

# Translation and/as Diasporic Self- fashioning: The Case of Bernard Guilbert Guerney and Rose Quong

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# Beyond the Nation-State

Many of the foundational models in the field of TS assumed a world order based on monolingual nation states (see Naoki Sakai: all translations assume “a monolingual addressee,” 2016)

Nation-based frameworks tend to reify binaries (native vs. foreign) and have traditionally marginalized the contribution of translations

# Beyond the Nation-State

- As Andre Lefevere notes:

“Literary histories, as they have been written until recently, have had little time for translations, since for the literary historian, translation has had to do with ‘language’ only, not with literature—another pernicious outgrowth of the ‘monolingualization’ of literary history by Romantic historiographers intent on creating ‘national’ literatures preferably as uncontaminated as possible by foreign influences.” (1992:24)

# Beyond the Nation-State

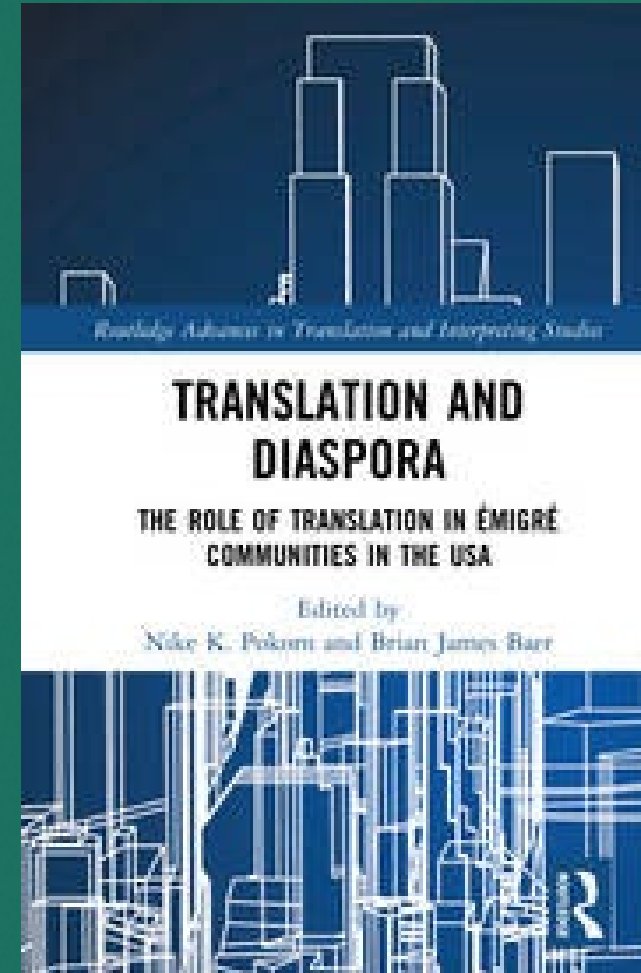
- Johan Heilbron makes a similar point in regard to a monumental survey of French publishing:

“In the remarkable project directed by Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin (1982–86) on the French book trade, which contains more than 3,000 pages, there is not a single chapter on translations or translators. Literary history also tends to ignore translation since it is commonly conceived as national history” (2010:316).

# Beyond the Nation-State

- As a result, Translation Studies becomes a highly productive perspective through which to historicize and provincialize nation-based models of translation and to foster non-binary thinking...
- The role of translation in internationalist aesthetics (supranational polities)
- The role of translation in diasporic communities (subnational polities)

# Translation and Diaspora: Diaspora as a distinct site of translational activity



# Sites of Translation in Diaspora

Émigré periodicals

Émigré institutions (e.g., publishing houses, festivals, cultural centers)

Émigré cultural mediators (individuals whose translational activity helps to define a culture/tradition for the host country and for the diasporic community)

# Two Émigré Translators / Cultural Mediators

- Bernard Guilbert Guerney (1894-1979)
- Rose Quong (1879-1972)



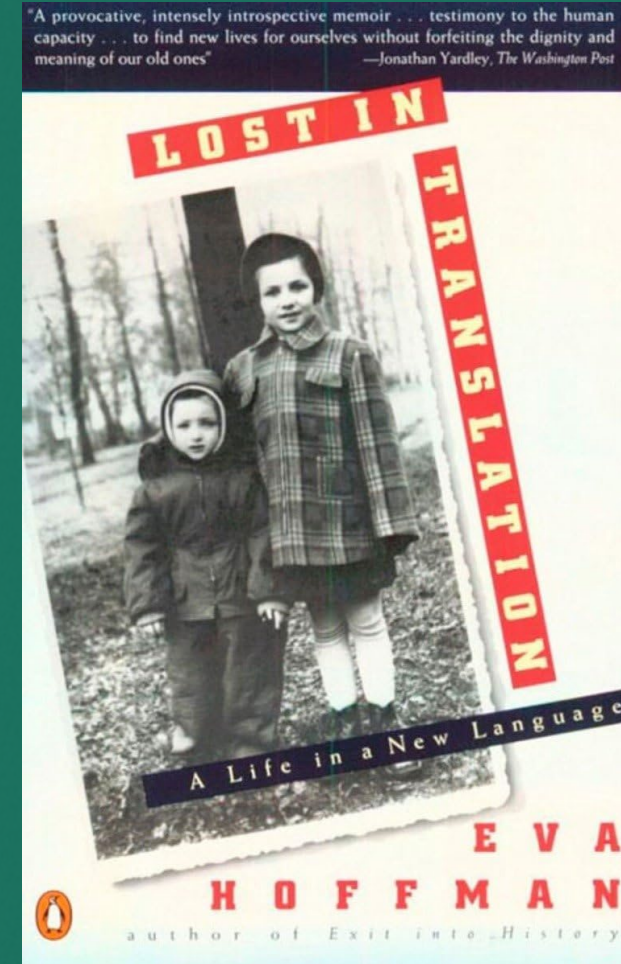
# Translation and Diaspora: Beyond Binaries

What does translation look like  
(in terms of theory and practice)  
when viewed from the  
perspective of diasporic  
communities where the “in  
between” is a fact of life

“in between” not as mystifying  
the positionality of the translator,  
as Tymoczko (2014) argued, i.e.,  
not as a “no place,” but rather as  
complex site of competing and  
conflicting loyalties and  
orientations

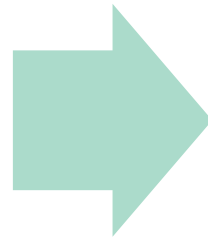
# Translation and Diaspora: Beyond Binaries

- Indeed, immigrants themselves often express the feeling of being “stuck between the home and the host, as peoples constantly straddling two cultures, falling through gaps” (Demir 2022, 8). Consider Eva Hoffman’s immigrant memoir *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (1990).
- In-betweenness in the context of diaspora, however, encourages us to conceptualize it in terms of agglutinative *both/and* rather than the binary of *either/or*



# Where Translation Studies and Diaspora Studies Meet


My exploration of translation's role in diasporic self-fashioning is grounded in theoretical strands in diaspora, exile, and migration studies, as well as translation studies, that seek to move beyond reductive binaries, such as homeland/host or source/target, which tend to reify both sides of the binary and imply a unidirectional trajectory—from homeland to host, from source to target.




Such binaries obscure more complex transnational realities

# Thinking beyond Binaries

In his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” Stuart Hall (1990, 226) critiques the tendency among Caribbean filmmakers to present cultural identity as “a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return.”



Michael Seidl, in his classic study *Exile in the Narrative Imagination*, underscores the imagined nature of origins in his definition of the exile as “someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another” (Seidel 1986, ix).



An especially poignant expression of the dubious ontological status of homeland appears in the notebooks of Russian émigré translator Avgusta Damanskaya: “I want go to home. Но где мой home.”

# Thinking beyond Binaries

- At the same time, Hall remarks, cultural identity is not “a mere phantasm”:
- “It is *something* – not a mere trick of the imagination. It has its histories – and histories have their real, material and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual ‘past’, since our relation to it, like the child’s relation to the mother, is always-already ‘after the break’. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental ‘law of origin’”(Hall 1990, 226).

# Thinking beyond Boundaries

- The idea that such positioning is not governed by a transcendental “law of origin” is especially germane to the situation of Guernsey and Quong, whose “national” origins are multiple and complex.

# Thinking beyond Binaries

- Hall's notion of positioning helps to further complicate already non-binary models, such as Greta Slobin's notion of the "triangular orientation" of Russian diasporic writers who emigrated first to Western Europe after the Bolshevik Revolution and then to the US just before and after World War II:
- "As writers sought to create a distinct national legacy they had to navigate between three points of orientation that were often in contradiction with one another [and that were contested and constantly shifting]: the lost homeland and its prerevolutionary literary tradition; the Soviet Union, then in the process of unprecedented political and cultural transformation, and the European host countries, especially France" (Tihanov 2013, 14).

# Thinking beyond Binaries

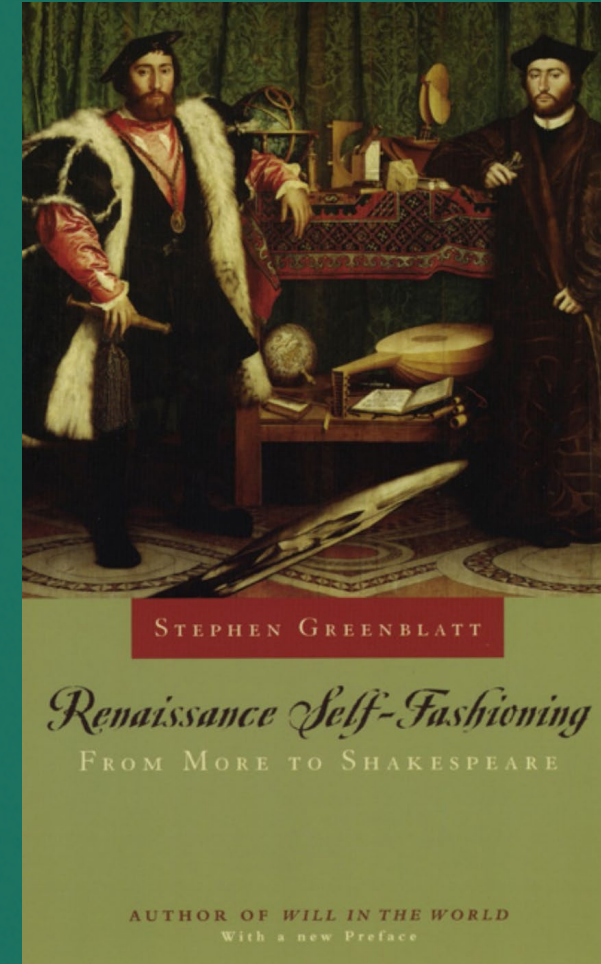
- Moreover, for those writers, the “homeland” was a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic empire, as a result of which many member of its educated elite, and especially of its linguistic minorities were, minimally, bilingual
- It is interesting in that respect to note that Boris Schnaiderman (1917-1916), the leading translator of Russian literature into Brazilian Portuguese, was, like Guerney, born into a Jewish family in Ukraine.

# Thinking beyond Boundaries

- As such, the translatorial activity of translator-migrants involves a complex positioning vis-a-vis heterogenous source and target cultures as well as a diasporic community, which itself bears “the traces of struggles and contradictions within ideas and practices of collective identity, of homeland and nation” (Tölölyan 1991, 3).
- The experience of these translators, I will argue, underscores the fact that, “making translation central to our understanding of diaspora can help us to rethink diaspora, and place it at the centre of our understanding of modernity, globalisation and politics today” (Demir 2022, 38).

# Diasporic Self-fashioning

- In his seminal work of New Historicism, *Renaissance Self-fashioning*, Stephen Greenblatt argues that in Renaissance England the word *fashioning* assumed new prominence, indexing “a change in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities” or at least “an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process” (Greenblatt 2005, 1, 2).



# Diasporic Self-fashioning

- For Greenblatt, this socio-literary phenomenon was characterized, structurally, by a tension between an authority and an “alien,” and by mobility, as manifested not only in a historically new level of social mobility, a product of, among other things, the spread of Humanist education and values, but also, in the case of Tyndale and Wyatt, in geographic mobility.
- Literature as “an extraordinarily sensitive register of the complex struggles and harmonies of culture,” representing “a manifestation of the concrete behavior of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped, and as a reflection upon those codes” (Greenblatt 2005, 5, 4).

# Diasporic Self-fashioning

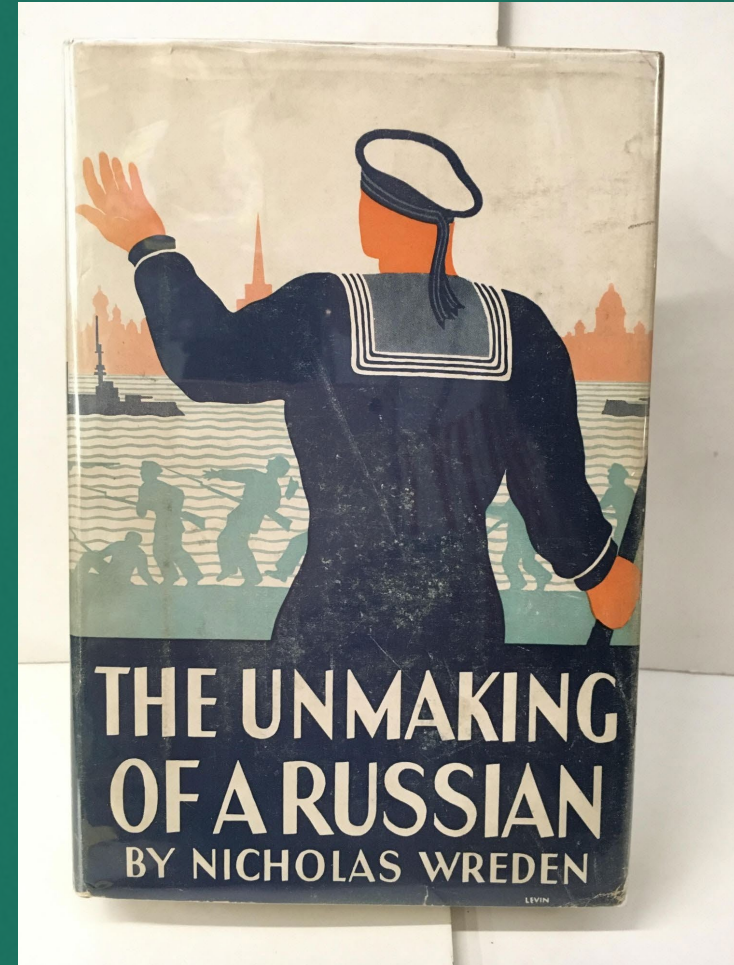
- I apply Greenblatt's conceptualization of self-fashioning to the context of diaspora, involving two adjustments:
- 1) While Renaissance self-fashioning is generally theorized as the formation of an identity out of raw material, so to speak, as in the rendition of Psalm 119:73 in the King James Bible: "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me," diasporic self-fashioning is typically a *re-fashioning*, a reshaping or even a replacing of an already formed identity upon entering a new linguistic, cultural and socio-political context, as evident in the title of Russian émigré Nicholas Wreden's memoir *The Unmaking of a Russian* (1935).

# Diasporic Self-fashioning

- Indeed, even when the French-American author, diplomat, and farmer John Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur (born Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur in Caen, France) describes the American immigrant as “Adam in the Garden,” he is an Adam *with a past*.
- “Who is this new man, this American?” asked Crèvecoeur. He was Adam in the Garden, man beginning again, leaving all the history and heartbreak of the Old World behind. The idea that what made America unique was the opportunity for man to live in a state of nature, a society of farmers whose perception of Truth is unfettered by ancient social and political conventions lies at the base of Jeffersonian democratic theory. (US Citizenship and Immigration Services 2025)

# Diasporic Self-fashioning

- Or, as Wreden (1935, 315) puts it in the concluding chapter of his memoir:
- I realized that I could not be a Russian, and spend the rest of my life abroad, and, on the other hand, I saw no prospect of returning to Russia in the near future. The thing which puzzled me most was the fact that I no longer felt any overwhelming urge to go back. Suddenly I understood the truth: in my outlook, in my habits, in my attachments, I was an American.



# Diasporic Self-fashioning

- 2) While for some of the historical figures analyzed by Greenblatt, translation is an important activity (Tyndale, in particular), it appears as incidental to Greenblatt's overall conception of self-fashioning.
- Extending self-fashioning to the context of diaspora, however, requires that translation assume a more central role as the "geographic mobility" of migrants often involves the acquisition of a new language, allowing some migrants to assume the role of cultural mediator and, specifically, of translator or interpreter.

# Diasporic Self-fashioning

- As the US Citizenship and Immigration Services points out, from 1892 to 1924, “one-third of all immigrant inspectors were themselves foreign-born, and all immigrant inspectors spoke an average of three languages” (qtd. in Ault 2016). When communication was still a problem, “interpreters—often from immigrant aid societies, would be called in to help translate” (Ault 2016).
- So, individual immigrants as well as immigrant societies (i.e., diasporic communities) became involved, often as translators and interpreters, in the processing and resettling of new immigrants

# Bernard Guilbert Guerney

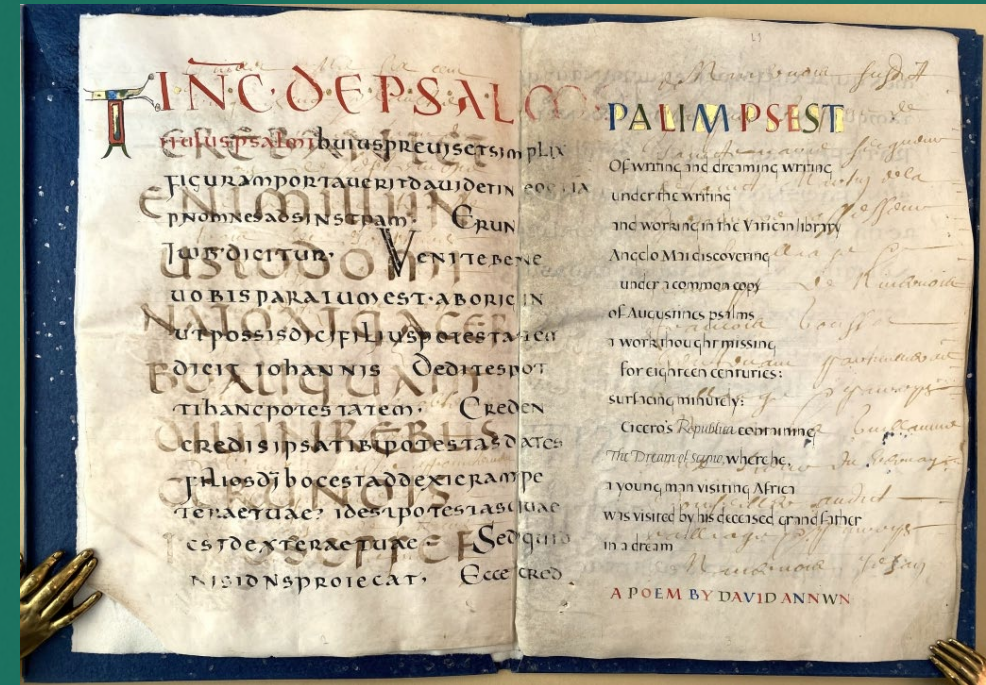
- Bernard Guilbert Guerney was born Bernard Abramovich Bronstein in Odesa in 1894. He emigrated with his family to the United States in 1905, settling in New York City.
- As Muireann McGuire describes him:
- “An avid reader and an autodidact, Guerney propelled himself to prominence among New York editors as a skilled translator, quirky essayist, and omniscient anthologist. Like Nick Wreden, Guerney engaged in literary culture at multiple levels simultaneously: as a translator, a pint-sized publisher, and owner-manager of a notoriously eccentric New York City bookshop, the Blue Faun.”

# Bernard Guilbert Guernev and Literature in the Second Degree

- Before World War II, Guernev established a reputation as an accomplished translator and retranslator of canonical works of Russian literature.
- After World War II, in the context of the Cold War, Guernev became an influential anthologizer of Russian literature at a time when the image of Russia and Russian literature was being reduced to a small number of stereotypes and when the only contemporary writers who could be translated and published were dissidents.

# Literature in the Second Degree

- Gerard Genette theorized as palimpsests, or “literature in the second degree,” described as “a text derived from another preexistent text,” characterized by “a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts; that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another” (Genette 1997, 1-2).



# Translation and/as Literature in the Second Degree

- Specifically, Guerney's contributions as a translator, retranslator and anthologist, belong to the category of hypertextuality, which Genette defines as "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (ibid., 5).
- Archetypal hypertextual genres include pastiche, parody, and travesty, although, as Genette points out, "[it] touches upon other genres—perhaps all genres" (ibid., 8).

# Diasporic Self-fashioning: The Name Change

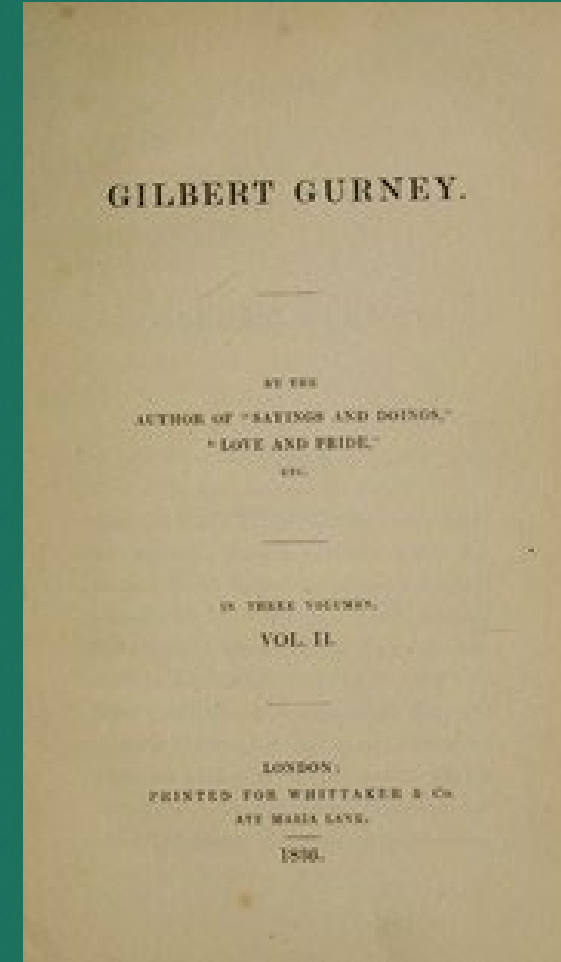
- Changing one's name is perhaps the most symbolic acts of diasporic self-fashioning.
- While names were sometimes altered or simply misspelled on the shipping records that were used to process immigrants upon arrival in the United States, it was more common for immigrants themselves to change their names, “either to sound more American, or to melt into the immigrant community, where they were going to live” (Ault 2016).
- Moreover, as the US Immigration Office reports, immigrants who changed their names “tended to do so within the first five years after arrival,”, symbolically inaugurating their new life in the States.

# The Name Change

- “The New World became a place for mankind to begin again, a place where every man can be re-born and re-create himself. In such circumstances, the adoption of a new name is not surprising. Nor is it surprising in the cases of immigrants who came to America to abandon a wife and family or to escape conscription in a European army. There were all kinds of reasons, political and practical, to take a new name.” (Ault 2016)

# The Names Change

- Bronstein's choice of name was an especially quirky one. Gilbert Gurney was the eponymous hero of a novel by the British writer Theodore Edward Hook (1788-1841).
- Bronstein had used Gilbert Gurney as a pseudonym on his first work of original writing, which was accepted for publication in 1917.
- "Soon after," notes Charlotte de Lissovoy (1980, 4), "with his own orthographic touch, Bernard Abramovich Bronstein legally changed his name to Bernard Guilbert Guerney."





# Literature in the Second Degree

- Hook's *Gilbert Gurney*, is itself a masterpiece of literature in the second degree, as it is itself a literary mystification (a pseudo-memoir), it is filled with word play and double entendre
- Hook was a noted trickster (e.g., instigator of the Berners Stree hoax of 1809)
- While he was a contemporary of Lord Byron, but he was a follower of Lawrence Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*

# Literature in the Second Degree

- The novel opens with a self-conscious disquisition on the generic classification of first-person life writing, clearly distinguishing Gurney's reflections from the unmediated expressions of the heart that characterized sentimental prose and Romantic poetry:
- “When I resolved upon committing to paper sundry passages of my life, I determined most carefully to abstain from the perpetration of a piece of *autobiography*— not because the public has been somewhat surfeited with that kind of literature; since, if I have my will, my memoranda of the scenes and circumstances which I have witnessed, and which have occurred to me, will never meet the public eye — but because, for the most part, “Reminiscences,” and “Lives and Times,” and the like, are extremely tiresome to read, seeing that the matters and events, incidents and occurrences, which are, or were at the time at which they were set down, all of great importance to the recording individual, have (as all those books savour sadly of senility) lost all interest for the reader, long before they reach his eye.” (Hook 1836, 1)

# Literature in the Second Degree

- Word play:
- “Begin we, therefore, with the beginning. “A fig for your dates,” says the Smyrna man to the Tunisian. Nevertheless, in this place, dates are really essential, as marking the progress of the writer through his chequered career. Be patient, reader, whomsoever thou mayst chance to be, and I will be brief.” (ibid.)



## Literature in the Second Degree: Retranslation

- GuerneŸ's fascination with the second degree is more evident, however, in his work as a *retranslator* of Russian literature.
- GuerneŸ was born about one generation after the first anglophone translators of Russian literature, led by the indefatigable Constance Garnett, brought unprecedented attention to Russia's great nineteenth-century writers.
- In fact, Garnett would become something of a *bête noir* for GuerneŸ (see Lissovoy 1980, 11-13), who repeatedly compared his translations and translatorial decisions to hers.



# Retranslation

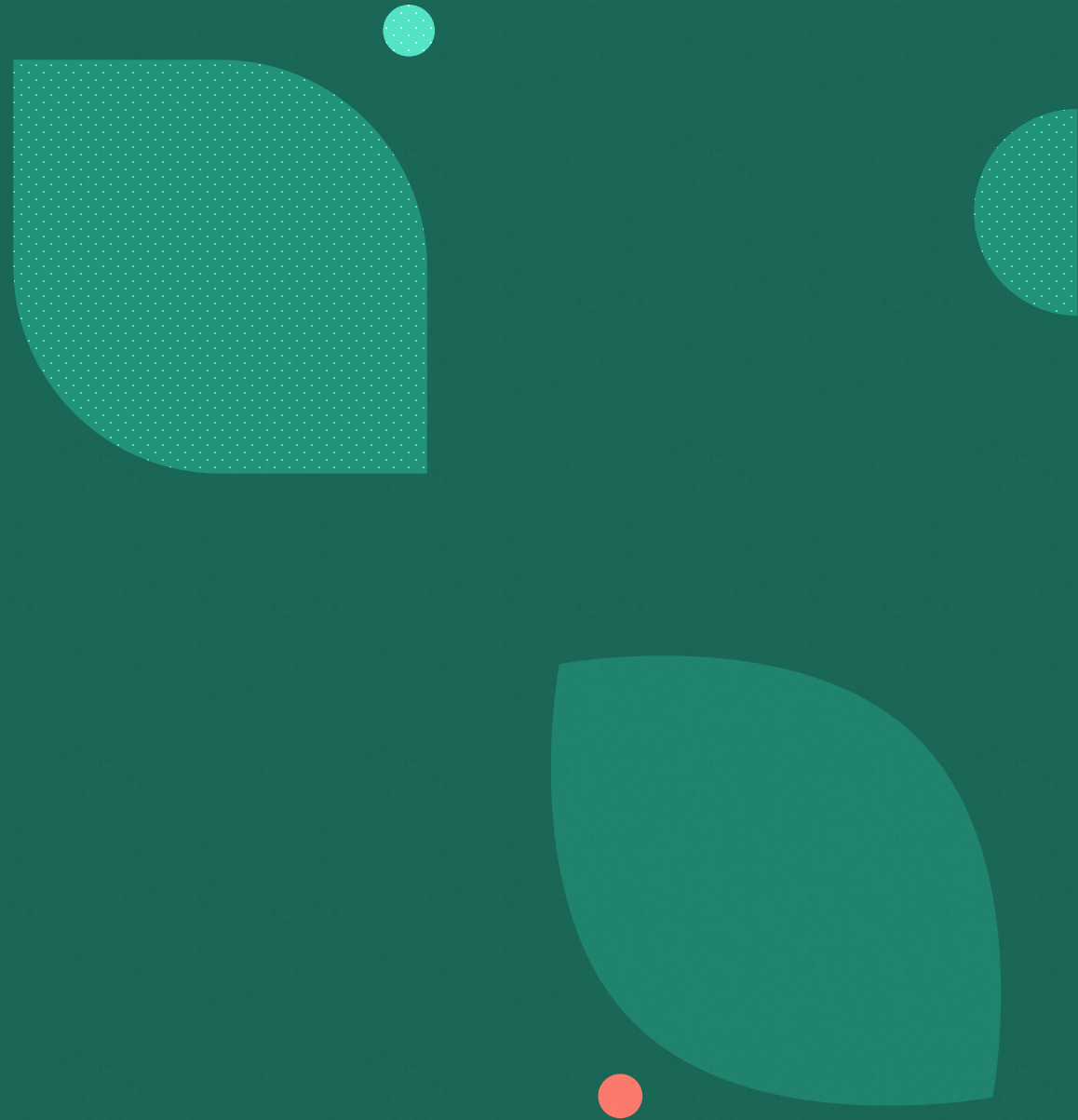
- As something of a trickster himself, Guernev was sensitive to a ruse, as evident in his retranslation of the novel *Resurrected Gods* (1900), by Dmitrii Merezhkovskii.
- The first English translation, done by the Irish poet Herbert Trench in 1901, claimed to be done directly from the Russian—although there is no indication in Trench's biography that he knew or could have known Russian.
- Nevertheless, it was advertised as the only English translation authorized by Merezhkovskii himself and done directly from the Russian

# Retranslation

- Guerneŷ alludes to Trench's false claims in his preface:
- “A word as to the translation: whatever its merits,—or possible defects,—the *purchaser* will find it more complete than any other in English,—aye, even at two and a half times the exceedingly modest price asked for this edition; this translation has, moreover, the distinct advantage of being absolutely unbowlerized—and the only version in English, I firmly believe, done directly from the Russian, and not re-translated from the French...” (Merejkowski 1928, ix-x)
- Despite claiming his translation to be more complete and accurate, Guerneŷ preserves Trench's title, *The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci*, establishing two types of hypertextual relationship to Trench's translation, one of correction and the other of imitation.

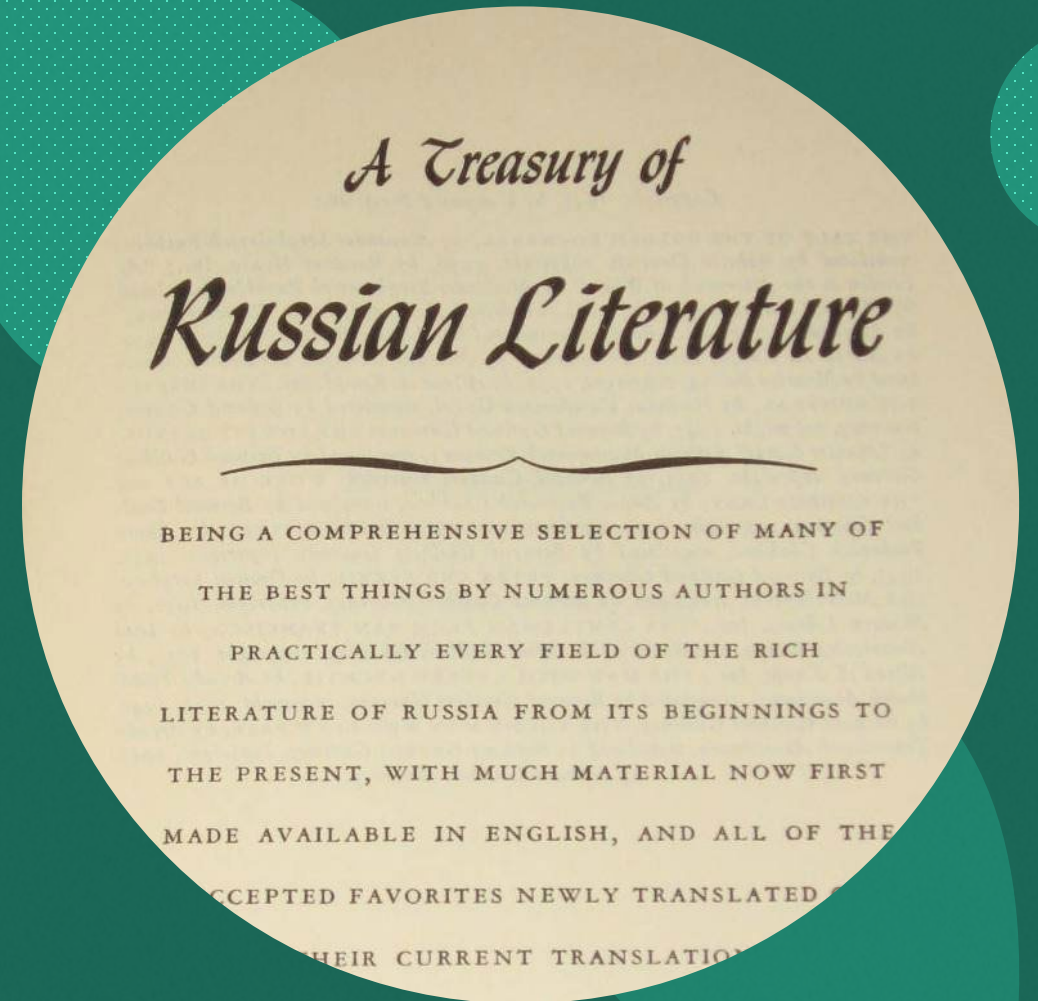
# Literature in the Second Degree: Anthologies

- Even more influential than his individual translations and retranslations, which were generally praised, were Guernsey's anthologies of Russian literature, which contained a good number of his translations:
- *A Treasury of Russian Literature* (1943)
- *The Portable Russian Reader* (1947)
- *New Russian Stories* (1953)
- *An Anthology of Russian Literature in the Soviet Period from Gorki to Pasternak* (1960).



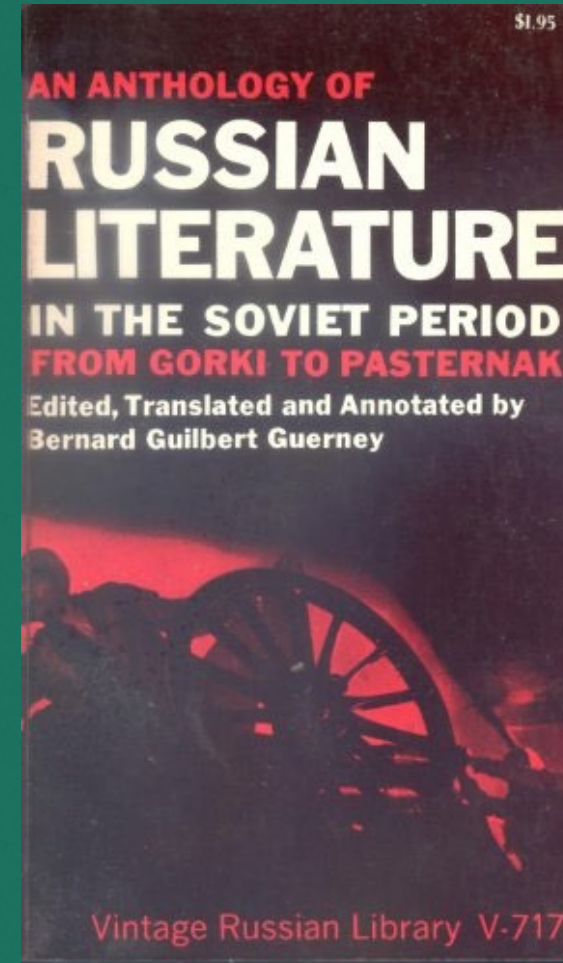
# Anthologies

- With these anthologies, Guernev sought to provide anglophone readers with an alternate reading of the Russian literary tradition
- First, Guernev aimed to provide a more *complete* picture of Russian literature, as evident in the elaborate subtitle of his 1942 *Treasury*. “being a comprehensive selection of many of the best things by numerous authors in practically every field of the rich literature of Russia from its beginnings to the present, with much material now first made available in English, and all of the accepted favorites newly translated or their current translations thoroughly revised.”



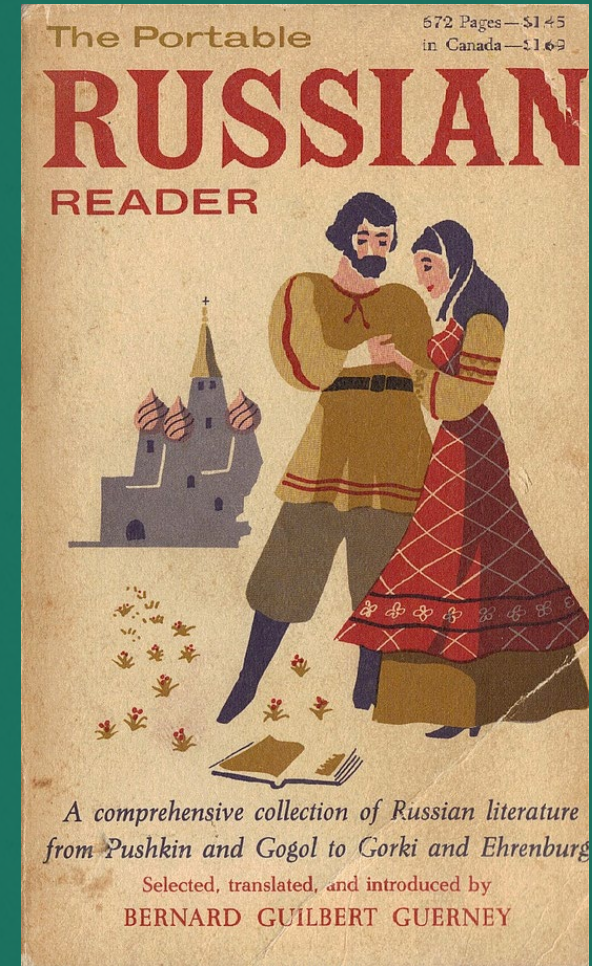
# Anthologies

- More provocatively, Guernev included in his 1960 anthology “non-dissident” Soviet writers, typically left out of other anglophone anthologies published in the Cold War, judged to be aesthetically inferior and politically suspect.



# Anthologies

- Second, Guernev sought to provide a more *balanced* view of Russian literature by debunking the “American cliché of ‘gloomy’ Russian literature, particularly Chekhovian gloom” and restoring “both humour and stylistic diversity to the canon of translated Russian literature” (Maguire 2025, 158).
- As he explains in his preface to the 1947 *Portable Russian Reader*:
- To be quite candid, the usual (and almost lethal) scrapiana of sleazy mysticism and metaphysical frumpery, the obvious, the ersatz, the over-emphasized, the pseudo-profound and, above all, that which is commonly (but fallaciously) regarded as ever so delectably typical of the Slav soul, have all been shunned as earnestly as the ragweed, the polecat and the Arizona rattler, since, basically, the Slav soul is not a jot better or worse than, or even different from, the American Soul or the Pantagonian Soul. (Guernev 1947, 5)



# Anthologies

- To that end, Guernev goes on to state, “a genuine welcome was given to humor, satire and folk-material, all of which abound in Russian but which are not usually presented in English or, if they are, are muffed in the presentation” (ibid.). The addition of humorous and satirical writings not only offered, in Guernev’s view, a more balanced view of Russian literature, it also allowed his anthologies to achieve the dual purpose of entertaining and educating:
- “Above all, the selectivity was guided by a certain belief that great things need not necessarily be soporific, that best (or even good) writing need not be oversolemn, and that boredom is not synonymous with appreciation. In brief, if this book can contribute to the reader’s enjoyment, and incidentally add to his knowledge (and possibly appreciation) of Russian, its modest aims will have been fulfilled.” (Guernev 1943, xiv)

# Rose Quong: Translation as Performance, or the Art of Passing

- Rose Quong was born in Australia to Chinese parents in 1879.
- Her father was a merchant who was born in Guangzhou, China, but emigrated to Australia after the Opium War broke out.
- In the 1890s, an Englishman, Mr. Chisley, taught Quong to read Shakespeare and English poetry. In 1924, she won a scholarship and went to study acting in London at the academy of Rosina Filippi with the aim of becoming a Shakespearean actress.
- Unable to find success as an actor in the classical British repertoire, however, Quong made herself known as a reciter of Chinese poetry, an actress and a performer.



# Rose Quong

- According to *The Australian Dictionary of Biography*.
- At first Quong felt ambivalent about presenting herself professionally as Chinese. When it became clear that she was not going to succeed as a Shakespearean or general actress, her friends urged her towards a specialized career, that of exotic or Oriental reciter, actress and performer. (Woolacott 1991)



# Translation and/as Performance

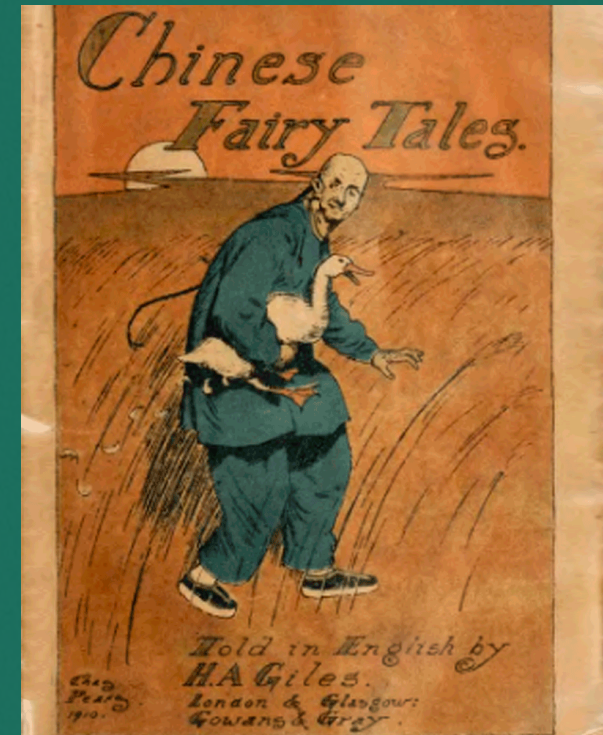
- In 1932, she launched her Circle, “a regular event on alternate Sunday evenings at which she would lecture on Chinese themes and recite poetry, or to which she would invite a guest speaker, and would usually include a musician or singer on the program” (Woollacott 2009, 77).
- She visited the US twice for performances or lectures “depicting the culture, wit and philosophy of China” before 1939, when she settled down in New York City permanently and continued to perform, lecture and recite Chinese poetry (The New York Times 1936, 24).
- During these years, Quong often dressed in Chinese costume and wore an oriental style of hair (Woolacott 1991).
- She also switched between two versions of her name, the more anglicized “Rose Maude Quong” and the more sinocized “Rose Lanu Hong” (Wollacott 2007, 19)

# Translation and/as Performance

- In her article “Rose Quong Becomes Chinese,” Woolacott, describes the paradox of Quong’s professional self-fashioning:
- “Quong’s story leads us to consider how Orientalism—that edifice of Western representations of the East as exotic, mysterious, barbaric and sensuous, among other characteristics—could be appropriated by “Orientals” to their own ends. It compels us to think about how Quong juggled her mixed Australian, British and Chinese identities—stressing each in particular ways and at different times.” (Woolacott 2007, 17)
- The paradox of “performing” authenticity: Quong’s “Chineseness” was an artful performance.

# Translation and/as Performance

- It seems from her own artfully presented biography that she learned about Chinese culture through translations:
- As she told the journalist: “My perfect gentle little mother determined that as I grew up I should learn the best I could of the ways and culture of the West... I also went to the library and dragged out all the books on Chinese thought I could, *reading translations*” (qtd. in Woolacott 2009, 57; italics added).
- Woolacott (2007, 25) notes: “In her first year in London she frequented the Kensington Public Library; in October, 1924, for example, she recorded that she borrowed a book of ‘Chinese Folk Tales’, although she did not elaborate on her reasons.” Interestingly, Quong’s most famous translation was an edition of Chinese folk tales.



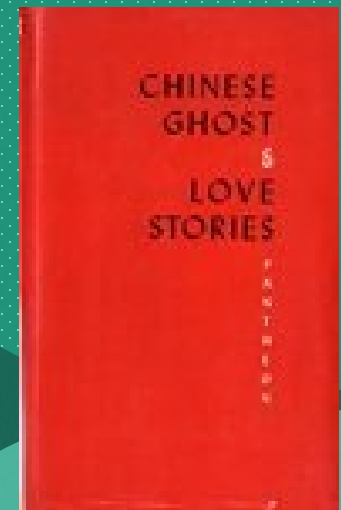
# Translation and/as Performance

- While describing Quong as a “cultural interpreter between East and West” (ibid., 28), however, Woolacott focuses almost exclusively on Quong’s professional acting career, ignoring her published translations, which, I will argue, are an integral aspect of her diasporic self-fashioning.
- Quong’s translation of forty stories from the sixteenth-century collection *Liaozhai* by Pu Songling was published in 1946 under the title *Chinese Ghost & Love Stories*.
- As Harry J. Huang and Canzhong Wu note, “Despite a lack of translation theory in the 1940s, Quong’s English translations were successful, and by today’s standard, they are still of high quality” (Huang and Wu 2009, 119).



# Translation and/as Performance

- Like Guerne's anthologies, Quong asserts her agency as a translator in the selection and presentation of the texts (curatorial agency)
- The reviewer for the *New York Times* singled out Quong's selection of stories for praise: "Some forty of the best of these stories have been wisely selected and translated by Rose Quong" (Glick 1946, 11).



# Translation and/as Performance

- Centering on the theme of love, she presented a romanticized but de-sexualized version of China in her selection of stories, in her paratexts, and in her actual translation strategies
- Through her selection, translation, and editing of these folk tales, Quong is able to solidify her credentials as an interpreter of traditional Chinese culture while at the same time pursuing a progressive “feminist” agenda



A CHINESE WEDDING AT SHANGHAI.—SEE PAGE 125.

# Translation and/as Performance

- In her selection of stories for translation, Quong demonstrates a marked preference for stories about love, family and women's issues.
- 45% (18 out of 40) of the stories translated by Quong have the theme of romantic love, as opposed to 14.9% (74 out of 497) in the entire collection of stories (see Pei 2017, 85).
- The dominant themes of the other stories translated by Quong are also related to romance (see Table 2), and specifically to the “new day” mentioned in her introduction—“A new day has dawned for the Chinese wife—and husband” (Quong 1946, 4).

# Translation and/as Performance

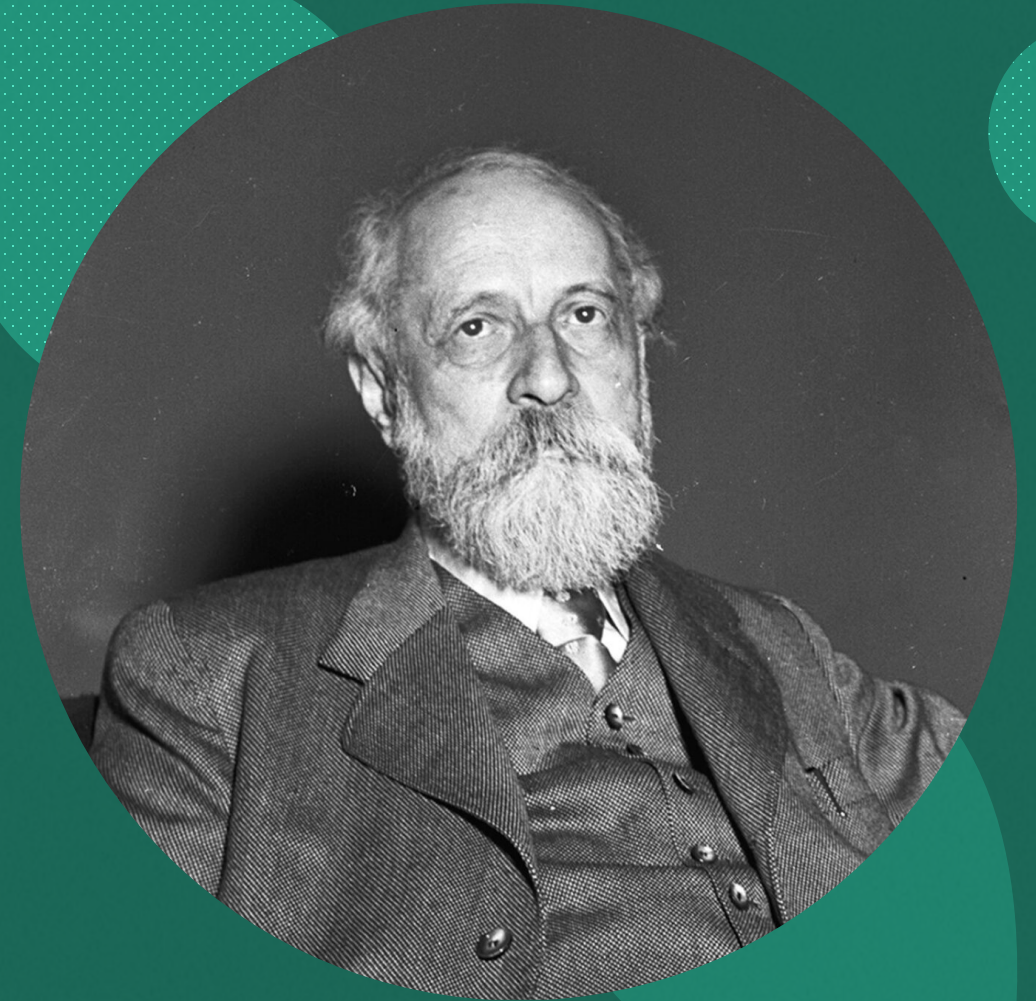
- The romantic stories selected by Quong deal primarily with the pursuit of true love regardless of social status and wealth, and with love that surpasses the confines of the natural world, as represented by ghosts, spirits, and fairies.
- Such stories critique, at least tacitly, the traditional system of arranged marriage.

# Translation and/as Performance

- Supernatural elements are another distinguishing feature of Quong's selection of tales for translation (39 out of 40).
- Unlike earlier translators of the colonial period, who used the supernatural stories in *Liaozhai* to present the Chinese people in a negative light as superstitious and ignorant (see Pei 2017, 100), Quong presents these stories as evidence of the rich imagination and deep romanticism of Chinese culture.
- This revaluing of the supernatural is most evident in the paratextual material that frames the translations.

# Framing Translations: The Role of Paratexts

- An introduction by the German philosopher Martin Buber (1878-1965).
- Buber translated *Liaozhai* from Chinese into German with the help of his friend Wang Jingdao, a Chinese scholar in Germany.
- This translation, titled *Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten* [Chinese Ghost- and Love-Stories], was first published in 1911



# Quong's Paratext: Curatorial Agency

- Quong is the only translator of *Liaozhai* to render the four-line poems accompanying the illustrations in the original work.
- However, Quong places the poems at the beginning of each story and does not use the illustrations from the original work. The addition of these poems, each written by a different writer, serves to enhance the romantic aspect of the romantic stories selected and to add a romantic touch to the non-romantic stories.



*Let's talk nonsense and listen as we please!  
Outside, beans and melons 'gainst a trellis, and rain  
like silk strands.  
Speaking of human affairs surely is irksome,  
But fain would we hear, in the bush of a tomb,  
spirits singing their songs.*

WANG SHIH-CHEN  
(A.D. 1634-1711)

# Quong's Paratext: Curatorial Agency

- If the poems and Buber's introduction enhance the romantic quality of Quong's paratexts, so, too, do the illustrations she includes.
- At the beginning or the end of almost every story, there is a traditional Chinese painting, the size of which varies according to the space available.
- Illustrations in a traditional Chinese style are also inserted in the middle of the stories. Although these paintings are not from the original work, they are very similar in style



# Quong's Play with Fidelity

- In her selection of tales to focus on themes or particular interest to her
- Translates the poems but moves them to the beginning
- Includes illustrations but not the ones from the original
- Includes an introduction by Martin Buber, which serves her purposes of promoting a reevaluation of Chinese culture and philosophy

# Quong's Translations

- Performing modesty:
- Fifteen stories in Quong's translation contain sexual references, and while she does not omit them entirely, she often softens them, typically resorting to euphemism, as evident when compared with the original and with Sidney Sondergard's more literal translations.

## Source Text (画壁)

遽拥之亦不甚拒，遂与狎好。

## Quong's translation (The Wall Painting)

At once he embraced her and she not resisting, their hearts leapt to ecstasy (306).

## Sondergard's translation (The Frescoed Wall)

he hastily embraced her, and meeting very little resistance from her, they proceeded to make love (Pu 2008, 1: 25).

# Quong's Translations

## Source Text (毛狐)

夜分果至，遂相悦爰。

## Quong's translation (Fourth Sister Hu)

At midnight she really did arrive, and they took pleasure in each other (319).  
(319).

## Sondergard's translation (Miss Quarta Hu)

At midnight, she did indeed arrive, and they made love enthusiastically (Pu 2008, 2: 589).

# Quong's Translations

## Source Text (书痴)

郎喜，遂与寝处。然枕席间亲爱倍至，而不知为人。

## Quong's translation (The Crazy Bookworm)

Lang was overjoyed, and together they retired, but notwithstanding his great love he knew not how to act as a man (63).

## Sondergard's translation (The Bookworm)

Lang, ecstatically happy, took her to his bedroom. However, though he was lying together with his beloved on the bed, he didn't know how to make love to her (Pu 2008, 6: 2073).

# Quong's Translations: Culture-specific Items

- Quong chooses to include in her translations a significant number of Chinese culture-specific items, such as units of measure, characters' names, which she renders in italicized pinyin.
- In the forty stories she selects, seventeen are titled with the names of the protagonists. Quong translates the names into pinyin and then adds some information she considered key to the story.
- For example, in the original work, the titles of the following three stories consist only of the names of the main characters, but Quong translates them as: "Hu-ning, the Laughing Girl," "Wang Shih-shiu Played Football," and "Heng-niang's Advice to a Neglected Wife."
- The extensive use of borrowings in pinyin and of explicitation serve to reinforce Quong's role as a cultural mediator.

# Quong's Progressive Agenda

- Quong's own introduction sounds a slightly disparaging note in regard to the arrangement of family life in contemporary China, a nod to her progressivist agenda.
- Indeed, among all the previous English translations of *Liaozhai*, her introduction is the only one that mentions family life—the domain of the traditional Chinese woman—noting that Pu Songling largely ignores it!
- As Quong points out: “First, the almost total absence of family life [in *Liaozhai*]—a wife flits but rarely across the pages—and second, the ‘Romeos’ consistently are candidates for state examination degrees” (Quong 1946, 4)

# Quong's Progressive Agenda

- Quong then discusses domestic life under the old Chinese family system: marriages were arranged; special training of Chinese wives was “in the art of managing the family and the home” (ibid.); and the love between husband and wife came from a feeling of duty.
- In a translator's note, Quong mentions the stark gender disparity in the upbringing of Chinese children: “Of old in China a baby girl was given a tile to play with, as emblem of her future role—one of a girl's home duties being, with tile on knee, to twist threads of hemp. A baby boy was given a scepter” (ibid., 327).

# Quong's Progressive Agenda


- At the very end of her introduction, however, Quong introduces a glimmer of hope for change, pointing out that Cupid's random arrows have finally pieced this rigid social system, and "A new day has dawned for the Chinese wife—and husband" (ibid., 4 ).
- Her mention of Chinese husbands here reveals Quong's progressivist understanding that both men and women are confined by traditional gender disparity.

# Conclusion

- Diasporic Self-fashioning and/as Cross-identity Performance, as theorized by James St. André (2017a and 2017b)
- Drag vs. Passing
- *Drag* highlights its status as performance to comic or satirical effect (Guerney)
- *Passing* is characterized by the invisibilization of its performativity (Quong)

# Conclusion

For Guernsey, his drag performance establishes him as a master of literature in the second degree, as expressed in his bold retranslations and revisionist anthologies of Russian literature



Whereas for Quong, “passing” as a traditional Chinese woman allowed her to pursue a progressive “feminist” agenda and to lead the life of a modern career woman

# Conclusion

- The positive reviews of Guernsey's and Quong's translations suggest that both ultimately proved successful in negotiating the roles available to them through complex acts of diasporic self-fashioning.

# Questions?

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