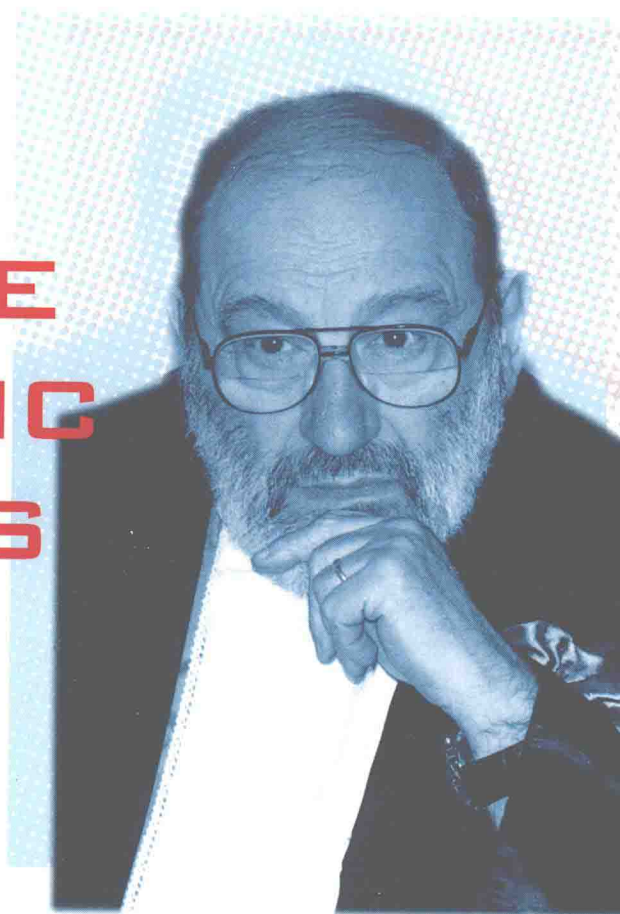




中国符号学研究
第8辑

CHINESE SEMIOTIC STUDIES

Issue 8, December 2012



南京师范大学国际符号学研究所
中国语言与符号学会中国符号学研究中心

主办

Official Publication of the International Semiotic Research
Institute at Nanjing Normal University and the Chinese Semiotic
Research Center of the Chinese Association of Linguistic Semiotics

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CSS

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Chinese Semiotic Studies (CSS) (<http://css.njnu.edu.cn>) publishes research achievements related to semiotics in many areas involved in the field. In CSS, theoretical academic articles and those dealing with practical semiotic application constitute the majority of content. Progress reports on current research, discussion papers on specific problems in the field are also included. Articles that look across disciplinary boundaries are encouraged.

Authors should follow the APA style carefully. Each article should have an abstract and 3-5 keywords and should be followed by a short paragraph explaining how the content relates to semiotic studies as a whole. We accept papers from all parts of the world.

Chinese Semiotic Studies only accepts electronic manuscripts (Microsoft Word format preferred). All contributions go to **nshdyxwang@163.com**.

The aim and purpose of CSS is to further develop Chinese as well as international semiotic studies and to promote friendship and cooperation among semioticians in this global village.

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Global Semiotics: Bridging Different Civilizations —The 11th World Congress of IASS, Nanjing Normal University

Yongxiang Wang & Hongbing Yu

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University, China

From October 5–9, 2012, over 400 experts and scholars from 53 different countries and regions of the world convened at Nanjing Normal University, the most beautiful campus in eastern China, to attend The 11th World Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies.

The grand opening ceremony took place at Nanjing Normal University at 8:30, October 5, 2012. President of IASS, Professor Eero Tarasti, delivered his opening speech, fully acknowledging the development of Chinese semiotic studies in recent years, complimenting Nanjing Normal University on its contributions to semiotics and expressing his deep satisfaction with the preparations for the global conference. The opening address was followed by additional welcoming remarks from President of NNU, Professor Yongzhong Song; Party Secretary of Jiangsu Community of Social Sciences, Mr. Haohan Zhang; President of the Chinese Association of Linguistic Semiotics (CALS), Professor Zhuanglin Hu; and Chairman of the 2012 IASS Nanjing Congress Organizing Committee, Dean of the School of Foreign Languages & Cultures, NNU, Professor Jie Zhang, respectively.. They expressed also their determination to create a platform for the communication between eastern and western semiotics, further semiotic studies and achieve the ultimate aim of the congress expressed in the sub-title: “global semiotics—bridging different civilizations”. The master of ceremonies for the conference opening was Vice Dean of the School of Foreign Languages & Cultures, NNU, Professor Xin Bin.

The congress lasted for five days. Fifteen outstanding semioticians were invited to give plenary speeches and 422 abstracts of papers by authors from around the world were received. Fifty-three round tables and sessions were held related to eight main topics: Epistemology and Semiotics; Arts; Literature and Linguistics; Culture, Media and Comparative Studies; Society, History and Religion; Science and Semiotic Practices; Areas; Law and Semiotics, each of which provided perfect arenas for scholars of different fields to freely share, exchange and debate their convictions.

The brief, yet equally grand, closing ceremony was held in Yifang Lecture Hall, NNU, 10:40-12:00 am, October 9. President of IASS, Professor Tarasti gave the closing speech, expressing his great satisfaction with the enormous success of the congress and extending his sincere gratitude for all the efforts and contributions made to guarantee the success of this international event. Secretary-General of the IASS, Professor Jose Maria Paz Gago, in his closing remarks, declared that the next congress of IASS would take place in Bulgaria. Vice President of IASS, Professor Youzheng Li, on behalf of China and all of Asia, spoke at the ceremony. Vice Dean of the School of Foreign Languages & Cultures, NNU, Professor Bin Xin, on behalf of the host at the end of the closing ceremony, extended heartfelt thanks to all the delegates, especially Professor Tarasti, Professor Youzheng Li and Professor Zhuanglin Hu, for their generous support, guidance and help. Professor Bin Xin also announced that the collected papers would be published in due course. For the closing, the master of ceremonies was Vice Dean of the School of Foreign Languages & Cultures, NNU, Professor Zhijun Yan.

All the scholars present at the congress were unanimous in declaring it a magnificent success, which was not only manifested in the congress itself but also apparent in the establishing of cooperative relations concerning theoretical studies and applications of semiotics during the congress. In this regard, Nanjing Normal University and the German publisher De Gruyter reached an agreement to publish *Chinese Semiotic Studies* in four issues a year beginning February 2014. As well, the School of Foreign Languages & Cultures, NNU, signed a letter of intent with the Shenzheng-based Global Interlanguage Research Center for strategic coordination. And lastly, the International Institute of Nanjing Normal University reached an agreement on long-term cooperation with the International Semiotics Institute at University of Helsinki.

Time has witnessed the outstanding achievements of the School of Foreign Languages & Cultures at Nanjing Normal University. In April 2007, the School

founded the International Institute of Nanjing Normal University. In November 2008, it successfully hosted the Nanjing International Symposium of Cultural-semiotics. In 2009, it launched the first issue of its English journal *Chinese Semiotic Studies*. Delegates of the School attended both the 9th World Congress of Semiotics in Helsinki, Finland, June 2007 and the 10th World Congress of Semiotics in La Coruña, Spain, September 2009. During the Congress in Spain, under the leadership of Professor Jie Zhang, the School won the right to host the 11th World Congress of IASS and Professor Jie Zhang was elected as a member of the IASS executive committee.

With continued effort and dedication, Nanjing Normal University has developed into one of the most important strongholds of semiotic studies not only in China but throughout Asia. The hosting of the 11th World Congress of IASS is bound to promote the cause of Chinese Semiotics and increase the level of academic studies as well as theoretical accomplishments, forging China as the fourth Semiotic Kingdom alongside the United States, France and Russia.

The 11th Congress has been successfully concluded, but semiotics at Nanjing Normal University will continue to thrive, through collaboration and communication with institutes, academic groups and individuals both inside and outside China, for we are dedicated, with great enthusiasm, to the wonderful cause of semiotics.

A Portrait of Professor Yiheng Zhao

Professor Yiheng Zhao is a leading Chinese scholar in Formalism and is known for his original contributions to semiotics, narratology and comparative poetics. He studied for his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1980s, and taught at the University of London for almost 30 years (where he was known as Henry Y. H. Zhao) before resettling in China in 2006 and teaching at Sichuan University. In 2011 he published *Semiotics: Principles & Problems*, which summarized his life-long research in the field; of late, he has been working on his new project of semio-narratology.

Professor Zhao's university years were totally engulfed by the tumultuous Cultural Revolution, and he labored in farms and coalmines for nearly 10 years without any access to literary or academic books. In 1978 he seized the opportunity of the first post-graduate examination in China and became a student again, this time at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences under the mentorship of Professor Zhilin Bian, the celebrated poet and Shakespearean scholar. Professor Bian soon discovered Zhao's academic propensity and guided him to conduct a systematic study of the New Criticism (as I. A. Richards and William Empson had taught for many years in China during the 1930s). Professor Zhao has devoted himself to various formalistic disciplines ever since.

Zhao's early works include the Chinese prize-winners, *The New Criticism* (1983), and *The Muse from Cathay* (2003). In the last thirty years or so, he has published widely. The volumes *Literary Semiotics* and *When the Teller Is Told About: A Comparative Narratology* were published in the 1990s, and have been considered in China to be pioneering in the fields of semiotics and narratology. Zhao has also published extensively in English. In 1995 *The Uneasy Narrator* was published by Oxford University Press in London, followed by *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre* by

SOAS Publications in 2000.

Currently Yihang Zhao is the Chair of the Institute of Semiotics & Media Studies at Sichuan University. He is also in charge of the editing of *Signs & Media*, the only journal devoted to semiotics in Chinese; he directs *The Forum of Semiotics* (www.semiotics.net.cn), a webzine and digital database of semiotics literature in China, and the series designed for younger scholars, *Frontiers of Semiotics*, in which eight monographs have already been published. The “China West School of Semiotics” has gathered around the Institute of Semiotics & Media Studies and is, possibly, the only school of semioticians in the East. Its members have contributed to the book *The Fields of Semiotics* that aims to highlight the Chinese semiotic heritage in the last three millennia.

Yiheng Zhao is also well-known for his fiction, poetry and essays. His humorous portraits of modern Chinese and Western literature in *The Lure of the Other Shore* has been repeatedly reprinted. His witty recollections of the West recounted in *There's a Peninsula Called Europe*, has been widely quoted in today's blog-twitter literature.

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The Paradox of Translation

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Abstract: For a good translation the “interpretant sign” or “translatant” must not only repeat the “interpreted sign”, the “translated sign”, the original text in translation, but also must respond to it with interpretants of “answering comprehension”. In interlingual translation, the relation between the “interpreted” and the “interpretant” is oriented by the logic of responsive creativity, dialogism and otherness, by iconic similarity and abductive inference. Interlingual translation involves the disposition to respond to the word of the other in the form of reported, indirect discourse masked as direct discourse. The paradox of a good translation, which is the same text as the original but other from it, is the paradox of the sign.

Keywords: alterity; dialogism; listening; responsiveness; similarity

In the case of interlingual translation among texts — if we understand “fidelity” in terms of *creativity* and *interpretation* and not just imitation, repetition, reproduction of the original text, a literal copy in another language — the translating text, or “translatant”, must establish a relation of alterity with the text object of translation, or “translated”. The greater the distancing in terms of *dialogic alterity* between two texts, the greater is the possibility of creating an artistic reinterpretation through another interpretant sign in the potentially infinite semiotic chain of deferrals from one sign to the next, of which the so-called “original” is a part.

To be an adequate interpretant of the original text, as for any interpretant, the translating text must not only repeat the interpreted, but must establish a relation of “answering comprehension” with it, to say it with Mikhail M. Bakhtin, a relation of “responsive understanding”, of dialogic, creative and responsible distancing, of dialogic alterity, otherness (Bakhtin, 1963, 1965, 1975, 1990). The translator’s interpretive

capacity in terms of creativity is directly proportional to the capacity for “answering comprehension”.

We can also claim that the translation and the original do not relate to each other on the basis of deduction: it is not the case that given a certain original text, a certain translation must inevitably derive from it. This is no different from our previous statement: in other words, the translating text is not connected to the original by a relation of necessity, of cause and effect. The translating text can even exist autonomously from the original text, detaching itself from it. Therefore, the relation between the translating text, the “translatant”, and the original text, the “translated”, is not purely conventional; that is to say, it is not based on mere decodification.

To describe the interpreted-interpretant relation in the interlingual translative process in terms of deduction and decodification is to fall prey to the fallacy that the transition from one historical-natural language to another, from one linguistic convention to another simply implies transferal of the same meaning into different signifiers. In effect, it is not a question of the “same” meaning transiting from the original text to the translatant. As anticipated, the translating text must attempt a relation of answering comprehension with respect to the original. Even more interesting is that the meaning of the original is in fact determined and decided in this type of interpretive work and remains unvaried until another translation, another interpretation proposes yet another interpretant, yet another translatant, thereby enhancing its meaning.

The translation must *resemble* the original. But resemblance does not obstruct the capacity for inventiveness, creativity and autonomy with respect to the original text; on the contrary, it is the very condition for this. A translation can make different claims and have different aspirations: it may simply accompany the original text word by word, or, at the other extreme, it may recreate the original text in another language and succeed brilliantly, to the point that the translation has value in itself — in the case of a literary text, whether in prose or poetry, it may even reach such high levels in aesthetic value as to become an artwork in itself. The type of interpreted-interpretant relation that best renders the character of translation is characterized by dialogism.

Just as we tend to believe that in a sequence that repeats itself that which comes first causes that which comes later, as observed by David Hume, and that these two terms are connected by a relation of necessity; in the same way, we tend to believe that the order of presentation of a text is necessary and unchangeable, especially when we

are familiar with the text, when we practice the text according to given frames and habits. This line of thought may lead one to the conclusion that any change in a text is a sacrilege. The text can only be that text, consequently its translation — any form of translation — in the last analysis is a fake.

Let us take the case of a reader in the habit of reading Dante's *Divine Comedy* in Italian. *Inferno* can only begin with the line "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita" and variants are not appreciated — not only in the sense of transposition and transferral into another language, but even in the form of paraphrase in the same language. On the contrary, for a reader unfamiliar with ancient Greek, the *Odyssey* is available in numerous different variants, none of which is referred to as the original as the criterion for evaluating fidelity — and yet we are discussing translations. Nor does it make any difference whether these variants are in prose or in verse. Consider the Homeric texts. In Italy, Vincenzo Monti's translation of the *Iliad* carries out the role of the original, especially for those who encountered this translation for the first time during early school days and have continued reading it, to the point of not wanting to recognize any other version that is not Monti's. And yet, on Ugo Foscolo's account, Monti was not worth much as a scholar of ancient Greek! Indeed, it seems that his translation derives from other translations, rather than from the original. Foscolo apostrophizes Monti as the "Traduttor dei traduttor d'Omero".

Evoking Zeno's riddle about Achilles and the tortoise, let us ask the following question (Achilles can never overtake the tortoise because the tortoise has always advanced beyond the point where it first was when Achilles reaches that point): is swift-footed Achilles (who can never reach the slow tortoise) similar to a skillful and relevant translation? (See Derrida, 1999–2000.) The "relevant translation", like Achilles, is committed to reaching the original, which, like the tortoise, has the only advantage of having taken off first, of starting first. However, precisely because of this advantage and similarly to the relation between Achilles and the tortoise, the translation cannot reach the original text. In any case, let us remember that the *logoi* or argumentations used by Zeno of Elea to deny movement, change and becoming (like the riddle about Achilles and the tortoise or the other riddle about the arrow) were ultimately intended to support Parmenides and his thesis about unchangeable unity against the existence of plurality. Parmenides confuted the idea of the plurality and asserted the idea of unity; he introduced the concept of being and asserted that being is one (on Zeno's riddles, cf. Colli, 1998).

Under a certain aspect, the thesis that asserts that only one is possible, only unity can be connected to the question of translation. Confutation of the plurality, of the multiplicity can be applied to common views about the relation between that which is considered as the unique original text and those that are considered its many translations. From our point of view, it is important to underline that Zeno's confutation of the plurality, as reported in *Parmenides* by Plato (1977), is based on the problem of similarity, that is to say, on the same notion generally invoked to explain the relation between the text and its translations.

Even if a translation is simply a text "rewritten" in the same language, it is not identical to the original (not even Pierre Menard's *Quijote* by comparison to Miguel de Cervantes's *Quijote*; on this account see Borges, 1939b). If a translation were totally similar to its original, it would be identical, simply another copy of the same text. But a translation must be at once similar and dissimilar, the same other. This is the paradox of translation, which is the paradox of multiplicity. To admit that translation is possible is to admit that something can be at once similar and dissimilar, which is a real contradiction. We could resort to Zeno's argumentations, as reported in Plato's *Parmenides* (127d–128e), and deny existence of the many, at once similar and dissimilar. That is, we could demonstrate that the idea of a text existing at once as the original text and as the translatant is absurd. Following this line of reasoning, and considering that it is impossible for the not-similar to be similar and for the similar to be not-similar, it would also be impossible for translations to exist given such conditions of impossibility.

Instead, expressed in terms of the paradox of Achilles and the tortoise, the "paradox of translation" consists in the fact that in order to reach the object-text in translation, the translating text must somehow recover the former's advantage of being first from the very start. With reference to Achilles and the tortoise, as reported by Aristotle in *Physics* (239b: 14–20), the argument is that in a race the quickest runner can never overtake the slowest, since the pursuer must first reach the point from where the pursued started, so that the slower must always hold a lead. This argument is the same in principle as the paradox about the flying arrow: the arrow will never reach its goal because it must move across the infinite halves of the segment in a trajectory, where the segments are divisible ad infinitum. However, in Achilles's argument the distance that remains to be covered each time he attempts to reach the tortoise is not successively divided into halves.

Borges formulates this argument in slightly different terms (cf. “La perpetua carrera de Aquiles y la tortuga” (1932b) and “Avatares de la tortuga” (1939a)): Achilles is ten times faster than the tortoise; therefore in the race he gives it a ten-meter advantage. But if Achilles runs ten times faster than the tortoise, it follows that while Achilles runs a meter, the tortoise runs a decimeter; while Achilles runs a decimeter, the tortoise runs a centimeter; while Achilles runs a centimeter, the tortoise runs a millimeter, and so forth ad infinitum. Therefore, swift-footed Achilles will never reach the slow tortoise. Borges reports and examines various attempts at confuting Zeno of Elea’s paradox: that proposed by Thomas Hobbes, Stuart Mill (*System of logic*), Henri Bergson (“*Essay upon the immediate data of consciousness*”), William James (*Some Problems of Philosophy*) who maintained that Zeno’s paradox is an attack not only on the reality of space, but also on the more invulnerable and subtle reality of time, and lastly Bertrand Russell (*Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy, Our Knowledge of the External World*), being the only attempt Borges considers worthy of the ‘original’ in terms of argumentative force. ‘Of the original’ is placed in inverted commas because all these successive argumentations are variants or translations of the primary text, in so far as they compete with Zeno’s paradox and attempt to equal it in argumentative ability.

Pierre Menard, author of *Quijote*, also turns his attention to the riddle of Achilles and the tortoise. And Borges dedicates a short story to Menard, included in *Ficciones*, which is just as paradoxical. In the story, Menard’s *Quijote* is listed among his works as *Les problèmes d’un problème*, dated Paris 1917. Menard discusses different solutions, in chronological order, to the “Achilles” paradox, and in the second edition cites the following advice from Leibniz in the epigraph: “Ne craignez point, monsieur, la tortue.” Why should we fear the slow tortoise? Because of its advantage, because of the distancing, the time-lapse separating it in space and time, like a gulf, from swift-footed Achilles. To fear the tortoise is to fear translation because of the original, which has the advantage of coming first. The text that translates the original inevitably comes second. To fear the original and faithfully respect it: Menard decides that he will not just compose another *Quijote*, but the *Quijote*, the unique, the original *Quijote*. Of course, it was not just a question of imitating or copying the original. This would have meant to propose the advantage of the original once again, making of *Quijote*, as composed by Menard, a second text. Menard had a sacred fear of the original; however, he did not fear producing pages that coincided word by word with the words of Cervantes. Menard