



Translation and Time: Exploring the Temporal Dimension of Cross-cultural Transfer

Presentation Details	
Title of Paper:	“Translation, Passing, and the Passing of Time”
Abstract:	<p>It has long been noted that translations “date” over time; while we continue to read and enjoy Dickens, no one but a translation historian today reads the works translated from Chinese by Sir John Francis Davis and others. To the extent that the texts Davis translated are valued today, they are read and enjoyed in more contemporary translations done in the twentieth or twenty-first century.</p> <p>Walter Benjamin’s essay “The Task of the Translator” contains perhaps the most sophisticated statement concerning this phenomenon; he sees translations as watching over the maturation process of the target language. The sentiment is very common in translation studies, with only a handful of cases, notably The King James Bible, Luther’s Bible, and certain German translations of Shakespeare being held up as exceptions that prove the rule.</p> <p>This paper will attempt approach this issue of how translations date, ie the temporality of translations, through the lens of the metaphor of cross-identity performance as developed in my book <i>Translating China as Cross-identity Performance</i>. Specifically, I will look at how the notion of performativity, passing and doubling intersect with work in the area of literary history on forgeries, fakes, and the idea of the revenant. For if translators are trying to pass as someone they are not, then the texts that they produce may be conceived of as akin to forgeries.</p>

Author's Biography:

James St. André is currently associate professor in the Department of Translation at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Director of the Centre for Translation Technology. Publications include *Translating China as Cross-identity Performance* (U. Hawai'i Press 2017), *Thinking Through Translation with Metaphors* (edited volume 2010), *China and Its Others*, co-edited with Peng Hsiao-yen of Academia Sinica, Taiwan (2011), and various articles including "Consequences of the Conflation of *Xiao* and Filial Piety in English." (Translating and Interpreting Studies 2017), "How the Chinese Lost Face" (*Journal of Pragmatics* 2013), and "Revisiting Walter Benjamin's 'Task of the Translator' in light of his *Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism*." (*TTR* 2011), winner of the Vinay and Darbelnet Prize of the Canadian Association for Translation Studies.