Translation and the making of history: The objectification of Mao Zedong

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Objectification. Translation and history. Translation and knowledge. Translation of Mao Zedong. Academic paratext and translation.

This study looks at translations of Mao Zedong produced as part of the Mao Writings Project (MWP) at Brown University in order to explore how translation, as a step in the production of global historical knowledge, transforms authors and their texts into historical objects. As the MWP's editors and translators instrumentalise Mao for their own historical purposes, the historical narratives that Mao sought to establish in his writings are undermined and even supplanted, and what he says, in both substance and style, comes to reflect the sensibilities and priorities of his translators.

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Umberto Eco famously said that "the language of Europe is translation" (1993; quoted in Wolf 2014, 225). The same could easily be said of world history. Our knowledge of the world beyond the limits of our own language abilities is always, one way or another, mediated by translation. History itself is increasingly seen as a form of translation: if the past is "a foreign country" (Burke 2005, 3), then understanding it necessitates an "act of translation" (Alonzi 2023, 1). On a more practical level, translation is a necessary step in the transfer of knowledge about events, people and ideas from one language context to another. This is a topic in which there has been growing interest. A recent volume on the role of translation in the transmission of scientific knowledge – to which the present special edition might be deemed complimentary – notes Mona Baker's observation that the role of translation as "a core mechanism for the production and circulation of all forms of knowledge" has "received relatively limited attention in translation studies to date" (Baker, quoted in Sumillera et. al 2020, 1). The present paper contributes to this growing literature by considering translation as a 'core mechanism' in the creation of historical knowledge. It explores translation's embeddedness in historical processes by looking at the translations of Mao Zedong produced by the Mao Writings Project (MWP) at Brown University in the 1970s and 1980s.

This paper argues that translation in the service of history can operate as a form of objectification, which I term historical objectification. Historical objectification refers to the process by which a historical subject – an actor from history possessing their own autonomy – becomes a historical object. The term 'objectification' has its origins in feminism and the concept of sexual objectification (Nussbaum 1995, 249) but has evolved into a term that describes any process by which a "target" – normally a human being – is made into "a tool for one's own purpose" (Gruenfeld et al. 2008, 112). In her seminal paper on the term, Nussbaum details several concepts associated with objectification, three of which are relevant for the concept of historical objectification. The first, *instrumentality*, describes how an 'objectifier' treats an 'object' as "a tool of his or her purposes." The second, *inertness*, describes how the object is treated as "lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity." Finally, *violability* describes how the objectifier "treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into" (1995, 257). This paper shows how, in the pursuit of their scholarly goals, the editors and translators at the MWP treated Mao and his writings as inert, violable and instrumentalisable.

Objectification is often seen as a purely negative phenomenon, an "instrument of subjugation whereby the needs, interests, and experiences of those with less power are subordinated to those of the powerful" (Gruenfeld et al. 2008, 111). While Nussbaum sympathises with this perspective, she allows that objectification "has features that may be either good or bad, depending upon the overall context" (251). My view of historical objectification in translation is not entirely pejorative, seeing both history and translation as vital for the expansion of knowledge. Still, the definition by Gruenfeld et al. is worth reflecting on. In the MWP translations, the 'powerful' are the editors of the project who chose how to translate and present Mao's works. Mao's 'needs and interests' are expressed to a degree in the source texts, but it is unlike-

ly they were considered at any stage of the MWP. The power imbalance between translator and subject, though context-dependent, is real. The needs of the objectifier always supersede those of the object. This does not mean that the editors and translators of the MWP mistreated Mao when they historicised him. The historical process has its own valid ends.

This paper is organized into three parts. The first part provides an overview of the MWP, its origins, and its objectives. The second part looks at the role of paratext in presenting an alternative subjectivity alongside Mao's 'own words', and explores the reframing effect this has on his representation. The third part considers the translated text itself, illustrating how emergence from within a particular disciplinary context affects the way language is used, and therefore how Mao speaks. Taken together, these observations show how objectification occurs: As Mao's voice is mediated by the translator's voice, and as editorial interventions establish a critical perspective on Mao and his work, he is reconfigured – at least in part – as a historical object.

THE MAO WRITINGS PROJECT AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

The MWP was an ambitious scholarly project that sought to compile, translate, and annotate the entire corpus of Mao's works from the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The project was the brainchild of Michael Y. M. Kau, a professor of political science at Brown University, whose goal was to create a resource for "systematic scholarly research" (Kau and Leung 1986, xxviii). The project began optimistically. The first volume, published in 1986, outlined plans to publish "a comprehensive set of six volumes" which were to be published within two and a half years (xxxi). By the time the second volume was published four years later, in 1992, this had been revised to eight volumes. In the end, only two volumes were published as financial support for the project ran out, along with the energies of the remaining contributors. Despite the project never being completed, the two volumes left by the MWP are impressive achievements, providing new translations of around 750 texts spanning from 1949 to 1957, with extensive notes, cross-references, and comprehensive bibliographic information. The volumes are still found on the shelves of research libraries across the world, and remain informative and usable guides to the writings of Mao Zedong in the early years of the PRC.

In an interview I conducted with Michael Kau (2023), he explained to me the inspiration behind the MWP. Kau had the idea for the project in the early 1970s. At the time, China was still in the throes of the Cultural Revolution, a "chaotic period" in which scholars looking at China from abroad often lacked the resources to fully comprehend what was happening there. Kau was particularly struck by the fact that Chinese political movements in the 60s and 70s "always cited Mao's quotations." Noting the importance of Mao as a revolutionary figure, Kau wanted to know not only the complete and unabridged contents of Mao's writings, but how his writings were being used, and the extent to which they could be considered "political manipulation or propaganda" (2023). The volumes' introduction describes how "texts were invariably selected and edited by the dominant political group of the day to reflect and support its own ideological orientation and policy positions" (Kau and Leung

1986, xxvii). Addressing this inadequacy was a core goal of the project. The project was also motivated by a fascination with Mao, the "revolutionary theorist" who "dominated the stage of China's Communist revolution and socialist experiment" (xxv). For Kau and Leung, Mao was "the twentieth century's most powerful symbol of political and philosophical radicalism" (xxv). Understanding Mao and his ideas was seen as the key to understanding "new China", in which they represented "the dominant political and ideological force" (xxv). This understanding of Mao and his importance no doubt impacted how his works were understood and translated.

When it comes to ideology, the editors at the MWP tend to fall into the trap described by the critical linguist Teun A. van Dijk, wherein "few of 'us' [...] describe our own belief systems or convictions as 'ideologies.' On the contrary, Ours is the Truth, Theirs is the Ideology" (1998, 2). When I asked Kau whether there might have been any motivating or unifying ideology among participants, he interpreted the word 'ideology' as being exclusively applicable to Chinese communists rather than Western academics, replying "there were no political activists who were very pro-Maoist," since "Western political values are more about academic freedom and independence" (2023). When prompted to consider his own convictions, Kau is candid. He describes his "consistent value orientation" as in favour of "fundamental liberal values" such as personal freedoms and human rights, though he emphasises that he is "not a political activist". Asked what the main values of the project were, Kau responds without hesitation: "intellectual values" (2023). For Kau, the scholar works in a sanctified space, free from obligations, political or otherwise, to anything but the truth.

Maria Tymoczko has argued against the possibility of such an "in between", arguing that the necessity of "affiliation and collective action" in all forms of cultural engagement means that translators are "all too committed to a cultural framework" (2014, 201). This comment surely applies as readily to scholars as it does to translators. The MWP was based at an elite American university, a geopolitical and institutional setting that tied the project to a specific cultural milieu. Part of that cultural inheritance was a belief in Enlightenment values, like the power of rational enquiry to illuminate the world. Another part of it, arguably, was a subscription to the "liberal values" espoused by Kau. The MWP was active at the height of the Cold War, in the prosperous northeast of a global superpower embroiled in an ideologically charged confrontation with Communism in Europe and Asia. All of these factors put the editors and translators of the MWP at odds with Mao and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), both intellectually and politically. The present work suggests that Mao's objectification is more a consequence of the historical process than a reflection of anyone's agenda, political or otherwise. Still, the ethico-political distance between Mao and his translators cannot be ignored, and forms an important backdrop for this paper's observations.

PART 1: THE PARATEXT

The MWP translations are nested within layers of paratext, preceded by introductory comments and followed by supplementary notes. Connections between texts

are made through cross-references in notes. The texts are arranged in strict chronological order, and are often given new titles, or reorganised to present commonly excerpted passages in their original context. All of this serves to impose a new order on Mao's works, corralling his writings into a formation that fulfils the vision of the editors.

With its copious annotations, the MWP continues a tradition of many centuries of academic practice. According to Anthony Grafton "footnotes were 'created' as an academic device by historians and philosophers, with the years around 1700 forming a decisive watershed before [their] rapid spread" (1997, viii, 131; quoted in Claridge and Wagner 2020, 70). The use of footnotes in this era had an ethical dimension that, arguably, still resonates today. Demonstrations of a scholar's erudition, rigor, and transparency, they represented "outward and visible signs of inward grace" (Grafton 1994, 57), as records of the scholar's critical reflection on their work.

Another way of viewing scholarly paratext is to see it as an authoritative narrative intervention, or even as a way of 'talking over' historical sources or translatorial source texts. Esther Allen, writing in the context of translation, describes paratext as "a crucial demonstration of […] authority" (2013, 212). A well-grounded sense of authority is particularly associated with academic translation. A relevant case study is provided in Alison Martin's (2006) paper on the translation into German of George Keate's *Account of the Pelew Islands* by the scientist Georg Forster. In Martin's telling, the most striking thing about the scientist's footnotes is their "destabilizing intent towards the text" (2006, 201), as he uses footnotes to "call key aspects of the account into question" (200), and "impress on the reader the authenticity of [his] knowledge" (190). These tendencies of academic paratext, of elevating the voice of the scholar and destabilizing the text, are well represented in the MWP. The paratext is a place where Mao's voice is absent, and where the MWP's scholars have free reign to (re)frame and supplement his works in whatever way they choose.

In this section, I focus on two categories of paratextual intervention. The first is the provision of contextual information that provides for readers a framework in which to interpret Mao's words. The second is the provision, through various means, of counternarrative, or the inclusion of details that contradict the narratives presented by Mao in his original speeches.

Notes providing context tend to complicate Mao's narratives, dragging his claims through the mire of a complex reality. Mao's preferred ways of viewing or discussing certain subjects, discourses constructed and maintained not just in isolated texts but across the entirety of the Party's communications, are vulnerable to confrontation with inconvenient facts. A good case study into this phenomenon is the "Directive of the CPC Central Committee on Work in Tibet". This was a message Mao sent to the Central Committee of the CCP on April 6, 1952, discussing how Tibet was to be brought under the control of the Party after their victory in the Chinese Civil War. The directive concerns itself with practical, bureaucratic matters, discursively normalising China's occupation, and reflecting a sense that Chinese presence in Tibet was legitimated not only by history, but by the recognition of ordinary Tibetans. This idea is captured in a 1954 internal Party report on Tibet: "Tibet and the motherland

have had a close, inseparable relationship [...] Tibet is one part of the territory of our great motherland" (quoted in Goldstein 2007, 21). Throughout Mao's directive, he reiterates the idea that Tibetans are receptive to Chinese rule, and a faith in the idea that "the Tibetan masses will gradually draw closer to us" (MWP vol. 1, 256).[1] However, certain facts challenge this narrative. By 1950, Tibet had been a de facto independent state for around 35 years, during which time Tibetan elites had become increasingly "influenced by British customs" and developed a preference for the English language over Chinese (Goldstein 2007, 21). Before Tibet's 'liberation' in the early 1950's, the Dalai Lama's government in Lhasa drafted plans to send diplomatic missions to Britain and the United States, among other countries, to request assistance in maintaining their independence (276). These facts reflect that, while Chinese rule was normalised and accepted under Qing and Guomindang rule, there was a nascent Tibetan national identity with the potential to upset Beijing's narratives.

After a period of uncertainty following the Communist victory over the Guomindang, Tibet was brought under control with the 'Seventeen-Point Agreement', a controversial agreement signed by the Tibetan government – under intense "diplomatic and military pressure" (20) – accepting Chinese rule in Tibet. As part of the agreement, a Tibetan Military Region was established, and Tibet was occupied by the People's Liberation Army (PLA). In his directive to the Central Committee, when discussing how the army should proceed, Mao draws a comparison with recent military activity in a neighbouring region, Xinjiang: "Even when our army units under Wang Zhen entered Xinjiang, they focused all their efforts on practicing meticulous and careful budgeting, and on self-reliance and self-sufficiency in production[3]" (MWP vol. 1, 255). Here is the corresponding footnote:

> 3. In October 1949, the First Division of the First Field Army of the PLA moved in Xinjiang under Commander Wang Zhen (see text Nov 14, 1949, note 4). It carried out Mao's directive issued in December of that year [...]. PLA troops [...] began to enter Tibet on the mission of "liberating" the region in the spring of 1950 [...]. (257–258n3; emphasis mine)

One intervention here is a clear statement of the fact that the military activities in question were under the command of Chairman Mao. Even though the Chinese military was under Mao's direct control at this time, the construction "our army units under Wang Zhen" (255) de-emphasises this fact. The contextual note recentres Mao. Mao did not necessarily deliberately seek to downplay his role in the occupation of Xinjiang, but the editors did deliberately choose to highlight it. Also significant are the inverted commas that they place around the word 'liberating'. *Jiefang*, or liberation, was the official term for China's occupation of regions like Tibet and Xinjiang. By placing it in inverted commas, the editors demonstrate scepticism towards the official use of the term and imply a different reality: military invasion and occupation. These interventions highlight certain facts about the Chinese military occupation that Mao chose not to. Even subtle editorial interpolations serve to flesh out the narrative for the benefit of the MWP's readers.

Nearby translation choices, and the contextual information they elicit, contribute to this effect. In the same directive on Tibet, the MWP translates the term *guannei* as follows:

PPH: 新疆和关内汽车畅达 (61)
MWP: Motor vehicles travel freely between Xinjiang and "China Proper".[4] (vol. 1, 255)

The translation by itself is interesting, as the phrase 'China Proper', – which in the context of the speech obviously does not include Xinjiang – suggests that everything outside is not really China. The appended note provides a fuller explanation of the term's meaning, history, and implications:

> 4. Mao uses the term *guannei* here, which we have translated as "China Proper." Literally the term means "within the passes." This refers to fortified passes along the Great Wall, such as Shanhaiguan at the extreme eastern tip of Hebei Province and Yanmenguan in northern Shaanxi Province, which have traditionally been invasion routes taken by tribes on China's northern frontiers. (vol. 1, 258n4)

This information ties the term *guannei* into a historical context where modern Xinjiang was not part of China. Even on its own, the term *guannei* seems loaded with the sense of civilization within and barbarism beyond. Terms like "fortified passes" and "invasion routes" suggest a history marked by violent struggle. The picture this paints of relations between China and Xinjiang, of a central power with a centuries-long history of conflict with the barbarians on its periphery, casts a particular light on China's presence in Tibet in the 20th and 21st centuries.

One thing that increases the significance of these translations is that the directive on Tibet was featured in Volume V of Mao's *Selected Works*, meaning it was at one point seen as a key canonical text. This volume received an official translation into English by the Foreign Languages Press (FLP), with the MWP version being a deliberate retranslation. Because of this, one can see what an officially sanctioned version of the translation might look like. The term *guannei*, which the MWP translates as "China Proper", is translated by the FLP as "the heartland of the country" (73). The difference in sympathy and/or perception revealed by these two translations is clear. The FLP translation conveys nothing of the troubled history discussed in the preceding paragraphs, and it discursively figures Xinjiang as inside rather than outside. Not being a scholarly work, the FLP translation is free of critical paratextual interventions. The text is allowed to speak for itself.

Another destabilising feature of the paratext is the provision of counternarratives that contradict or undermine what Mao is saying. Sometimes this takes the form of an allusion to the existence of multiple narratives. In the directive on Tibet, a note giving a brief account of the PLA's activities in Tibet ends with two references for further reading. The first is the *Renmin Shouce*, or "The People's Handbook" (1952), which provides what the note describes as "a PRC description". The second is H. E. Richardson's *Tibet and its History* (1962), which is described as "an 'opposition' description" (MWP vol. 1, 258n3). The allusion to multiple narratives reminds readers that Mao's account of events is only one version, and probably, all things considered, not an entirely accurate one.

Elsewhere, Mao's one-sided versions of events are balanced out with the 'other side' of the story, especially when Mao is on the attack against political opponents. Notes on Mao's barbed comments often unveil messy internecine struggles. For example, in "US Imperialism is a Paper Tiger", Mao refers to "Right deviation-

ist errors of line" (vol. 2, 87), naming Gao Gang as one of the guilty parties. Via cross-reference, the MWP notes direct readers to a detailed history of the "Gao Gang – Rao Shushi affair" (vol. 1, 542n1) over several notes, including a brief history of the political careers of Gao Gang and Rao Shushi in which the degree of prominence they enjoyed is discussed. Gao, for instance, was a politburo member and chairman of the State Planning Commission (vol. 1, 543n7). The notes claim that Gao and Rao were accused of "lobbying for Gao to become first Party Secretary, vice-chairman of the PRC, and premier of the State Council when Mao was on inspection tours outside the capital", and of trying to organize a "joint letter asking Mao to relinquish power" (vol. 1, 543n7). The paratextual account suggests that Gao and Rao were purged for posing a threat to Mao and his leadership. One is left with the impression that Mao's most pointed criticisms are for men who were once his rivals.

This is in stark contrast to Mao's preferred 'official' version of events, which he makes clear in the "Opening Speech at the National Conference of the CPC" (March 21, 1955). In Mao's telling, the "Gao Gang – Rao Shushi anti-Party affair" was of much broader import: It was "an acute manifestation of the present stage of fierce class struggle in our country," and its main purpose was to "blaze the path for the restoration of counterrevolution" (MWP vol. 1, 528). The fact that Gao and Rao's opposition was directed at Mao personally is deliberately occluded. Unlike some of the occlusions discussed in the above section on Tibet, this omission is pointed, deliberate, and politically crucial.

The overall effect of presenting alternative narratives alongside Mao and the Party's official narratives is to remind readers that 'official' does not mean 'true'. Mao's demolishing of his political rivals is an exemplary "unequal encounter" (Cunico and Munday 2007, 141). By giving voice to the 'other side' in these encounters, the MWP translation undermines the sense of righteousness and authority that pervades Mao's speeches in their original context. By bringing readers' attention to the existence of competing narratives, they caution against viewing the version of history presented by Mao as neutral, objective, or even true.

PART 2: THE TRANSLATION

Having looked at the paratextual framing of Mao's writings, I now move to consider the translated texts themselves. In this section, I look at how the translations produced by the MWP – ostensibly representations of Mao's voice – are shaped by their academic origins. I start by considering the style of the MWP translations, which affects Mao's tone and moderates his messages. I then consider the impact of the translations' emergence from a disciplinary context, reflected in the scope and reflexivity of their language.

The MWP translations have a distinctive style that reflects more the concerns and predispositions of the translators than Mao himself. They show a preference for careful, measured, and neutral language, as well as a pervasive sense of meticulousness. One textual feature that provides an insight into this meticulousness is the use of square brackets, which are frequently used for the purpose of explica-

tion, or for enabling literal translations to function coherently. In a speech from March 1956 entitled "Speed Up the Socialist Transformation of Handicrafts", in which Mao issues directives on the collectivization of small industry, the MWP translation uses 46 square brackets across two pages (vol. 2, 28–29). As an example of how they are employed, consider the following passage: "The First Five-Year Plan[3] set [the goals] low, [and] we suffered some losses. It is not necessary to alter [the plan] at present, but you must get a grip on [this problem] in your work" (28). The ubiquity of these brackets, and their visual impact, strongly establishes the "discursive presence" (Hermans 2014, 287) of the translators, while impeding the natural flow of the text.

The preference for more measured language is harder to demonstrate, manifested as it is across innumerable understated shifts. In the following passages, I focus on two examples where the MWP translation softens the meaning of the original, with repercussions for how Mao's views and temperament are portrayed.

The tendency towards measured language has a noticeable impact on Mao's discourse about two defeated rivals, Wang Ming and Li Lisan, in the speech "Reinforce the Unity of the Party and Carry Forward the Party Traditions", which Mao gave at the first preparatory meeting for the Eighth National Congress of the CPC in August 1956. Wang Ming is the pseudonym of Chen Shaoyu, a leader of a "Returned Students" faction made up of party members who had studied in the Soviet Union (vol. 1, 374n23). Chen was at one point an influential figure within Chinese Communism and was even the General Secretary of the CCP for a period in 1931. However, by the early 1940s he had been stripped of his authority by the Maoist leadership, and became a "leading target of CCP historians", who "charged him with responsibility for crucial errors in policy during the early 1930s" (Klein and Clark 2014, 127). Mao details Wang Ming's response to his prosecution, including an attempt to retract a confession:

> PPH: 但是, 后头我跟他谈话, 他又翻了[...] (300)
> MWP: Yet when I talked with him later, he had changed [his position] (vol. 2, 115)

Here the combination of the explicative square bracket and the neutral word 'change' serve to make Wang's flip-flopping – which Mao is critical of – seem more reasonable. On the very next page, Mao justifies the toppling of Wang and Li by connecting them to a wider social contagion, or as Mao (via the MWP) puts it, they "are not isolated individuals, but rather represent quite a large portion of the petty bourgeoisie" (vol. 2, 116). Mao goes on to condemn said petty bourgeoisie as 'opportunists', at one point saying that they are liable to *fakuang*, which might be translated as 'go insane':

> PPH: [...] 高兴起来可以发狂 [...] (302)
> MWP: When they are happy they can be delirious [...] (vol. 2, 116)

Translating *fakuang* as 'be delirious' is a very mild choice, particularly when paired with 'happy', as the collocation 'deliriously happy' in English has pleasant associations with no implication of insanity. This softening of the edges must be understood in the context of a passage meant to permanently condemn a political rival.

The impact of such translation decisions is small when taken case-by-case, but over the course of a text they alter Mao's tone, and, therefore, his message.

The academic context of the project has implications for the translation beyond its style. As discussed above, Tymoczko sees translators as "embedded in and committed to a specific cultural and social framework and agenda" (2014, 199). She defines a translation's "place of enunciation", as "an ideological positioning as well as a geographical or temporal one" (183). This could easily be expanded to include other 'places' associated with forms of enunciation, like subcultural groups or social classes. The present section undertakes such an expansion, considering the MWP's disciplinary and broader academic context as a 'place of enunciation' for its translations. This positionality is reflected in disciplinary preoccupations, and in a heightened focus on the object of their scholarly efforts, Mao Zedong.

I start with an example that shows how the political focus of the MWP's translators causes them to render a statement of Mao's as explicitly political, when originally it was only obliquely so. The translation in question is of *zongpaizhuyi* as "factionalism":

PPH: 还有另外一个东西, 叫宗派主义。(297)
MWP: There is another thing; it is called factionalism. (vol. 2, 113)

This decision represents a subtle, but definite, shift in meaning. *Zongpaizhuyi* is more readily expressed as "sectarianism", with the concept of "factionalism" arguably better indicated by *paixizhuyi*.[2] Terms like 'faction' and 'factionalism' are primarily used in political contexts: In the Corpus of Contemporary American English, the most frequent nominal collocate for 'factionalism' is 'party', and the most frequent adjectival collocate is 'political'.[3] The word 'faction' is normally used to describe splits within parties or political movements. To understand the significance of this translation decision, we need to look at the argument Mao was constructing when he introduced the concept of *zongpaizhuyi*. Mao's discussion of sectarianism /factionalism occupies one paragraph in a long speech entitled "Strengthen Party Unity and Carry Forward Party Traditions". Mao's rhetorical approach is to speak in broad, universal terms, as though to invoke the sense of an inviolable natural law, before narrowing his focus to his own political reality. The point of this approach is to confer legitimacy on his political theories. By opting for a context-specific, rather than general, term, the MWP translation fails to present Mao's argument on his terms. One reason for the shift may have been that, as political scientists and historians of China, the translators at MWP were focused on the significance of Mao's arguments in political terms.

A similar shift in focus can be observed in the phenomenon of introduced reflexivity, where translators emphasize the relationship of objects and events to Mao and the Party, often by inserting words like 'we' that relate the contents of a speech back to Mao and his audience. A passage from "Speech at the Second Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee" (November 15, 1956) illustrates how sustained shifts towards reflexivity can alter the focus of Mao's discourse. In one three-paragraph passage (vol. 2, 167), the MWP translation uses the word 'we' nine times. The source-text passage from which it was translated contains only five mentions of *wo* or *women*,

the equivalent terms in Chinese (PPH 322–323). While this is only a small increase, it reflects an observable tendency to take phrases that could be universal in scope and make them about Mao and the Party. In these paragraphs, Mao talks about communists in other countries criticising China's idea of the "mass line", saying in response: *meiyou banfa* (PPH 323). This translates, roughly, to "there's nothing to be done about it," but the MWP translation makes it reflexive: "there's nothing we can do about it" (vol. 2, 167). Similarly, when Mao claims that following the 'mass line' is something the CCP learned from Lenin and Stalin, the MWP translation is reflexive: "things we learned from them" as a translation of *cong tamen nali xuelai de* (PPH 323). The paragraph ends with a final introduced reflexivity, as the phrase *fenqing diwo* is translated as "distinguish between the enemy and ourselves". That this is not the only possible translation is confirmed by the translation of the same passage by the FLP, who translate *fenqing diwo* as "make a clear distinction between the people and the enemy" (342). The aforementioned *meiyou banfa* is translated by the FLP as "there is no stopping them" (FLP 342), another passive formulation. These examples from the FLP confirm that the level of reflexivity found in the MWP translation is not inherently present in the source.

For another, perhaps more subtle, example of introduced reflexivity, see below:

> PPH: 现在有两个地方发生问题, 一个是东欧, 一个是中东。(318)
> MWP: At this moment there are two places that present problems: one is Eastern Europe, and the other is the Middle East. (vol. 2, 163)

In the original Chinese, with *fasheng wenti*, Mao simply states that problems are occurring. The phrase 'present problems' states that problems are occurring *for* someone, namely Mao and the Party. This shift between source and target arises because, whereas Mao and his audience were interested in unfolding global events, the MWP translators were interested in *Mao* talking about these events.

In their original contexts, many of Mao's writings, addressed as they were to Party members, were about the external world. But the goal of the MWP was to produce a set of reference works to help Western scholars understand Mao. This shift in perspective can be detected in the language of the MWP translation, which blurs the line between a text *by* Mao and a text *about* him.

CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated how translation, as part of the historical process, objectifies source authors and their works. Using the Mao Writings Project as an example, I have shown how academic translators recontextualise, historicize, undermine, and reframe the source author, even as they do that author the service of presenting their work to a new audience. The relation of the translator to the source author is not inherently antagonistic: Mao *is* an object of historical enquiry for many, and it is legitimate to treat him as such. The value of the present study is to 'go backstage', exposing the sleight of hand that occurs when a first-person author, supposedly speaking in his own voice, is made to speak by and for somebody else.

When a collection of writings, originally written for a particular context and with a particular goal, becomes – with the help of translation – a historical resource,

the framing is radically altered. The shift in perspective evident in the MWP translation reveals Mao's dual status as both historical subject and historical object. As a historical subject, Mao was a powerful actor who shaped history and said precisely what he wanted. As a translated historical object, he is still a powerful figure, but his exact words are chosen for him. The words no longer serve their original purpose, serving instead the goals of the objectifier, the translator.

NOTES

[1] In order to easily distinguish between different sources attributable to Mao, acronyms of publishers are used as follows: PPH for People's Publishing House (Mao 1997a); FLP for Foreign Languages Press (Mao 1977b); and MWP for Mao Writings Project, with Volume 1 (Kau and Leung 1986) or Volume 2 (Leung and Kau 1992) specified in-text.

[2] These definitions are standard in most Chinese-English dictionaries. See entries on MDBG, a popular online dictionary, for zongpaizhuyi and paixi: https://www.mdbg.net/chinese/dictionary?page=worddict&email=&wdrst=0&wdqb=%E5%AE%97%E6%B4%BE%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89; https://www.mdbg.net/chinese/dictionary?page=worddict&email=&wdrst=0&wdqb=%E6%B4%BE%E7%B3%BB.

[3] Source: https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/.

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