

Contextual Representation in Translation Paratexts: A Comparative Study of Paratexts in Different English Editions of *Fortress Besieged*

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to study the ways in which different paratextual devices in English-language editions of *Fortress Besieged* interpret dynamic socio-political contexts for their target audiences. *Fortress Besieged* by Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao, the English translation of Zhongshu Qian's modern Chinese novel *Weicheng*, was republished and repackaged from 1979 to 2006, a period marked by ideological struggle, political change, and literary reform in China and throughout the globe. Applying Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory and the paratextual framework proposed by Kathryn Batchelor, this article compares three selected editions of *Fortress Besieged* in terms of their publication contexts and paratextual materials, including both visual and verbal paratexts. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the paratexts in *Fortress Besieged* are redesigned to reflect the corresponding publishing environment. This is done by shifting the interpretation of modern Chinese literature away from political propaganda and toward high-value literature.

KEYWORDS: Chinese literature; *Fortress Besieged*; polysystem theory; socio-cultural contexts; verbal paratexts; visual paratexts

Introduction

Literature is not an isolated phenomenon unaffected by political systems, cultures, ideologies, or other constraints but is often a mirror of the social condition in which it is produced (Even-Zohar 1979). From this perspective, the study of the representation of contextual constraints in literature and literary translation is meaningful and important. Compared to the relative immutability¹ of the translated text, paratexts are more “flexible” to reflect changes in relevant socio-cultural contexts (Genette 1997:408). While translated literature spreads to new publishing circumstances, its covers, prefaces, footnotes, and other paratextual elements all serve to condition the reception of translations. In this article, the focus will therefore be on paratexts. In the three decades between its first publication and its most recent edition, *Fortress Besieged*, the English translation of the Chinese novel *Weicheng*, has been clothed in a wide range of paratextual coverings in line with changing Chinese political strategies at different times. With this in mind, *Fortress Besieged* is selected as the object to study how paratexts interpret Chinese literature to reflect their social-political contexts.

The publication of the original novel was significantly influenced by political reform in China. *Weicheng* is a satirical Chinese novel written by Zhongshu Qian that was published in Shanghai in 1947, reprinted in 1948, and released in its third edition in 1949. Satirising intellectual hypocrisy and weakness as well as political darkness and corruption, *Weicheng* is regarded as “the last hurrah of modern Chinese literature’s pre-communist cosmopolitan age” (Lovell 2005). However, despite receiving a positive response during the first two years after its publication, *Weicheng* was banned and disregarded by mainstream society in China after 1949, under Zedong Mao’s² political leadership. Due to the class struggle during the Cultural Revolution,³ which lasted from 1966 to 1976, *Weicheng* was denounced as a capitalist product, while Zhongshu Qian and his wife were condemned as reactionary bourgeoisie. After approximately thirty years, a more relaxed political environment in the 1980s allowed

¹ The term “relative immutability” is used here to express that paratexts offer more flexibility to adapt to the contexts than translation, not to imply that translation itself is immutable.

² Zedong Mao is the founder of the People’s Republic of China. From 1949 until 1976, he served as Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party.

³ The Cultural Revolution was launched by Zedong Mao in 1966 as a ten-year campaign to purge Chinese society of counter-revolutionary forces. It was marked by brutal class warfare, extensive destruction of cultural objects, and an unparalleled elevation of Zedong Mao’s personality cult.

Weicheng to come into the spotlight again. There was even a “Zhongshu Qian Craze” in China due to the rising popularity of Qian and his works in the 1990s (He 2021:107). The novel has also been translated into various languages, including Japanese, Russian, French, etc.

Such a shift in the Chinese political environment prompts the Anglophone world to focus on *Weicheng*. *Weicheng* commenced its odyssey into English with the publication of *Fortress Besieged* (1979). The translation was jointly done by Jeanne Kelly, an American translator specialising in classical and modern Chinese literature, and Nathan K. Mao, a Chinese-American literary translator. After the 1979 translation, the same English text with minor variations⁴ was reprinted in the UK, Mainland of China, and Taiwan (see Table 1). Although *Weicheng* only has one English translation, it remains a source of interest for many translation scholars, in the fields of metaphor translation (Wang 2007), humour translation (Ge and He 2012), the translation of culturally specific items (Tian 2010), and so on. However, various paratextual components in *Fortress Besieged*’s different editions have only attracted sporadic research efforts in recent years. The constantly changing paratexts in *Fortress Besieged* should not be discarded as they become a way of representing socio-political contexts that chart the process of *Weicheng* going to the Anglophone world.

Table 1. Published English editions of *Weicheng*

Publication Date	Title	Translator	Publisher	Paratexts
1979	<i>Fortress Besieged</i>	Jeanne Kelly, Nathan K. Mao	Bloomington, US: Indiana University Press	A cover page, an author’s preface, a translators’ preface, an introduction, and notes
1989	<i>Fortress Besieged</i>	Jeanne Kelly, Nathan K. Mao	Taipei: Bookman Books (臺北: 書林出版社)	Unable to find the resource

⁴ The minor variations appear in editorial aspects, such as the different romanization styles for conveying Chinese characters and the different paragraphing settings.

2003, bilingual edition	<i>Fortress Besieged</i> 围城	Jeanne Kelly, Nathan K. Mao	Beijing, China: People's Literature Publishing House (北 京: 人民文学出版社)	A cover page, a foreword, and an author's preface
2003, bilingual edition	<i>Fortress Besieged</i> 围城	Jeanne Kelly, Nathan K. Mao	Beijing, China: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (北 京: 外语教学与研究 出版社)	A cover page, an author's preface, a translators' preface, and notes
2004	<i>Fortress Besieged</i>	Jeanne Kelly, Nathan K. Mao	New York, US: News Directions	A cover page, a note on edition, a foreword, an author's preface, a translators' preface, and notes
2005	<i>Fortress Besieged</i>	Jeanne Kelly, Nathan K. Mao	London, UK: Allen Lane	Unable to find the resource
2006	<i>Fortress Besieged</i>	Jeanne Kelly, Nathan K. Mao	London, UK: Penguin Classics	Front and back cover pages, biographies, a note on edition, a foreword, an author's preface, a translators' preface, an afterword, and notes

The overarching aim of this article is to explore how the paratexts in *Fortress Besieged*'s different editions reflect the changing publishing environment. Three case studies of *Fortress Besieged* that originated from distinct contexts, locations, and times will be examined: the Indiana University Press edition published in Bloomington in 1979, which is the first publication of *Weicheng*'s English translation; the 2003 People's Literature Publishing House edition released in Beijing, as the source location; and the 2006 Penguin Classics edition published in London, which is the most recent English translation available to the author. Three questions will be answered in this article:

- (1) What are the publication contexts of *Fortress Besieged*'s different editions?
- (2) Which visual symbols are chosen for visual paratexts to reflect a particular publishing context?
- (3) How is a particular publishing context represented in the verbal paratexts?

To answer these questions, the following two sections review recent studies on translation paratexts and contexts. The main analysis section examines three case studies separately and in depth: first their contexts, and then their visual and verbal paratexts. In the last part of the article, the three case studies are compared, and the research findings, as well as the limitations of the research process, are given.

Debates on Translation Paratexts

From the inception of Translation Studies as a distinct discipline, translation scholars have focused on the study of textual materials other than translated texts, such as translators' biographies, prefaces, afterwords, and so on. Gérard Genette (1997:1) first proposes the terminology "paratext" and defines that "the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public" (1997:1). Placed inside or outside the book, paratexts function as thresholds and contribute to the intricate mediation between the book, author, publisher, and reader (Genette 1997:2). Title pages, covers, forewords, blurbs, etc. are all examples of paratexts.

When it comes to translation, Genette (1997:405) views the translation as a faithful representation of its source text, arguing that a translated text should be considered as an element of the paratext of its original text. However, such a viewpoint is at odds with the dominant theories in Translation Studies, which see translation as a creative process of rewriting (Lefevere 2016). Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar opposes Genette's notion and proposes that translations should be considered as texts unto themselves, with their own paratexts. The paratexts of translations consist of "presentational materials accompanying translated texts and text-specific metadiscourses formed directly around them" (Tahir-Gürçağlar 2002:44).

Perhaps owing to Tahir-Gürçağlar's (2011:115) universal suggestion that paratexts serve as a mediator to demonstrate how translations are shaped, more than 100 English-language articles have applied paratextual analysis to the study of translation and scholars have proposed

definitions of paratext one after another. The vast majority of paratextual research focuses on textual paratexts in literary translation, as Kathryn Batchelor (2018) also observes, such as translators' prefaces (e.g., Mcrae 2012; Norberg 2012), footnotes (e.g., Lopes 2012; Valdeón 2014), and book titles (e.g., Frías 2012). However, paratextual research on non-verbal elements is scarce, particularly in literary studies. For instance, in addition to children's literature (e.g., Todorova 2021; 2022), there is less focus on visual elements such as cover design and inside illustrations (Neather 2014:504).

To expand the applicability of paratextual analysis to a wider variety of translations, translation scholar Kathryn Batchelor (2018) develops a new paratextual framework in her book *Translation and Paratexts*. Batchelor adopts Genette's terminology, "paratext", stating that the translated text is not a paratext but rather equivalent to the original and redefining the paratext as "a consciously crafted threshold for a text which has the potential to influence the way(s) in which the text is received" (2018:142). This avoids specifying where the paratext should be placed, when it needs to be accessed, and who should be the creator of it, allowing for the inclusion of a broader variety of "consciously" created items that act as "thresholds" for translations (ibid.). The flexibility of Batchelor's definition inspires both "a producer- and a receiver-based perspective", which is applicable to research into the contexts in which translations are produced as well as the impact of translation products on recipients (2018:143). It is noteworthy that Batchelor emphasises the importance of analysing "non-verbal elements" or "image-based elements" (such as book covers, trailers, and video prefaces) alongside verbal materials (2018:173), and suggests using the visual grammar framework proposed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006) in *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*.

Thus, this study applies Kathryn Batchelor's paratext theory to evaluate multiple types of paratextual material together instead of just concentrating on one single form. Paratexts attached to *Fortress Besieged* are categorised into visual (e.g., cover designs) and verbal (e.g.,

prefaces, notes, afterwords, titles, and blurbs) paratexts in order to discuss how these different paratextual forms represent particular pushing environments.

Contexts in Translation Paratexts

Since the paratext is viewed as the “instrument of adaptation” (Genette 1997:408), which is continuously modified in relevant socio-cultural circumstances, paratextual analysis cannot be isolated from contexts. According to Fetzer, the context is a “multifaceted” and “multi-layered” notion (2012:107). Although “context-oriented research” occupies a substantial portion of the studies on translation paratexts (Batchelor 2018:34), the issue of social-cultural contexts poses a complex challenge because scholars often struggle to determine the norms controlling the paratextual materials, the intent that the paratexts attempt to achieve, and whether translation recipients are influenced in the manner created by paratexts designers (Batchelor 2018:171-173). Thus, the interaction between continually shifting contexts and paratexts is still insufficiently researched.

Existing context-oriented research on translation paratexts can be categorised into two types as described below. In the first, paratexts are regarded as being shaped by their contexts, in other words, the way in which paratexts are constructed reflects the socio-cultural milieu. Marija Todorova (2022) analyses the verbal and visual paratexts of Western Balkans translated works for children and young adults. The wartime context in the Western Balkans reinforces the prevalent stereotypical image of violence in paratexts, and paratexts, especially covers and inside illustrations, are crucial elements for resisting violent stereotypes and creating peaceful auto-images. Working on the retranslations of the Chinese novel *Jin Ping Mei*, Lintao Qi (2018) seeks to investigate how retranslations respond to their dynamic social-cultural contexts. Qi examines translation strategies as well as a wide range of paratextual elements, including cover designs, titles, archival files, interviews, and so on, in order to understand the dynamic “censorial system” governing the “different treatments of erotic from *Jin Ping Mei* in the various TTs” (2018:3). This article thus emphasises the dynamic nature of the interaction between translation products and contexts.

In the second category of research, paratexts in turn exert an impact on contexts, either reinforcing or challenging dominant social conventions. A vivid example is Pingping Hou's (2013) study of the paratexts in the official English translations of a political text, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* published in 1954 and the early 1960s. Paratextual components of this translation, such as the red covers, the positive comments written on the dust jacket, and the title pages with Mao's name and portrait prominently placed, serve to reinforce Maoist ideology (the dominant ideological context in China at the time of translation production). In addition to being introductory and interpretative, Hou believes that paratextual elements can offer an "ideological purpose" by launching readers "into a biased pre-designed reading experience" (2013:37). Another example of research in this category is Roberto Valdeón's (2014) study of Nigel Griffin's translation of *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*. Valdeón finds that the footnotes of this translation "attempt to resist the ideological position of earlier English editions" by critiquing English imperialism, while a colonially laden image appears paradoxically on the cover (2014:12).

Previous research has discovered that the paratexts are designed to fit their publishing environments, therefore, the focus of this article is not on what publishing environment is reflected in paratexts but on how the publisher selects certain paratextual elements to interpret a particular publishing context for target audiences. The interaction between translation paratexts and contexts forms the basis of the analysis in this article. As Valdeón's (2014) study demonstrates, tackling the interplay between social-cultural contexts with translation paratexts is a complicated challenge since multiple contextual systems may fight mutually at the same time. This is in line with Itamar Even-Zohar's description of the polysystem, "a multiple system", that is a collection of interconnected and partially overlapping systems, including ideological, political, literary, historical systems, etc. (1979:290). The interaction and positioning of these systems take place inside a dynamic hierarchy that evolves over time. As a result, the position of translated literature, which holds a "primary" or "secondary position" in the polysystem, is not fixed (Even-Zohar 2021:193).

The history of the English-language republication of *Fortress Besieged*, imbued with transition, revolution, and renaissance, is a good demonstration of Even-Zohar's statement. This study combines Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory with Kathryn Batchelor's paratextual framework to explore what social-political contexts are engaged in the publishing process and how certain social-political milieus are interpreted by these paratextual elements. To understand the contextual constraints of paratexts, this article juxtaposes, in chronological order, differently structured paratexts for the same translated text, *Fortress Besieged*, which was published in the US in 1979, China in 2003, and the UK in 2006, separately. Since there are no official explanations from cover designers, editors, or publishers, the interpretation of the visual paratexts in the three editions can only be speculated, which may be affected by the cultural background or experiences of the article's author, a native Chinese. Other scholars may interpret these visual paratexts in a different way.

Paratextual Analysis of *Fortress Besieged*

Case Study 1: Fortress Besieged in the US

The English translation of *Weicheng* was first published by Indiana University Press in the United States in 1979 under the title *Fortress Besieged*. Before this translation came out, it had been more than 30 years since the original Chinese novel was published. Such a long-time span shows the prolonged political and ideological entanglement between China and the US. This section discusses the social-political context of the 1979 edition's publication and analyses how visual and verbal paratexts reflect such a context.

Lovell notes that during the 1950s Cold War, in order to remake Japan as a non-threatening geographical partner against communist China, the US publisher Knopf sought to promote Japan as a "non-bellicose land of exotic aestheticism" via chosen and translated works of its modern literature (2005). The capitalist world was not interested in reading Chinese "party literature" (Lee 1985:561). Thus, translated Chinese literature held a "secondary position",

representing a “peripheral system” inside the polysystem of American culture, which means that American readers did not pay much attention to it (Even-Zohar 2021:193).

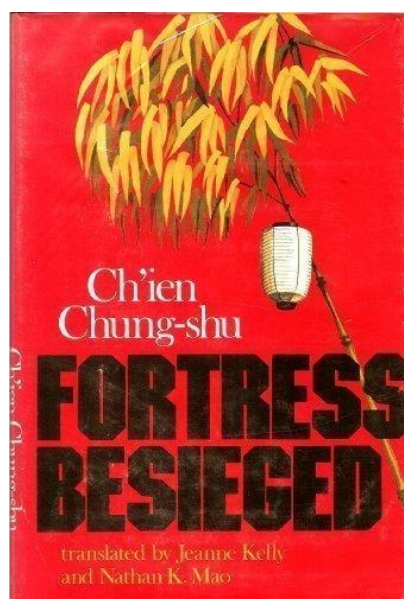
In the 1970s, the political context began to change. Due to the need to jointly confront the Soviet Union, the tensions between China and the US started to ease. Such a political situation governed the literary polysystem in the US, causing more and more publishers to produce translated Chinese literature, which played an “innovatory role” in weakening the ideological struggle between the US and communist China (Even-Zohar 2021:192). For instance, according to Lo (1979:55), Indiana University Press planned to extend its publication of literary works from the East Asian region in acknowledgement of the crucial importance of these countries’ cultures, starting with the series “Translations from Chinese Literature”. The series particularly focused on overlooked writers, whose works deserve a new “hearing” (ibid.). The first work that appeared in this series was the translation of Ruoxi Chen’s *Yin Xianzhang*,⁵ published in 1978. Since she exposed Chinese people’s tragic fate during the Cultural Revolution, *Yin Xianzhang* has been temporarily banned from China’s mainstream society, a similar experience to that of Zhongshu Qian’s *Weicheng*, whose translation *Fortress Besieged* was released in the same series in 1979.

The cover of *Fortress Besieged* (1979), which can be regarded as the visual paratext of this translated book (Batchelor 2018:174), is worth discussing (see Figure 1). According to Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2006:187) image analysis methodology, the cover can be partitioned by a horizontal axis into top and bottom. The top section of the 1979 cover features a golden bamboo and a white lantern, which are typical Chinese elements with specific symbolism, signifying people with noble personalities and family reunions, respectively. Therefore, this top section implies an “ideal” vision of the novel’s protagonist as a person with excellent conduct, a successful career, and a harmonious marriage. However, such a utopian picture is broken by the “real” components at the bottom (ibid.). The original author’s name “Ch’ien

⁵ A collection of eight short stories set during the period of the Cultural Revolution that describe the lives of Chinese people, stemming from the author's experience in the years 1966-1973.

Chung-shu”⁶ appears below the image, followed by the title “Fortress Besieged” in a larger font size, implying a greater salience in the textual hierarchy (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:202). As suggested by the title, the apparently attractive scene in the upper image is actually a besieged fortress from which people want to escape. In this way, the cover reveals the core theme of this literary work.

Figure 1. The cover page of *Fortress Besieged* (1979) published by Indiana University Press



Moreover, the separate elements on the cover are combined as a whole by the dominant colour red (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:177), which signifies a Marxist or Communist ideology. The addition of bamboo and the lantern, which are not mentioned in the textual content, can be regarded as a further mark of (communist) China, cooperating with the red background. According to Said, the textual representations of China by Anglophone countries function as a type of “cultural praxis”, which they typically engage for a specific purpose in accordance with a trend within a particular historical context (2003:273). Lee also argues that translated Chinese literature that has been “paratextually treated” plays an important role as

⁶ Ch'ien Chung-shu is the spelling of Zhongshu Qian in the Wade-Giles romanization scheme. Both the 1979 and 2003 editions use the Wade-Giles romanization system to render Chinese characters. The 2006 edition uses Pinyin, i.e., Zhongshu Qian, to spell the author's name, and the original Wade-Giles style for Chinese characters is retained throughout the main text.

the “ideological filter” (2015:265). Thus, considering the US’s constant condemnation of China as a hostile menace since the communist takeover of China (Mackerras 1999:83-96), the visual paratext of *Fortress Besieged* (1979) mainly contributes to reinforcing and further strengthening the stereotypical representation of (communist) China via colours, images, and texts.

In terms of verbal paratexts, *Fortress Besieged* (1979) provides many textual materials that do not appear in the Chinese version. Not only do these verbal paratexts give background information for the translated text, but more importantly, they evoke particular emotions in readers before they begin reading the text, as presented below.

Apart from an “Author’s Preface” translated from the original Chinese version, the 1979 edition has a “Translators’ Preface” that says *Weicheng* was greatly admired when it was first published but “was largely neglected” in the decades that followed. In addition, the two translators state that this novel is deserving of praise and hope that this translation can “generate even greater interest in Ch’ien Chung-shu and his works” in order to reverse the novel’s marginalisation (Kelly and Mao 1979:xi). A 17-page “Introduction” by one of the translators, Nathan K. Mao, also highlights the high literary worth of *Weicheng* by giving examples of previous praise from a number of critics regarding its “comic exuberance”, “satire”, “linguistic manipulation”, and so on (Mao 1979:xiii). Most importantly, the “Introduction” emphasises that the objective of this translation is to “discuss the novel as an artistic whole” (ibid), which is distinct from the earlier ideological disputes present in Chinese literature.

Following the translated text, there are “Notes” for every chapter at the end of the book, which only appear in the English version. Most of the notes pertain to the names of real-life Chinese people mentioned in the novel, by detailing their lives and major achievements; Chinese festivals, by showing the customs and origins of festivals; and Chinese idioms or proverbs, by explaining their literal and deeper meanings. The English translation’s choice to

add these notes might improve English-speaking readers' understanding of the novel's use of metaphor, irony, and other rhetorical devices, allowing readers to appreciate the novel's artistic worth. Thus, verbal paratexts of *Fortress Besieged* (1979) seek to leave readers with a strong sense of the novel's high literary value and faithfully reflect the historical context in which the translation was produced.

In summary, on the one hand, the verbal paratexts attempt to reflect the historical context of the two countries' de-escalation of hostilities by demonstrating the literary worth of *Fortress Besieged* and the importance of understanding Chinese culture; on the other hand, this attempt does not go far enough, since the red colour and typical Chinese symbols are selected for the visual paratext to represent a stereotypical image of (communist) China, implying the peripheral position of Chinese literature.

Case Study 2: Fortress Besieged in China

Fortress Besieged was republished in China by People's Literature Publishing House in 2003. This is a bilingual edition with the Chinese ST on the left page facing its English TT on the right. Compared with previous editions of *Fortress Besieged* launched in English-speaking countries, the uniqueness of this edition is that it is an "outbound translation", meaning that the source culture initiates the translation production rather than the target culture seeking it out (Geng 2021:57). In this case study, the *Fortress Besieged* (2003) is governed by the factors in the polysystem of the source culture, China (Even-Zohar 2021:192). This section explores which visual symbols and verbal elements are used in paratexts to interpret the social-political context in China.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese central government has placed high importance on spreading Chinese classical literature in translation to other nations (Ren and Gao 2015:93). For example, the translations in Foreign Languages Press'⁷ monthly *Chinese Literature* were employed to promote "official policy"

⁷ Foreign Languages Press was founded in 1952 to boost the possibility for contemporary Chinese literature to reach a broader audience in foreign countries, and numerous scholars and in-house translators were hired.

(Hegel 1984:179), providing a way to consolidate political power, strengthen foreign exchanges, and realise the socialist revolution (Ren and Gao 2015:93). The political goal of outbound translation was altered in the 1980s as a result of the official rejection of the class struggle during the Cultural Revolution. In 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party included an impetus to shift from Mao's era of class struggle to economic construction through the "Four Modernisations" (Hong 2006:225). Four modernisations include the modernisation of industry, agriculture, national defence, and science and technology, as a prelude to the policy of opening-up and reform. In light of this context, the new purpose of initiating outbound translations was to serve modernisation rather than revolution. Geng characterises outbound translations at that time as "gift-giving": the Chinese government did not demand a financial return, but rather attempted to allow international readers to witness "a country ready to embrace the world, its people experiencing ups and downs, sorrow and happiness" and thus alleviate the decades-long battle with the capitalist world (2021:65). In terms of translation selection, according to Geng, works that revisited the damage imposed on people and the state by the Culture Revolution, as well as "wound and introspective literature" were on the list since they critiqued the class struggle, fitted well with the Party's need to remedy its historical wrongdoings, and enabled renewed thinking suitable for the "Four Modernisations" (2021:64).

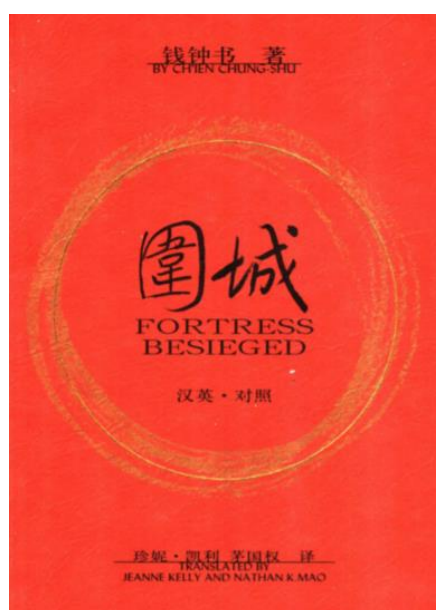
Zhongshu Qian is a victim of the Cultural Revolution, and his novel *Weicheng* includes sarcasm directed towards the authority and an attack on political darkness and corruption, which serves to clarify stereotypical perceptions of communist China during Mao's rule. In addition, the publisher of *Fortress Besieged* (2003) is People's Literature Publishing House, a national professional publisher, and its publishing decisions may be highly influenced by national policy. Thus, with a strong connection to the political climate, *Fortress Besieged* was released by People's Literature Publishing House in 2003.

According to Chang, although these outbound translations had the task of promoting Chinese culture, they struggled to enter the mainstream English literary market, and their readership

was mainly Chinese (2015:224). Therefore, the practical effect of these outbound translations was to regain Chinese culture's "self-confidence" (Chang 2015:104), rather than to raise Chinese literature from a "peripheral" to a "central" position in the polysystem of the world (Even-Zohar 2021:193). This argument can be presented in the paratexts of *Fortress Besieged* (2003), which will be further analysed below.

In terms of the visual paratext, *Fortress Besieged* (2003) has a new cover (see Figure 2), which can be interpreted by the structure of the "centre" and "margin" (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:196). The golden light from the central circle places the focus on the bilingual title "圍城 Fortress Besieged" and the text "汉英·对照" (Chinese with corresponding English, my translation), which are the most significant elements on this cover. On the one hand, the title as the centre, along with the golden circle symbolising the border around the marriage, emphasises the crucial theme of the whole book: marriage is similar to a besieged fortress; those on the outside want to enter, while those on the inside wish to leave (Mao 1979:xxvii). Along with the centre, the cover page has the author's name and the translators' names in English and Chinese, displayed on the top and bottom margins, respectively.

Figure 2. The cover page of *Fortress Besieged* (2003) published by People's Literature Publishing House



It is noteworthy that the 2003 edition of *Fortress Besieged* is a bilingual book, and most of the textual information on its cover is displayed in both Chinese and English. In the cover's hierarchy, the higher an element's weight, the more prominent it is (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:202). When the bilingual title is seen from the font size, the Chinese title “圍城” takes greater salience in the textual hierarchy, unavoidably reminding readers that the book is translated from Chinese. Therefore, before starting to read, English-speaking readers may bring their preconceived notions of China, such as the widespread prejudice in Anglophone countries that China is a “despotism” (Mackerras 1999:186). Furthermore, despite the stereotypical Chinese symbols in *Fortress Besieged* (1979), such as the bamboo and lantern, having been cut down, the retention of the red backdrop in the 2003 edition still reinforces stereotyped Chinese images in the English-speaking world. Thus, the visual paratext in *Fortress Besieged* (2003) attempts to redirect readers' attention away from the stereotypical image of China and toward the novel's theme by emphasising the title and omitting typical Chinese images. However, this goal is not fully achieved due to the use of a larger Chinese title and the unchanged colour scheme.

In addition to the visual paratext, *Fortress Besieged* (2003) only includes two verbal paratexts. A Chinese “Preface to the English-Chinese Version” (my translation) by Jiang Yang, the wife of the original author Zhongshu Qian, recalls the circumstances surrounding the 1979 edition's release and recounts the story of the People's Literature Publishing House edition's publication. The “Author's Preface”, which appears in the original Chinese version, is kept in both English and Chinese. The most salient theme that emerges from the written paratext is that *Fortress Besieged* should be appreciated by international readers without the language barrier, which corresponds to the gift-giving ethos in China at that time. This is discussed below.

In the preface, the argument is formulated by directly expressing the expectation of this English translation.

语言的间隔，在“四海之内”造成许多异国他乡；即使“天涯若比邻”，邻居间就好比有墙壁分隔你家我家。一旦打通这层间隔，你我可成一家人，至少《围城》之内“皆兄弟也”。这是可喜的事。钟书有知，必定高兴。

Many foreign countries exist around the world because of the language barrier; even if the globe is like a neighbourhood, there are walls separating our homes. Once this gap is bridged, you and I may become one family, or at least in the realm of *Weicheng*, we are all brothers and sisters. This is a gratifying thing. I am sure that Zhongshu Qian will be pleased to know about this (Yang 2003:3, my emphasis, my translation).

When the translation was published by People's Literature Publishing House in 2003, Zhongshu Qian had passed away. Jiang Yang, his wife, authorised the publication on Zhongshu Qian's behalf and provided this preface. Jiang Yang mentions the "language barrier" and expresses her and Zhongshu Qian's desire to see that "this gap is bridged". However, since this preface is not translated into English, it is inaccessible to non-Chinese readers, which contradicts the stated goal of overcoming the language barrier.

In summary, the 2003 *Fortress Besieged* was published in the context of the Chinese government's invitation to international readers to rectify the stereotype of communist China via outbound translations. However, although the paratexts originally intend to reflect this publishing environment by omitting some typical Chinese symbols to create a global book image and attract the attention of global audiences, they fail to do so due to the use of a stereotypical colour and an untranslated Chinese preface.

Case Study 3: *Fortress Besieged* in the UK

After the US, China, and one UK publisher, Penguin Classics republished *Fortress Besieged* in London in 2006. Penguin Classics, founded in 1946 as an imprint of Penguin Press, is the world's premier publisher of classic literature in English. Its collection includes non-fiction works and non-English literature in translation that has expanded to every corner of the world.⁸ In the 1960s, two Chinese works were published for the first time as part of Penguin Classics: *The Golden Casket: Chinese Novellas of Two Millennia* and *Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century*, both works of ancient Chinese

⁸ Useful information can be found on the Penguin Classics website: <http://www.penguinclassics.com/>

literature. However, it was not until 2006 that Penguin Classics first canonised modern Chinese novels, including *Fortress Besieged*, on its list. This section aims to understand the publishing context in which *Fortress Besieged* (2006) was released as a classic work in the UK, as well as how paratexts represent this specific context.

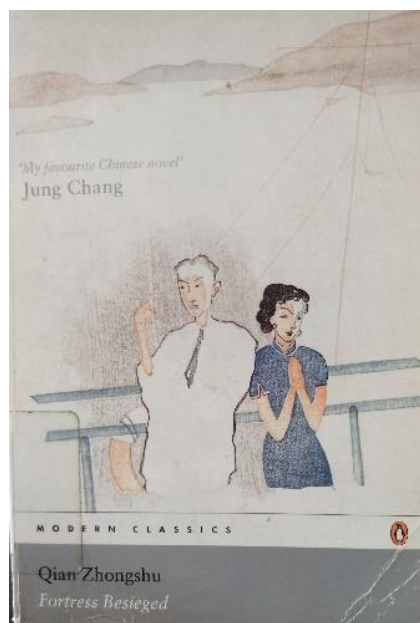
Due to the class struggle and the socialist revolution since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, English-speaking readers were mainly exposed to politically aligned works promoted by the Chinese state. This phenomenon contributed to the establishment of a stereotype about literature in the minds of UK readers: Chinese literature is “dully propagandistic” (Lovell 2005). However, since then the negative perception of modern Chinese literature has begun to shift. In the 1980s, China attempted to achieve modernisation by delivering translated Chinese literature with high literary value to the English-speaking world (see Case Study 2). Moreover, in British society, book reviews in major newspapers and criticism in the form of literary histories and anthologies contributed to Chinese literature's worldwide prominence (Qian 2017:309). For instance, prior to Penguin Classics adding *Fortress Besieged* to its list, the Guardian, a British daily newspaper, published an article by Julia Lovell in 2005 titled “Great Leap Forward”, which argues that the UK publisher's decision to release *Fortress Besieged* was “momentous”. Lovell (2005) also provides a critique of the British publishers' neglect of publishing translated modern Chinese literature. These two phenomena suggest a tendency whereby an interest in the aesthetic virtues of contemporary Chinese literature is beginning to outweigh its perception as socialist propaganda (Qian 2017:312). When this new “literary model” emerged, translated Chinese literature was likely to become a vehicle for developing unique characteristics in the British literary world (Even-Zohar 2021:192).

Against this background, translated Chinese literature was first included in Penguin's modern canon in 2006. To counteract previous stereotypes and provide a fresh picture of Chinese literature, Penguin Classics intended to include works that integrate aspects of the Chinese experience with genres and other factors not traditionally connected with China (Qian

2017:302). Zhongshu Qian's *Weicheng* meets this criterion as it is distinct from modern Chinese literature's typical political propaganda, including revelations about human nature and satirical critiques of authority, which are uncommon in modern Chinese literature at that time. Moreover, to appreciate the aesthetic significance from a new perspective, Penguin Classics continuously used non-Chinese translators to represent Chinese works, although a number of Chinese works on its list have been previously translated by Chinese translators (Qian 2017:300). Since *Fortress Besieged* was completed by a Chinese American translator, Nathan K. Mao, and a foreign collaborator, Jeanne Kelly, Penguin Classics did not change translators this time.

In terms of the visual paratext, the Penguin Classics edition includes a front and back cover. The image on the front cover is a "long shot" (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:130) (see Figure 3), with the sea and mountains in the background and a man and woman standing back-to-back on a ship, which recreates the scenario from the first chapter, when the protagonist, Fang Hung-chien, returns to China by ship. The man appears to be dressed in a white suit or shirt with a black tie, while the woman wears a blue cheongsam, a traditional Chinese dress. The two figures' uneasy and awkward relationship has a central position on the cover, expressed in their raised eyebrows and the posture of their bodies almost turning their backs to one another. In addition, the cover's predominant use of cool colours, such as white, blue, and grey hues, contrasts with the bright red of the preceding Indiana University Press and People's Literature Publishing House editions. The background colour in this edition is significant, as it emphasises that the publisher employs a new narrative framework to divert readers' attention away from the inherently political-propaganda nature of contemporary Chinese literature.

Figure 3. The front cover page of *Fortress Besieged* (2006) published by Penguin Classics

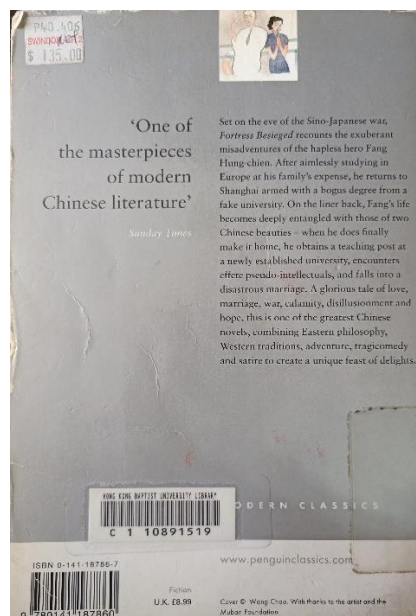


Moreover, at the top of the page is a line from Jung Chang's⁹ comment: "My favourite Chinese novel". Additionally, the back cover has an excerpt from a book review of *Fortress Besieged* published in The Sunday Times,¹⁰ which states that *Fortress Besieged* is "one of the masterpieces of modern Chinese literature" (see Figure 4). The texts on both the front and back cover pages, organised by Penguin Classics, are not neutral remarks but represent high praise for *Fortress Besieged*'s literary significance. According to Lefevere, publishers can be "patronages" that "further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature" (2016:12). In particular, recognised publishers of highbrow literature, such as Penguin Classics, play a critical role in establishing the literary merits of works. In this case study, Jung Chang, as the authoritative figure in Chinese literature, would lend some confidence in the quality of the translation on the readers' part. By emphasising the fact that the review is from a prominent national weekly, The Sunday Times, the cover is also manipulating the readers' interpretation of this book, trying to develop in them a sense of trust in the quality and significance of this translation. This contributes to the translated novel, *Fortress Besieged*, achieving classic status in the target culture.

⁹ Jung Chang is a British writer who was born in China and now lives in London.

¹⁰ The Sunday Times is a British newspaper, founded in 1821, and its sister publication is titled The Times. According to The Sunday Times' official website (<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/static/about-us/>), in the UK, The Times and The Sunday Times are two high-quality print publications.

Figure 4. The back cover page of *Fortress Besieged* (2006) published by Penguin Classic



Along with the visual paratext, the 2006 *Fortress Besieged* provides a much more extravagant assembly of verbal materials. The book starts with a page that offers, unlike the 1979 and 2003 editions, the short biographies of the main actors involved in producing the book, including the original author, Zhongshu Qian, the translators, Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao, and Jonathan Spence,¹¹ who contributes a foreword to this edition. The Penguin Classics edition also includes, for the first time, an unsigned “A Note on This Edition”, clarifying the romanization style used for translating Chinese characters, as well as a “Foreword” by Jonathan Spence, summarising the novel’s four levels of themes. The “Author’s Preface” and the “Translators’ Preface” are retained, as they were in the 1979 Indiana University Press edition (see analysis in Case Study 1). After the translated text, there is an “Afterword” by Nathan. K. Mao that is identical to the “Introduction” in the 1979 edition, followed by the “Notes”, which closely follow the format of the 1979 edition. This section suggests that all of these textual paratexts serve as a “threshold” (Batchelor 2018:142) that aims to appeal to worldwide readers to appreciate *Fortress Besieged* and provide a window to learn more about Chinese literature and culture.

¹¹ Jonathan Dermot Spence specialises in Chinese history as an American historian, sinologist, and writer.

This argument is formulated by giving positive acknowledgement to the author and novel. For instance, on the biography page, the highest wordcount is given to the author, Zhongshu Qian, rather than the translators or the foreword writer. The “Foreword” provided by Penguin Classics also offers a clear example: *Fortress Besieged* is “one that clearly has earned its place amongst the masterworks of twentieth-century Chinese literature, and can be read on its own merits within the most demanding of global contexts” (Spence 2006:x). The “Foreword” and the “Afterword” (see analysis in Case Study 1) both recognise *Fortress Besieged* as a significant literary work with a global appeal, which corresponds to the context of the growing appreciation for the literary value of *Fortress Besieged* in the UK.

Moreover, according to the “Foreword”, the book is to be recommended because “*Fortress Besieged* may not be able to tell us where China is heading now, but it can certainly tell us what China went through on the way” (Spence 2006:x). Jonathan Spence regarded this modern Chinese novel as a vital source of information on China, such as Chinese thought and society. This position demonstrates the strategy of this edition, which is to use the *Fortress Besieged* as a gateway to gain a deep understanding of Chinese culture.

In summary, the 2006 *Fortress Besieged* was released in response to the growing prominence of modern Chinese literature in British culture. Against this background, although the emphasis on *Fortress Besieged*’s literary merit in verbal paratexts is predictable, visual paratextual elements are completely changed, which focus on actual book content and the individual relationships between the characters. Such a significant visual change, which shows a fresh vision of Chinese literature, is used by the publisher to reflect the new status of Chinese literature in the Anglophone world.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the analysis section, the primary focus was on the publishing contexts, visual and verbal paratexts of the three selected editions of one translated book, *Fortress Besieged*, to explore

the ways in which different translation paratexts represent respective social-political contexts for the target readers. For this purpose, this article placed both visual and verbal paratexts in a broader socio-political perspective in light of the polysystem theory proposed by Itamar Even-Zohar, incorporating the paratextual framework developed by Kathryn Batchelor. The primary contribution of this article is its clear illustration of how translation paratexts employ the interpretations of Chinese literature and China to reflect their publishing environments.

When the three case studies are placed alongside one another, it is easier to understand the progressive evolution of social-political contexts reflected in their paratextual materials: paratexts in *Fortress Besieged* (1979) initially aimed to bring two cultures closer in accordance with the end of the decade-long conflict between China and the US in the 1970s. However, the considerable use of red and gold as well as bamboo and lantern motifs reinforced the stereotype of communist China, showing that the “peripheral position” (Even-Zohar 2021:195) of translated Chinese literature in American culture remained unchanged; despite being initiated in China, paratexts in *Fortress Besieged* (2003) did not escape too far from the stereotype of China by maintaining the red and gold colour scheme, which implied that the desire to advance Chinese literature’s position within the global polysystem remained unrealized at that time; finally, through emphasising the protagonists’ relationship, changing the colour scheme, and highlighting the novel’s prominence via rich texts, the paratexts in *Fortress Besieged* (2006) presented a publishing context in which the perception of contemporary Chinese literature moved away from the inherently political-propaganda nature and towards its aesthetic worth.

Based on the comparative analysis of three case studies of *Weicheng*’s English translation, *Fortress Besieged*, the following conclusions have been formed. Firstly, despite socio-political milieus having an overall effect on translation paratexts, visual and verbal paratexts may include diverse or even diametrically opposite implications, as case studies of the 1979 and 2003 editions demonstrate. Thus, visual paratexts contribute substantially to the representation of publishing contexts, especially motifs and colours, which are regarded as

significant reinforcers or antagonists of the stereotypical image of Chinese literature and China in certain contexts.

Secondly, the adjustment to the paratextual materials further emphasises the critical nature of the location of the translation activity launched. On the one hand, the outbound translation of *Fortress Besieged* (2003), initiated by its source culture, demonstrates an endeavour to distance itself from stereotyped images of China, although this goal has not been entirely realised. On the other hand, translation outputs launched by the target culture often reinforce pre-existing stereotypical representations of China, as in the 1979 US edition. It was not until several decades later, the 2006 UK edition took a further step in combating the predominant stereotypes of China. This process of change also shows that paratexts represent distinct political and ideological contexts through their interpretations of the image of modern Chinese literature and China.

Lastly, on the basis of these research findings, further studies can be conducted on other translated Chinese literature to investigate whether the paratext reflects its publishing contexts by using the same symbols or colours, and whether these paratextual elements truly affect how target readers perceive China and Chinese literature.

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