Huayan (or Hua-yen, Avatamsaka, "Flower Garland") philosophy. The Huayan school flourished first in China during the Tang Dynasty. During the Song Dynasty, Huayan metaphysics were nearly all assimilated by the Chan School, while the former, in Snyder's words, is "the intellectual statement of Zen" (2007: 34-35). Based on its worldview, as detailed in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, its doctrine seeks to

cultivate wisdom in the empathetic resonance with all forms of life, while the theoretical emphasis of the Huayan tradition "is not the formation but the existing situation of the world" (Wei 2007:189). A most fundamental and prominent feature of the Huayan philosophy is called "perfect interfusion" (ibid.). In the Huayan belief, all levels of reality are interrelated and interpenetrated. In Snyder's explanation:

> Avatamsaka Buddhist philosophy sees the world as a vast interrelated network in which all objects and creatures are necessary and illuminated. […] From the "human" standpoint we cannot live in those terms unless all beings see with the same enlightened eyes. [...] It is clear that the empirically observable interconnectedness of nature is but a corner of the vast "jewelled net" which moves from without to within. (Snyder 2007: 129)

As a fundamental ancient doctrine of Huayan, interpenetration is related to the idea that "countless dharmas (all phenomena in the world) are representations of the wisdom of Buddha without exception", and "they exist in a state of mutual dependence, interfusion and balance without any contradiction or conflict" (Wei 2007: 189). A significant metaphor to illustrate the abstract theory, "Indra's net", first appeared in the third-century script of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* and was later developed by the Huayan School in the sixth and eighth centuries. It is a sign of the interrelationship among all beings, as Thomas Cleary (1994: 37) explains: "the net of Indra is a net of jewels: not only does each jewel reflect all the other jewels but the reflections of all the jewels in each jewel also contain the reflections of all the other jewels, ad infinitum". In other words, the "infinity of infinities" stands for the interidentification and interpenetration of all things.

The Buddhist hermeneutic tradition is different from western hermeneutics, however, it does share the fundamental temporal structure of the hermeneutic task. Reading, writing, and speaking as communicative deeds are always enacted incompletely. As Garfield (2002: 234) notes, "meaning" enters the knots of Indra's net only from the infinite distance marked by each cord, and hermeneutic context is offered by the history of calls and responses that together constitute a tradition. The metaphors of the hall of

mirrors and Indra's net share intrinsic connections to Bakhtin's notion of "heteroglossia", which refers to the crossing of "specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meaning and values" (Bakhtin 1981: 421). The concept of heteroglossia foregrounds the clash of antagonistic social forces. The hybrid utterances in *Mountains and Rivers Without End* demonstrate that language can reflect the varying ways of conceptualizing and experiencing the world, while in "Cold Mountain Poems", Snyder has built a net where Han-shan's voice is intermingled in one way or another with Snyder's voice.

In his essay "The Problem of the Text", Bakhtin identifies two poles of the text. The first pole consists of a language system: everything repeatable and reproducible. The second pole "inheres in the text itself, but is revealed only in a particular situation and in a chain of texts" (1986a: 105). This pole is realized by means of pure context, which is "linked with other text (unrepeatable) by special dialogic (and dialectical, when detached from the author) relations" (ibid.). The concepts of heteroglossia and dialogization enable a rearticulation of "context". For Bakhtin, the study of literature is not only about language, but implies decontexualization of language and life. Dialogism comes with this ambivalent, sensuous materiality of human existence. Similarly, the metaphor of "Indra's net" in Buddhist philosophy indicates that all beings are all emerging in this present moment. It points to the Buddha's path. In the Mahayana tradition, all concrete things are impermanent. The human body is subject to birth and decay, while the attachment to self leads to suffering. Snydian poetics promises a novel way of conceptualising in a critical fashion by placing stress on the subtleties of human dialogue and the phenomenological "depth" of the self/other relation.

This study suggests Snyder's translation as a dialogical text is able to act as a third party that is independent from the source culture and the target culture. In one of Bakhtin's last essays, he announces a third participant into the concept of dialogue, the "superaddressee", who is "a constitutive aspect of the whole utterance" (Bakhtin 1986a:

126). Different from the utterance (the first party) and the addressee (the second party), the author of the utterance presupposes a higher superaddressee as the third party, whose "absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in a distant historical time" (ibid.). Bakhtin describes this third participant as an ideal listener that exists in the mind of the speaker, who listens sympathetically and understands justly. Instead of hollowing out the very concept of dialogue, this third participant offers Bakhtin a way to avoid ethical relativism. Holquist notices that "if there is something like a God concept in Bakhtin, it is surely the superaddresee" (1986: xviii). Yet, Bakhtin cautiously warns that this third party "is not any mystical or metaphysical being" (1986a: 126). Bakhtin himself is against limiting the superaddressee to a strictly theological interpretation, but provides a list of other likely superaddressees (the people, the court of history, science, etc.). In Frank Farmer's interpretation (1998: 201), Bakhtin's third party is better considered as a rhetorical figure than a transcendental one. Although it is not an expression of an ideological belief, as Morson and Emerson (1990: 135-136) argue, this new player can be considered as a metalinguistic fact that embodies the principle of hope.

If "superaddressee" represents Bakhtin's unspoken awareness that invites us to think in which conditions the dialogue is shaped, this study involves a consideration of how "Cold Mountain Poems" becomes a translation with its autonomy, an ultimate other with a metaphysical ambiance. The way contexts are "always already" inside the texts of "Cold Mountain Poems" signals a dimension of language in translation studies. Like Bakhtin, Snyder rejects the formalist views of meaning as totally text-bound, and the vulgar Marxist view of meaning as the product of extratextual factors, but instead, considers meaning as an absolute potential in an absolute future. Meanwhile, linking Bakhtin and Buddhist thought together enables us to understand the most penetrating aspect of dialogization, alterity, and interconnectedness that is shown in Snyder's works. With the tension of resistance and affinity that is shown in "Cold Mountain Poems", Snyder has created a best possible "third space" for linguistic and cultural encounters, where Han-shan and Snyder both give a part of their utterances to express a proper

lifestyle. In this contact zone, Snyder's poetic self is not isolated but constituted in the dialogue with "the other", whose identity is never completed but constantly in the process of creation.

6. Conclusion

As a transcultural eco-poet who subscribes to Buddhist philosophy, Snyder turns "Cold Mountain Poems" into a third space of exchange, a web of references, and a hall of mirrors within which one can see oneself reflected in others. The translation in a Bakhtinian sense, turns out to be an aesthetic event that implies the dialogic interaction of two autonomous consciousnesses. The discussion throws light on the pessimistic view which sees translation as a near-impossible task by considering it as a difficult yet still possible art. Robert Frost once remarked that "poetry is what gets lost in translation" (Undermeyer 1964: 18), however, in Snyder's case, poetry could be what gets created in translation. The dialogism in his poetry translation goes beyond the anthropologists' object of understanding an alien culture from *within*, but makes a new space come into existence.

Both Bakhtin and Snyder are morally and aesthetically allergic to monism. Transculturalism demands us to see ourselves in the other and also recognize an otherness in ourselves. Snyder's encounter with Han-shan retains those moments of recognition and solidarity in their historically specific situations. In the development of the dialogue in "Cold Mountain Poems", there are boundless masses of forgotten contextual meaning, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development in translation, they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form. As Bakhtin (1986b: 169-170) writes in one of his last fragments, "nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival".

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