Teaching Effective Translation: Naturalness vs Visibility

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Natural as Unremarkable, therefore Invisible

- Weather forecast for tonight and tomorrow: Cloudy to overcast with a few rain and mist patches. Rain will be more frequent later tomorrow. Temperatures will range between 17 and 19 degrees. Fresh easterly winds, strong offshore and on high ground.

  (Hong Kong Observatory, 20.3.16)

Natural as Unremarkable, therefore Invisible

- 本港地區今晚及明日天氣預測: 密雲，有幾陣雨及薄雲，明日稍後雨勢較為頻密，氣溫介乎17度至19度。吹清勁東風，離岸及你高地吹強風。

(Chinese webpage, Hong Kong Observatory, 20.3.16)

Natural language and its Translation

- Language is an “instrument of communication employed according to a system of rules”.
- Translation is executed “according to the four Gricean maxims: quantity of information, quality of truthfulness, relevance of context, and manner or clarity”.

(*Scandals of Translation*, 21)

Natural language and its Translation

- Language is naturalized by repeatable rules that its speakers live by, and so is its translation.
- The rules are meant to ensure the communication of information without gain or loss, intralingually and across languages.
- The maintenance of the status quo is by means of the style book and glossaries, bilingual in the practice of translation.

But language, and translation especially, is also transformational

- Grice allows the flouting of his maxims "to open a stratum of implicature, such as irony".
- The translator is expected to compensate for the "knowledge gap" by "rewriting the foreign text according to domestic intelligibities and interests" --- "exceeding any intention to convey a message" by activating the literary resources, or the "remainder" of the target language.

(*Scandals of Translation*, 21)

Self-deprecating "humour" and its sanitized translation

- "You can't put the nation's interests at risk just because of some silly s**e**ntimentality about justice. If we took moral positions on individual injustices and cruelties, we'd never have been able to hand Hong Kong over to the Chinese (or put Mugabe in power in Zimbabwe)."

ORIGINAL (*Yes, Prime Minister*, 214, quoted in Chang Nan Fung, "Politics and Poetics in Translation", *The Translator*, 1998, Volume 2, 263):

Self-deprecating "humour" and its sanitized translation

- TRANSLATION (Chang, ditto): " … we would not have been able to maintain a friendly relation with **South Africa** …"

ORIGINAL (*Yes, Prime Minister*, 214, quoted in Chang Nan Fung, "Politics and Poetics in Translation", *The Translator*, 1998, Volume 2, 263):

With a nonetheless political twist in compensation as "domestication"

- "Chang Nam Fung's Chinese translation of *Yes Prime Minister* (1986-1987), a work of British political humour, was intended to satirize the Chinese socialist government and thereby advance the embattled Democratic Movement. The translator handled British cultural allusions occasionally incorporating Chinese political terms, most of which were "in vogue during the Cultural Revolution". The resulting translation was a subversive allegory so clear in its political intent that no press in mainland China would publish it."

(Venuti, "Introduction", *The Translator*, 1998, Volume 2, 139)

“Effective” Translation as Critical Reading and Writing

- The rhetorically charged translation is in practice a kind of effective writing, or writing for effect. It may be used to raise “political” awareness---or, sell a commercial product.
- Unlike the weather bulletin, there is no certainty of meaning. It may fall short as well as overkill, etc.
- Translator training as the nurturing of literary sensibility?

Visible as Provocative /“Effective”?

不准吸煙, 總督都唔(不)准
No Smoking, not even Viceroy.

Visible as Provocative /“Effective”

不可能？ 不可能！
Impossible 又如何！

Bilingualism as Heritage

地下鐵路 為你服務
MTR Running For You

1979-80年代中
1979- mid 80's

搭地下鐵路 話咁快就到
Say MTR and you're almost there

80年代中–2000
Mid 80's-2000

多點時間 多點生活
More time for life

2000-2007

Bilingualism as Heritage

一路帶動生活
The ride to great living

2007-2009

一路心向著你
Serving you with joy and care

心繫生活每一程
Caring for life's journeys

2009-

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Forever hip
永遠“潮”
活廣告
Living advertisement

Bilingual Captioning

Self-supporting

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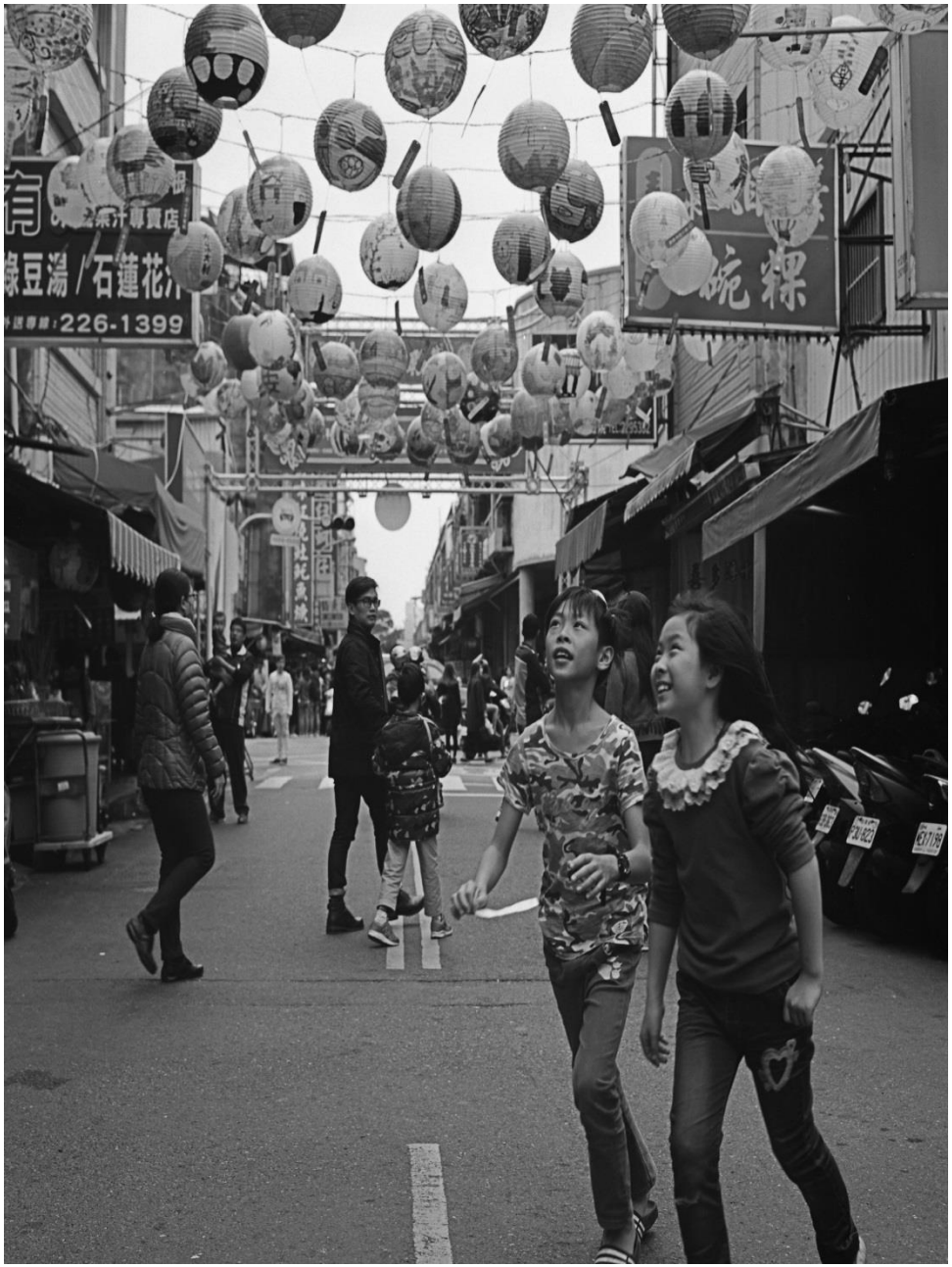
與佛
有緣



Bilingual Captioning

繽紛
Colour and Wonder

THE END

THANK YOU!