

Rhizomizing the Translation Zone: Xiaolu Guo and *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*

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In a world marked by increasing linguistic and cultural mobility, Homi Bhabha's paradigm of cultural translation proves to be of critical importance to opening up more areas of debate about agency, cultural identity, and power relations within and outside translation studies. Potentialities of the metaphorical use and epistemological expansion of translation may serve as a point of departure for understanding what Emily Apter defines as "translational translationalism [...] marked by [...] the internationalization of (North) American literary studies with multilingualism from within" (43).

Following the research conducted by Emily Apter, Sherry Simon, and Edwin Gentzler, it becomes apparent that for both literary studies scholars and translation studies scholars, translational texts, which reflect the dynamic landscape of cultures-in-contact and challenge the conventional readership, require more attention. Since most bilingual/multilingual authors are usually equipped with an awareness of the co-presence of other languages and their effects, writing, as far as they are concerned, is a process of both interlingual and cultural (mis)translation, an aesthetic process that takes place in a political translation zone.

This paper aims to examine the changing dynamics – from loss to gain, and from gain to loss – in translational writing on structural, linguistic, and thematic levels, through a detailed analysis of Xiaolu Guo's *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*. For a contemporary Chinese British author like Guo, translingualism serves as a distancing technique, which exacerbates the agony of writing in another tongue, yet frees her from "the tyranny of a specific syntactical structure" (Kellman 28). In Guo's linguistically and structurally groundbreaking novel *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, translation plays a pivotal role in text design and creative composition of the narrative. In the meantime, the novel also engages with the politics of language and destabilizes the assumed relationship between language, identity, and national belonging.

Keywords: Translational Writing; Linguistic Creativity; Cultural Translation; Multiculturalism; Translation Zone