

Book Reviews of/and Translation in Periodicals: With Reference to *World Today* During the Early 1950s

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This study examines the complex interplay between translation practices and book reviews in Cold War Hong Kong through an analysis of *World Today*, a periodical funded by the United States Information Service (USIS) during the early 1950s. Drawing on archival research and textual analysis, this article reveals how book reviews functioned as sophisticated instruments of cultural diplomacy. The book review section of *World Today* magazine exhibited extensive diversity in its choice of materials and reflected various reviewers' attempts to achieve political propaganda goals through multiple approaches, including shaping negative images of Soviet and Chinese Communist Parties, highlighting American democratic values, explaining the consequences of Communist Party policies, and reinterpreting Soviet leadership figures, and so forth. The reviews expressed political positions through both direct criticism and metaphorical expression. The research demonstrates that reviews operated both independently and in conjunction with translations to serve specific ideological purposes.

Keywords: book reviews, translation, periodicals, *World Today*, Hong Kong

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期刊中的書評與翻譯： 以 1950 年代初期《今日世界》為例

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本研究透過分析 1950 年代初期由美國新聞處資助的期刊《今日世界》，探討冷戰時期香港地區翻譯實踐與書評之間的複雜互動關係。基於檔案研究和文本分析，本文揭示了書評作為文化外交工具的運作機制。《今日世界》雜誌的書評欄目在選材上呈現廣泛的多樣性，反映了不同評論者試圖透過多種途徑實現政治宣傳的目標，包括塑造蘇聯和中國共產黨的負面形象、突出美國民主價值觀、闡釋共產黨政策的後果，以及重新詮釋蘇聯領導人形象等。這些書評透過直接批評和隱喻表達兩種方式來傳達政治立場。研究表明，書評作為意識形態運作的一環，與不同類型的翻譯實踐構成了動態複雜的機制，共同服務於贊助者的意識形態目標。

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Introduction

Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Hong Kong emerged as a crucial site of Cold War cultural and political contestation, with its strategic location and influx of Chinese mainland refugees making it an ideal base for American intelligence and propaganda operations. The United States Information Service (USIS) established significant cultural programs in the territory, utilizing translation projects, publications, and intellectual activities as sophisticated instruments of ideological warfare designed to influence Chinese-speaking populations and counter Communist expansion throughout East Asia (Carroll, 2007; Li, 2022; Mark, 2004).

Within this context, the USIS established a significant presence in Hong Kong, initiating various publication projects including *World Today* 《今日世界》 (or *America Today* prior to February 20, 1952), a semimonthly magazine attributed to USIS and its main publication, which served as a primary vehicle for American cultural influence among Chinese readers, and *Four Seas* (*Sihai Huabao* 《四海畫報》), a monthly pictorial that was unattributed, etc. *World Today* magazine operated within complex constraints, navigating between British colonial sensitivities and American Cold War objectives. Operating from Hong Kong, the agency's primary objective was to shape public opinion among the Chinese diaspora and to cultivate ideological alignment among Chinese readers. As the United States sought to exercise influence in Asia, translation became a vital tool of cultural diplomacy. In the magazine, excerpts of Chinese translations of some English books were published, sometimes alongside the original English text. In addition, our study finds that the publication of a series of book reviews significantly complements other writings in the magazine through what Li (2022) identifies as "internal dialogics" (p. 945) in the magazine *World Today*.

It should be noted, however, that the Hong Kong government had strong reservations about certain USIS activities in Hong Kong, especially “anti-Chinese communist propaganda” (Mark, 2005, p. 183) that was targeted at the Hong Kong audience. USIS officers had been cautioned against the use of Hong Kong as “a production or distribution point for material which would in any way antagonize Communist China and, thereby, jeopardize the future safety of the Colony” (Mark, 2005, p. 183). As Li (2022) demonstrates through USIS-funded literary translations, translators deliberately omitted passages about independence and voting rights “in keeping with the idea of not irritating the British colonial government” (p. 949) while still serving American Cold War propaganda objectives. This created a delicate balance where translation and review practices had to serve political objectives while maintaining apparent editorial independence.

The translation programs of anti-communist literature emerged as a significant propaganda channel strategically planned and organized by the USIS in Hong Kong during the late 1940s and early 1950s (Chu, 2005; Li, 2022; Mark, 2004; Taylor & Xu, 2022; Zheng et al., 2010). The intersection between American Cultural Cold War policy and its cultural diplomacy initiatives during the mid-21st century has developed into a significant area of scholarly inquiry (Aldrich et al., 2000; Chou, 2012; Leary, 2012; Oyen, 2015). This historiographical development has been particularly pronounced in research examining American cultural projection across East Asia, with special emphasis on territories such as Hong Kong (Li, 2013, 2022; Shan, 2009, 2014; M. H. Wang, 2014, 2016) and Taiwan (Shan, 2009; M. H. Wang, 2014, 2015, 2016). The political dynamics and the role of translation during the Cold War period have been documented by scholars such as Li (2022) and M. H. Wang (2015). However, the specific role of book reviews in mediating between translation and ideology remains understudied. This research addresses this gap by examining how book reviews in *World Today* functioned not

merely as literary criticism but as sophisticated cultural mediation that both complemented and sometimes substituted for translation.¹ This study combines archival research with comparative textual analysis and paratextual analysis. Our research encompasses complete runs of *America Today* (Issues 1-56, January 1949 to February 1952) and *World Today* (Issues 1-91, March 1952 to December 1955), totaling 147 issues. This periodization focuses on the magazine's early phase at the outset of the Cultural Cold War, from *America Today* to *World Today*, during which a number of book reviews were published as the journal established its editorial identity and intellectual orientation. Within this corpus, we identified items functioning as book reviews—pieces primarily engaging with a specific book through summary, evaluation, or commentary. Our inclusion criteria required reviews that focus on a single book, and engage substantively with content rather than merely announce publication. This yielded 15 book reviews with substantial review coverage. Some marginal cases required interpretive judgment, for instance, excerpts from journal papers or from books, selected or abridged translations or synopsis of English works. In such cases, we included the piece if the book itself was clearly a primary object of analysis rather than merely illustrative or condensed material. This process yielded a dataset of 15 book reviews in the magazine through close reading, comparative analysis of intertextual relationships between reviews and translations, and paratextual analysis of reviews as cultural mediators.

¹ We define “cultural mediation” as the active process through which book reviews function beyond mere evaluation to construct interpretive frameworks that shape how readers encounter and understand texts across cultural and linguistic boundaries. In the context of *World Today*, cultural mediation operates as a sophisticated form of knowledge transfer that selectively filters, frames, and recontextualizes source materials to serve broader ideological objectives. Book reviews as cultural mediators do not simply bridge source and target cultures; they actively constitute the conditions under which translated or untranslated works enter public discourse, authorizing certain readings while foreclosing others.

Book Reviews and Translations

The relationship between book reviews and translation manifests in complex dimensions. Book reviews serve as crucial supplements to the translation process, extending beyond mere evaluation to provide additional layers of cultural and contextual interpretation. Xu (2005) identifies three primary functions: cognitive, scholarly and educational. The scholarly significance of translation reviews extends beyond mere evaluation. As Delistathi (2017) articulates:

studying translation reviews allows us to extend our understanding of the complexities of discourse formation, to trace the history of discourses, to document how knowledge can be a resource in power struggles, and to understand how power struggles can recast discursive practices. (p. 201)

Book reviews, functioning as complementary interpretations of original works, significantly influence readers' understanding and amplify the impact of the reviewed texts.

Book reviews serve as crucial channels for the dissemination and evaluation of both translated and non-translated works in the literary marketplace. The review of translated literature presents unique considerations that distinguish it from traditional literary criticism. The practice of reviewing translated works is often influenced by broader sociopolitical and market forces. However, political considerations can also work against literary merit, as evidenced by cases where highly valuable literary works were deemed unnecessary for translation because they did not meet the political needs of the sponsor.

In cases where books remain untranslated, the selective translation of excerpts within reviews assumes a particularly significant role in shaping reader reception and ideological orientation. This practice represents a top-down ideological

mechanism and propagation, where reviewing institutions and individual reviewers effectively control the dissemination of literary content and its associated cultural-political messages. This function becomes particularly crucial in contexts where access to original works is limited. When books remain untranslated, reviews may incorporate selective translation of passages, creating a form of mediated access that shapes ideological reception without requiring full translation.

Translation studies has devoted little systematic attention to reviews as objects of scholarly inquiry, despite the centrality of book reviews to the circulation and reception of translated works, and the fact that book reviews often exert more immediate influence on reader reception than the translations themselves, as many potential readers encounter reviews before (or instead of) reading the translated works.

Genette's (1987/1997) theory of paratexts provides a foundational framework for understanding reviews' mediating function. Genette distinguishes between "peritexts" (elements within the book itself, such as titles and prefaces) and "epitexts" (elements outside the book, such as interviews and reviews). Book reviews constitute what he terms "public epitexts" (Genette, 1987/1997, p. 344) — texts produced by parties other than the author or publisher that nonetheless shape how readers approach and interpret the work. In the context of translation, reviews perform particularly complex epitextual functions: They mediate not only between author and reader but also between source culture and target culture, between source text and translated text, and between literary value and political utility.

The materiality of translation extends beyond the text itself to encompass various paratextual elements that shape reader reception. As Littau (2016) observes, "media are not merely instruments with which writers or translators produce meanings; rather, they set the framework within which something like meaning

becomes possible at all” (p. 83). This perspective is particularly relevant to understanding how book reviews function as material mediators in the translation process, creating interpretive frameworks that precede and potentially determine textual encounters. Book reviews, as material artifacts circulating through specific publication networks, constitute such meaning-making frameworks. They do not simply evaluate pre-existing translations but actively constitute the conditions under which translations enter public discourse. A review that praises a translation’s accuracy authorizes certain reading practices; a review that emphasizes political relevance over literary fidelity encourages different interpretive priorities.

Recent scholarship has significantly advanced our understanding of translation during the Cultural Cold War in East Asia (Li, 2022; Shan, 2014; Taylor & Xu, 2022; M. H. Wang, 2015, 2016). These studies focus on the translated texts themselves, the translators who produced them, and the institutional networks that commissioned and disseminated them. However, a significant gap remains regarding the role of book reviews in mediating translation’s cultural and political effects. This scholarly gap raises theoretical questions about whether reviews might constitute a distinct mode of cultural transfer with its own strategic logics, operating alongside but differently from complete translation. In some cases, reviews substituted for full translations, offering selective mediation that was actually more effective for propaganda purposes than complete texts. In other cases, reviews preceded translations, creating interpretive frameworks that shaped how subsequent translations would be received. And even when reviews followed translations, they performed crucial work of closing off undesired readings and authorizing politically useful interpretations.

We employ Ardis and Collier’s (2008) concepts of “internal dialogics” and “external dialogics” as key analytical tools. Internal dialogics focuses on “the

relationships among and between specific components of any given issue of the magazine, and the creation of meaning through these juxtapositions” (Ardis & Collier, 2008, p. 38). External dialogics refers to “their discursive exchanges with other print media; the mappings of geographical (and temporal) space that they perform as they claim the territories that they report on, distribute copies to take advertisements from” (Ardis & Collier, 2008, p. 38). These concepts prove particularly useful for researchers of early Hong Kong periodicals to attend more closely to the interplay between translations and non-translations in literary journals (Yuan & Li, 2020, p. 63). In our discussion, the concept of “intertextuality” will also be used to analyze book reviews and other texts that act as traces or memories of preceding texts, or the absorption and transformation of other texts. French semiotician Julia Kristeva argues that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66). Intertextuality is manifested primarily in two forms: intertextuality between the book review and the translation, and intertextuality between different book reviews of the same English original book.

Book Reviews as Cultural Mediation

As USIS’s most widely circulated Chinese-language publication in Asia during the early Cold War period, the magazine *World Today* achieved peak circulation of approximately 175,000 copies per issue, with distribution extending beyond Hong Kong to Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and Chinese communities worldwide. Published continuously from 1949 to 1980, it functioned as USIS’s flagship Chinese-language cultural publication (The Chinese University of Hong Kong Library, 2026a, para. 2). *World Today*, containing substantive book reviews

in its early time, is the primary venue through which USIS introduced American and anti-Communist literature to Chinese audiences. The magazine's distinctive integration of political commentary with cultural content, including translations, literary works, and book reviews, reveals how USIS strategically positioned book reviews within a broader propaganda apparatus. The coherent fusion of political and cultural material demonstrates how book reviews complemented other forms of cultural diplomacy, making *World Today* the ideal site for examining how reviews functioned as sophisticated instruments of Cold War cultural diplomacy.

Book reviews published in *World Today* can be categorized into three distinct types based on their temporal and translational relationship with reviewed works. The first category comprises reviews published after the Chinese translations of the books were released, providing critical assessments of both the original works and their translations. The second category includes reviews published prior to the release of Chinese translations, often serving as preliminary introductions to forthcoming translations. The third category consists of reviews of books that had not been translated into Chinese, where the reviews often contained translated excerpts and interpretative commentary. There are four, three and eight books that were reviewed respectively in each category (See Table 1).

Table 1

Classification of Book Reviews in World Today (1950-1955) Based on Temporal Relationship to Chinese Translation

Types	Book	Chinese translation title	Review title and publication information	Additional review(s) of the same book	Additional contextual information
Book reviews published after translation	<i>One Who Survived</i> (Barmine, 1945)	虎口餘生	再生 (Shui, 1952d) (1952.2.20; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 56)		One Who Survived, <i>The Russian Review</i> (Spring 1946) (Foreign review)
	<i>Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession</i> (Beck & Godin, 1951)	蘇聯大清黨	蘇聯大清黨 (Shao, 1952) (1952.10.15; <i>World Today</i> , Issue 15)		Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession, <i>International Affairs</i> (1952.1) (Foreign review)
	<i>Gone With the Wind</i> (Mitchell, 1936)	飄	飄 (J. Wang, 1952) (1952.10.15; <i>World Today</i> , Issue 15)		「飄」的作者瑪格麗米啟爾側寫 (1950.8.5; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 21) (Introduction of the author)
	<i>The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Rip Van Winkle</i> (Irving, 1820/1855a, 1819/1855b)	無頭騎士：華盛頓·歐文小說選；睡谷故事 李伯大夢	無頭騎士 (Sang, 1955) (1955.1.1; <i>World Today</i> , Issue 68)		
Book reviews published before translation	<i>Why I Escaped</i> (Pirogov, 1950)	出籠之鳥	飛向自由 (“Flying Toward Freedom,” 1950) (1950.7.22; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 20)	逃亡 (Why I Escaped) (Shui, 1952b) (1952.1.19; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 54)	我駕駛米格機逃出鐵幕 (Issue 34-36, 1953) (Translation of a similar book)

(continued)

Table 1

Classification of Book Reviews in World Today (1950-1955) Based on Temporal Relationship to Chinese Translation (continued)

Types	Book	Chinese translation title	Review title and publication information	Additional review(s) of the same book	Additional contextual information
	<i>Lenin: A Biography</i> (Shub, 1948)	列寧傳	列寧傳 (Shui, 1952c) (1952.2.10; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 55)		Lenin: A Biography, <i>The American Historical Review</i> ; Origins and Developments of Communism, <i>The Review of Politics</i> (1949) (Foreign reviews)
	<i>Conquest by Terror: The Story of Satellite Europe</i> (Stowe, 1952)	恐怖征服	恐怖征服 (Shouzhong, 1952) (1952.8.1; <i>World Today</i> , Issue 10)		Conquest by Terror: The Story of Satellite Europe, <i>The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science</i> (1952) (Foreign review); 史達林征服世界陰謀 (Wu, 1952) (1952.8.16; <i>World Today</i> , Issue 11; review of Chinese book 史達林征服世界陰謀的解剖 [1952.7])
Book reviews for books without translation	<i>This I Remember</i> (Roosevelt, 1949)		羅斯福夫人回憶錄 ("Mrs. Roosevelt's Memoir," 1950) (1950.1.21; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 7)		
	<i>The United States in World Affairs</i> , 1948-1949 (Council on Foreign Relations, 1949)		美國外交政策應付共產威脅 ("American Foreign Policy Against the Communist Threat," 1950) (1950.2.4; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 8)		

(continued)

Table 1

Classification of Book Reviews in World Today (1950-1955) Based on Temporal Relationship to Chinese Translation (continued)

Types	Book	Chinese translation title	Review title and publication information	Additional review(s) of the same book	Additional contextual information
	<i>The God That Failed</i> (Crossman, 1949)		辜負人類期望之上帝 ("The God That Failed Human Expectations," 1950) (1950.2.18; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 9)		
	<i>Great Books of the Western World</i> (Hutchins & Adler, 1952)		西方名著選集 ("Great Books of the Western World," 1950) (1950.6.10; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 17)		
	<i>The Roosevelt Treasury</i> (Rosenau, 1951)		羅斯福集錦評傳 ("The Roosevelt Treasury," 1951) (1951.10.3; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 47)		
	<i>A Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles</i> (Mathews, 1951)		五萬個美國字 ("Fifty Thousand American Words," 1951) (1951.12.10; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 51)		
	<i>America</i> (Caldwell, 1944)		美國 (Shui, 1952a) (1952.1.7; <i>America Today</i> , Issue 53)		
	<i>Alexander of Macedon: The Journey to World's End</i> (Lamb, 1946)		亞歷山大傳 (Wensun, 1952) (1952.9.15; <i>World Today</i> , Issue 13)		

Note. This table categorizes 15 books reviewed in *World Today* according to whether reviews appeared after, before, or in the absence of Chinese translation. The classification reveals distinct patterns of cultural mediation corresponding to different translation scenarios.

Book Reviews Published After Chinese Translation

Four book reviews were published shortly after the appearance of their Chinese translations: *One Who Survived* 《虎口餘生》 demonstrates the author's disillusion with the Soviet rule, *Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession* 《蘇聯大清黨》 depicts the Soviet Union's atrocities in its satellite nations, *Gone With the Wind* 《飄》 traces American history during and after the Civil War and to some extent beatifies the lives of slaves in the south, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Rip Van Winkle* 《無頭騎士》 uses a metaphorical analogy between Rip Van Winkle's recovery after 20 years' sleep and Kuomintang's (KMT, 國民黨) retreat and future comeback.²

The first two book reviews covered books that exposed the cruel facts of the Soviet rule. The reviewer largely focused on two perspectives, the wrongdoings of Stalin and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The review of *One Who Survived* first established the author's background as a thoroughgoing revolutionary and Bolshevik believer who held various high positions, yet awakened to the cruel reality after experiencing Stalin's purges and fled the Soviet Union, recording the brutal truths he witnessed. Through presenting the author's journey of ideological transformation and faith collapse, it is implied that communism and Communist Party beliefs, ideals, and systems were unable to receive constant support. The review also exposed the Soviet Union's duplicitous foreign policy and its willingness to create chaos in other nations to achieve its expansionist objectives. The critique then focused on Stalin's personal

² The Kuomintang emerged as a critical geopolitical force after retreating to Taiwan in 1949, transforming the island into a strategic anti-Communist bastion supported extensively by the United States as part of its Cold War containment policy. Hong Kong became a crucial intermediary space where the KMT maintained diplomatic, intelligence, and cultural networks, challenging the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) legitimacy through extensive propaganda efforts and strategic positioning. Throughout the Cold War, the KMT's complex relationships with the US, CCP, and international community fundamentally reshaped Taiwan's political landscape, creating a unique geopolitical entity that stood as a counterpoint to Communist China.

characteristics, highlighting his autocratic and brutal nature:

史達林處死黨政最高當局辛諾維葉夫和卡門涅夫，是緣因兩人認為蘇聯工業的性質，是剝削工人勞力的國家資本主義，不是保障工人利潤的社會主義，而遭史達林的大忌……史達林不容托洛茨基，也不容狄托 [Stalin's execution of high-ranking party and government officials Zinoviev and Kamenev stemmed from their recognition that Soviet industry represented state capitalism exploiting workers' labor rather than socialism protecting workers' interests, which Stalin found intolerable...Stalin tolerates neither Trotsky nor Tito]. (Shui, 1952d, inside back cover)

The passage about Stalin's purges exemplifies how lexical choices construct ideological meaning. Consider the binary opposition between *guojia ziben zhuyi* 國家資本主義 (state capitalism) and *shehui zhuyi* 社會主義 (socialism). This is not merely descriptive economic terminology but a carefully crafted ideological trap. By presenting Soviet industry as “state capitalism exploiting workers' labor” rather than “socialism protecting workers' interests,” the reviewer appropriates Marxist critique with the term “exploitation” and redirects it against the Soviet Union itself, exposing Soviet claims to socialist legitimacy as fraudulent.

The Chinese verb choice *chusi* 處死 (to execute/put to death) rather than the more neutral *chuju* 處決 (to sentence to death by judicial process) or the more condemnatory *shahai* 殺害 (to kill/murder) deserves attention. *Chusi* occupies a middle position on the spectrum of Chinese terms for taking life: more direct and visceral than legalistic *chujue*, yet maintaining some narrative distance compared to emotionally charged *shahai*. This calibrated choice allows the text to convey brutality without appearing propagandistically hysterical. The phrase 遭史達林的大忌 (literally incurring Stalin's great taboo) is equally strategic. In Chinese political and cultural discourse, *daji* 大忌 (great taboo) carries strong associations with autocratic power, imperial caprice, and the prohibition of legitimate dissent. If

the translator had chosen 引起史達林的不滿 (arousing Stalin's displeasure) or 遭到史達林的反對 (encountering Stalin's opposition), the connotation would be far less damning. The term *daji* implicitly analogizes Stalin to tyrannical emperors in Chinese history, making the critique culturally resonant for Chinese readers while amplifying the source text's condemnation.

The book review also mentioned Stalin's personal portrayal in the source text, covering aspects from his physical appearance to his marriages (to several young women) and daily life. While the reviewer claimed to abstain from judging Stalin's personal morality, ostensibly demonstrating objectivity, the inclusion of such details effectively served to denigrate Stalin's character.

The review of *Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession* 《蘇聯大清洗》, published in *World Today* in 1952, exemplifies how Cold War-era Chinese intellectuals interpreted and contextualized translated accounts of Soviet political repression. The reviewer explicitly predicted that the Chinese Communist Party would adopt identical methods, asserting that “this set of terror ruling methods is the fundamental approach used by all communist regimes to maintain their power [這一套恐怖統治方術，正是所有共產政權維持政權的基本方法]” (Shao, 1952, p. 28). The analysis reveals a striking cultural-political framework where the reviewer contrasts Chinese and Russian national characteristics, arguing that what defines “Chinese people as Chinese lies in the concept of ‘benevolence’ [仁]” (Shao, 1952, p. 28) and that historically, “governments that employ secret police tactics and arbitrarily kill innocent people will inevitably fall [行特務政治，亂殺無辜的政府，必亡]” (Shao, 1952, p. 28). This translation and reception of Soviet political texts demonstrates how cross-cultural political discourse functioned during the early Cold War period, with translated materials serving as both warning and analytical framework for understanding contemporary political developments.

In stark contrast to this exposure and criticism of the Soviet Communist Party stands the celebration and recognition of the American struggle and development during the Civil War era, as depicted in the review of *Gone With the Wind*, which appears on the same page of *World Today* as the review of *Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession*. These two reviews exemplify “internal dialogics” through their juxtaposition on the same page, contrasting Soviet critique with American values. Margaret Mitchell’s epic novel *Gone With the Wind* masterfully captures the transformation of Southern society through the eyes of the indomitable Scarlett O’Hara, whose personal journey mirrors the South’s painful transition from the antebellum period through the era of post-war reconstruction. The book review particularly highlights the novel’s complex portrayal of American resilience and transformation during the Civil War era and extends sympathy to Southern plantation owners, depicting their perceived sense of unity and suffering:

宓琪爾生活的空間是美國南方，而活動的時間却是新世紀的現代。由於空間的影響，她對南方地主寄予傳統的同情。由於時間的因素，她肯定了南北戰爭的統一進步意義 [Mitchell lived in the American South, but her era belonged to the modern twentieth century. Due to her geographical context, she held traditional sympathies for Southern plantation owners. Yet because of her temporal perspective, she affirmed the progressive significance of the Civil War in achieving national unity].
(J. Wang, 1952, p. 28)

In the above excerpt, the reviewer describes the conflict using *Nanbei Zhanzheng* 南北戰爭 (North-South War) rather than alternatives like *neizhan* 內戰 (civil war) or *tongyi zhanzheng* 統一戰爭 (war of unification), a choice that emphasizes regional difference over national rupture. When discussing slavery, the review employs relatively neutral terminology—*nuli zhidu* 奴隸制度 (slavery system) —while emphasizing the novel’s portrayal of *nanfang dizhu* 南方地主

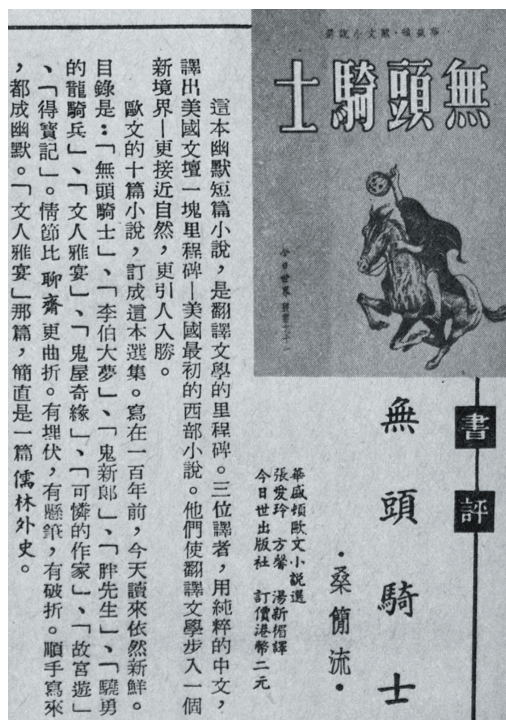
(Southern plantation owners) with language of *chuantong de tongqing* 傳統的同情 (traditional sympathy). This framing softens the moral condemnation of slaveholding that might complicate the review's celebration of American resilience and reconstruction. The translator selectively highlights Mitchell's depiction of post-war challenges—*zhanhou zhongjian* 戰後重建 (postwar reconstruction) —drawing implicit parallels to post-1949 China that authorize narratives of recovery and renewal. By positioning the Civil War as a test of national character that America successfully overcame, the review constructs a template for understanding contemporary geopolitical struggles, suggesting that current divisions might similarly yield to eventual reunification.

Another classical literary work that was reviewed after the publication of its Chinese translation is Washington Irving's novel *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Rip Van Winkle* 《無頭騎士》(Sang, 1955). The reviewer Sang Jianliu 桑簡流 (pseudonym of Shui Jiantong 水建彤), one major contributor of both essays and book reviews in *World Today* (discussed further in section four), notes that “the plot lines are almost satirizing us,” (Sang, 1955, p. 26) indicating that the then situation in the Chinese mainland seems absurd. Specifically, the review mentioned Irving's Rip Van Winkle, who escaped his wife's tyranny through a dream, easily revealing the two-layered critical metaphor of the Communist rule on the Chinese mainland and the British rule in Hong Kong.

Yet beneath this overt political messaging lies a substantial hidden cultural agenda. The review's extensive attention to translation quality reveals what Lefevere (1992) identifies as the “poetics” operating alongside and sometimes independently of patronage requirements. Reviewer Sang Jianliu devotes considerable space to praising the three translators, namely Zhang Ailing 張愛玲, Fang Xin 方馨, and Tang Xinmei 湯新楣, quoting distinctive passages from each to demonstrate their respective stylistic achievements. The review draws analogies

Figure 1

Cover Page Photocopied in the Book Review



Note. From "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Rip Van Winkle," by J. Sang, 1955, *World Today*, 68, p. 26.

between Irving's tales and classical Chinese fiction, situating American literature within Chinese literary traditions rather than treating it as exotic or purely foreign.

Most tellingly, Sang Jianliu recommends the foreword and afterword written by Lin Yiliang 林以亮 (Stephen C. Soong's 宋淇 pseudonym), which address translation theory and practice. This recommendation directs readers' attention beyond the stories' content to the intellectual work of translation itself, which is a distinctly scholarly rather than propagandistic concern. To attract potential readers, the cover page of the translation, depicting vividly the story of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Rip Van Winkle*, is also shown just above the review title (Figure 1). This accompanying reproduction of the book further emphasizes the review's

function as literary promotion rather than mere political commentary.

This layered approach exemplifies how reviewers navigated between USIS patronage and their own cultural objectives. While the political allegory satisfied sponsorship requirements, the substantial discussion of translation aesthetics and literary comparison advanced a separate agenda: establishing standards for evaluating translated literature and building a discourse community around translation criticism in Hong Kong. As Lefevere (1992) argues, such “rewriting” always involves negotiation between patron demands and rewriters’ own understanding of literary value (pp. 14-16) — a negotiation clearly visible in this review’s dual focus on political allegory and literary craftsmanship.

In summary, the analysis of post-translation reviews reveals how *World Today* strategically amplified ideological messaging while maintaining scholarly objectivity. The four works demonstrate a consistent pattern of exposing Communist brutality and advocating democratic values. These reviews functioned beyond literary criticism as vehicles for political interpretation that extended translation’s ideological work to serve USIS propaganda objectives.

Book Reviews Published Before Translation

The second type of book reviews were published before the translations of the books. These pre-reviewed books include *Why I Escaped* 《出籠之鳥》, *Lenin: A Biography* 《列寧傳》, and *Conquest by Terror: The Story of Satellite Europe* 《恐怖征服》. The book *Why I Escaped* was reviewed twice before the publication of the Chinese translation, and these reviews complemented intertextuality with book reviews published in other nations.

The July 22, 1950 issue (No. 12) of *America Today* magazine published a book review titled 飛向自由 (“Flying Toward Freedom”), which reviewed the book *Why I Escaped* written by Russian pilot Peter Pirogov. The review mentions that

the original book was published in New York and serialized as translation in *Hong Kong Times*.³ This approximately 600-word review demonstrates intertextuality in the two quotations from the serialized translation. The opening quotes some lines of the translation:

Though I know not what lies ahead, I have deeply breathed the air of freedom, which I have long yearned for. I no longer fear freedom; I understand it more each day. The more I understand it, the more I cherish it. (“Flying Toward Freedom,” 1950, p. 16)⁴

In the conclusion, it quotes: “I then understood I could no longer live in my birthplace, could not live as a slave among slaves, knowing I was powerless to help myself or others” (“Flying Toward Freedom,” 1950, p. 16).⁵ Excerpts of the serialized translations were quoted to help readers understand and interpret the text, with the aim of recommending both the original and the upcoming translated book.

The review exhibits “external dialogics” by citing book reviews published in other platforms. It quotes the comments from *New York Herald Tribune*:

The book contains no sensational new reports of Soviet crimes or international conspiracies, but rather a personal story describing his hardships and the terror of Soviet secret police, showing how they crush young people with independent minds and complete personalities. (“Flying Toward Freedom,” 1950, p. 16)⁶

³ Although the book is translated serially in *Hong Kong Times*, the translation of the book in the form of a complete book version is published after its review, so this book is categorized in the category “book reviews published before translation.”

⁴ The original text: “我的來日是如何非我所知，我只知道我已深深地呼吸到了自由的空氣，這是我生平久所渴求的。我再也不怕自由了，我一天比一天更懂得它。我愈懂得它，便愈貪戀它” (“Flying Toward Freedom,” 1950, p. 16).

⁵ The original text: “我於是懂得我再也不能在我出生之地生活下去，我不能再像奴隸一樣生活在奴隸中，明知對自己和人家都無能為助” (“Flying Toward Freedom,” 1950, p. 16).

⁶ The original text: “書中並無蘇聯罪行或國際陰謀等聳人聽聞的新報導，而是一個關於他個人的故事，描寫他經歷的艱險和蘇聯秘密員警的恐怖，怎樣摧殘一位具有獨立感和完美人格的年輕人” (“Flying Toward Freedom,” 1950, p. 16).

The Chinese translation of some excerpts of *The New York Times*'s review is also cited: "Pirogov's significance as a witness lies in his belonging to the post-Soviet Revolution generation. ... His book is not a story of disillusionment with radicalism, but rather of a young man's deliberate severance from his country's environment" ("Flying Toward Freedom," 1950, p. 16).⁷ This example demonstrates the dialogic nature between book reviews. The citations from *New York Herald Tribune* and *The New York Times* serve first to enhance the original work's perceived value through authoritative status, and convey the reviewer's perspectives through others' voices. The review writing primarily consists of brief plot synopsis while incorporating multiple quotations from serialized translations and other venues to establish overall dialogics.

America Today published another review of the same work 18 months later titled "Why I escaped" (逃亡) (Shui, 1952b) by Shui Jiantong, serving as prelude to the Chinese translation *The Bird Out of Cage* 《出籠之鳥》, which is published in July in the same year by Hong Kong Educational Supplies Society (translated by Wu Runzhi 伍潤之). The intertextuality between the source text and these titles ("Flying Toward Freedom," "Why I Escaped," and "The Bird Out of Cage") represents the translator's thoughtful reorganization of the source text after the comprehensive understanding of the source text's content, plot, and themes. Furthermore, an article titled 〈我駕駛米格機逃出鐵幕〉 ("I Flew a MiG Out of the Iron Curtain") is serialized in *America Today* (August 1 and September 1, 1953), narrating a similar escape by a Polish pilot. This similar narrative can be considered "internal dialogics" to "Why I Escaped" at a macro level.

The second book review in this category introduces and comments on Lenin's

⁷ The original text: "畢洛戈夫這位證人的所以重要，在他是屬於蘇俄大革命後新生代的人物……他書中所說的並不是一個激進希望幻滅後的故事，而是一位年輕人蓄意和本國環境斷絕關係的故事" ("Flying Toward Freedom," 1950, p. 16).

biography. The review of *Lenin: A Biography* also begins with the reviewer's claim that this book is "a reliable history" (xinshi 信史). The reviewer quoted Lenin's will suggesting Stalin should be removed from Communist Party General Secretary position, while repeatedly emphasizing Lenin's *Xianbei* 鮮卑 bloodline, claiming Lenin combined "Xianbei characteristics of cunning, intelligence, and cruelty [列寧是鮮卑種人，兼有鮮卑人的陰險、聰明和殘忍]" (Shui, 1952c, inside back cover). Since the *Xianbei* was historically part of Chinese civilization, these ethnic characteristics could be interpreted as representing Chinese traits, leading readers to associate Chinese Communist leadership with similar traits.

If the reviewer's critique of CCP in the review of *Lenin* is to some extent covert, the reviewer's critique of CCP in the review of *Conquest by Terror* is candid and straightforward. The observation of Leland Stowe, who spent considerable time as a war correspondent in Iron Curtain countries during World War II, is documented in *Conquest by Terror*, and summarized in the book review with the same title "Conquest by Terror" 〈恐怖征服〉 (Shouzhong, 1952, p. 31). The book review enumerates the actual conditions in Soviet-controlled Eastern European satellite states and suggests parallel circumstances in Communist China, arguing that the CCP replicated Soviet methods, including organizing puppet armies, controlling satellite economies, and liquidating upper and petty bourgeois classes. The review concludes by lamenting the suffering of Eastern European satellite states' populations under red regime control, urging those in the free world to empathize and suggesting similar conditions for people living in China.

Book Reviews for Untranslated Books

In our study, eight reviews are found reviewing books that up till now were not translated into Chinese:⁸ *This I Remember* (published 1949), *The United States*

⁸ Based on our research, no record of Chinese translations of these books has been found.

in World Affairs, 1948-1949 (published 1949), *The God That Failed* (published 1949), *Great Books of the Western World* (published 1952), *The Roosevelt Treasury* (published 1950), *Dictionary of Americanisms* (published 1951), *America* (published 1944) and *Alexander of Macedon* (published 1946).

These reviews functioned as sophisticated propaganda tools, employing selective translation within commentary. The reviews of these books were either directly or indirectly ideologically oriented, stressing either the embellishment of the image of America, the propaganda of American freedom, or the promotion of anti-Communist awareness. Selective translation within reviews represents complex intertextuality—absorbing English originals while transforming them through Chinese framing, creating a hybrid form serving propaganda objectives. This category can be further subdivided into three distinct types based on their thematic focus and propaganda objectives.

The first subcategory encompasses works portraying American national identity and foreign policy, including *America* 《美國》,⁹ *The Roosevelt Treasury* 《羅斯福集錦評傳》, *This I Remember* 《羅斯福夫人回憶錄》, and *The United States in World Affairs, 1948-1949* 《美國外交政策應付共產威脅》. These reviews constructed an idealized vision of American democracy, freedom, and moral leadership while presenting American perspectives on international relations during the early Cold War. These works collectively served to establish American political and cultural models as aspirational alternatives to communist systems.

Specifically, the beautification of the image of America is reinforced foremost in the review of *America*. Beginning by stressing the objectiveness of the book in describing the real situation of America, the review proceeds to describe America's establishment from wilderness, considering it:

⁹ Here the Chinese titles in the parentheses are the corresponding titles of book reviews published in *World (America) Today*.

most suitable for the germination of freedom seeds,” and praises how this new nation-state transformed “old forces into new spirit, poverty into prosperity, hardship into blessing, monarchy into democracy, enslavement into equality, decay into wonder [最適於自由種子的萌芽。這是歷史上許多老民族溶合成一個新民族，舊勢力蛻變成新精神，使貧困化為富足，艱苦化成享福，化君主為民主，化奴役為平等，化腐朽為神奇的空前無比例子]. (Shui, 1952a, inside back cover)

The review concludes with the promotion of America as a truly democratic country while indicating that wrong politics (implicitly the Chinese Communist government) cannot endure. In addition, the contrast between CCP rule and American freedom is particularly highlighted in reviews of *America*, sometimes drawing ill-suited analogies between the American colonies and Britain.

The second subcategory encompasses classical literary texts, educational texts, and historical texts, including *Great Books of the Western World* 《西方名著選集》, *Dictionary of Americanisms* 《五萬個美國字》, and *Alexander of Macedon* 《亞歷山大傳》. While ostensibly educational or historical in nature, reviewers frequently recontextualized these works through political lenses. *Alexander of Macedon*, for instance, was transformed into a political allegory for anti-communist resistance, with reviewers drawing explicit parallels between Alexander’s conquests and contemporary geopolitical aspirations. Educational materials like the *Dictionary of Americanisms* were presented as embodiments of Western cultural and intellectual traditions, implicitly contrasted with communist educational approaches.

In the review of Lamb’s *Alexander of Macedon*, the propaganda of anti-CCP awareness is enhanced by analogies between young Alexander’s conquests and anti-Communist forces. The reviewer wrote:

Using the power of a small island to sweep across a continent seems theoretically impossible, yet young Alexander achieved it [以一個小島的力量，席捲一個大陸，理論上不可能，而少年亞歷山大竟然做得到]. (Wensun, 1952, p. 31)

The terms “small island” and “continent” clearly corresponded to Taiwan and the Chinese mainland, aligning with Taiwan’s “counter-attack mainland” political stance. The review reinforces this connection through vivid imagery:

marathon swimming across the strait...create a path across the strait, like Moses leading the Israelites to climb onto the ancestral mainland and return home [馬拉松渡海泳……在海峽劃出一道通路，像摩西帶領以色列人，攀登祖國大陸，回到家園]. (Wensun, 1952, p. 31)

This review demonstrates internal dialogics by juxtaposing historical biography with contemporary political discourse, transforming Alexander’s conquests into allegory for Taiwan’s aspirations. The “strait” clearly indicates the Taiwan Strait, while the biblical Moses metaphor suggests that mainland refugees were like persecuted Israelites who should be led back to their promised land. This use of biblical allegory cloaked political intentions in righteousness and reflects the American religious consciousness characteristic of USIS-produced articles. The intertextual network is thus enriched as part of the “external dialogics,” operating through participation in broader KMT-American Cold War narratives.

The third subcategory features works directly critiquing communist ideology based on personal experience, represented by *The God That Failed* 《辜負人類期望之上帝》. The review of *The God That Failed* (“The God That Failed Human Expectations,” 1950) represents a particularly significant example of how book reviews functioned as ideological instruments during this period. The reviewer strategically emphasized the authenticity and intellectual credibility of these accounts, noting that these were not criticisms from lifelong opponents of

communism but rather the disillusioned reflections of former true believers. This framing was particularly powerful in the Hong Kong context, where many refugees from the Chinese mainland were processing their own relationships with communist ideology. The review's Chinese title itself, "The God That Failed Human Expectations," went beyond the original English title to explicitly emphasize the theme of disillusionment and betrayal.

Particularly effective was the review's emphasis on the contributors' criticisms of communist rule after their firsthand experiences in the Soviet Union. Quoting the comment of *The Washington Star* 《華盛頓明星報》, the reviewer comments on the rule of Soviet Union and other nations as "an autocratic dictatorial state [蘇聯原來是一個專制獨裁之國家]" ("The God That Failed Human Expectations," 1950, p. 21). Several factors might account for the untranslated status of these ideologically significant works. Political sensitivity in the colonial context represented a primary consideration for non-translation. Works like *America and Great Books of the Western World* extensively discussed American democratic revolution and self-determination, potentially triggering scrutiny from Hong Kong censors concerned about colonial parallels. These democratic ideals, essential to American identity, could potentially undermine British colonial authority if presented in unmediated form, whereas reviews allowed carefully framed presentation without risking unwanted analogies to Hong Kong's colonial situation.

Strategic information control constituted another reason for utilizing reviews rather than translations. *The God That Failed* offered powerful anti-communist testimonies from former believers, but full translation might have revealed their critiques of Western systems as well. *Alexander of Macedon* could be framed through review to emphasize leadership and Western historical greatness without potential complications from full translation. Through reviews, complex narratives containing both useful anti-communist elements and potentially problematic content could be carefully filtered.

Resource allocation and practical constraints also influenced translation decisions. Substantial reference works like *The Roosevelt Treasury and Dictionary of Americanisms* would have required significant translation effort while offering propaganda returns similar to more concise reviews. The book review format thus provided an efficient intermediate approach, more targeted than general political essays but requiring fewer resources than complete translations, maximizing the impact of limited resources in Cold War Hong Kong.

Book Reviews and Reviewers

Several key figures served as significant contributors for the publication of the USIS-funded Cold War cultural front *World Today*. These include Stephen C. Soong, Shui Jiantong and so forth. Through archival fragments and textual analysis, this study reconstructs their contributions as book reviewers, editors, and ideological intermediaries.

Table 2

Reviewers and Their Contributions to World Today (1950-1955)

Reviewer	Book title and original publication date	Review title	Publication and date
Sang Jianliu 桑簡流 (Shui Jiantong 水建彤)	<i>America</i> (1944)	美國 (America)	<i>America Today</i> 53, 1952.1.7
	<i>Why I Escaped</i> (1950.11)	逃亡 (Why I Escaped)	<i>America Today</i> 54, 1952.1.19
	<i>Lenin: A Biography</i> (1948)	列寧傳 (Lenin)	<i>America Today</i> 55, 1952.2.10
	<i>One Who Survived</i> (1945)	再生 (One Who Survived)	<i>America Today</i> 56, 1952.2.20
	<i>The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Rip Van Winkle</i> (Irving, 1820/1855a, 1819/1855b)	無頭騎士 (The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Rip Van Winkle)	<i>World Today</i> 68, 1955.1.1

(continued)

Table 2*Reviewers and Their Contributions to World Today (1950-1955) (continued)*

Reviewer	Book title and original publication date	Review title	Publication and date
Shouzhong 守中	<i>Conquest by Terror: The Story of Satellite Europe</i> (1952)	恐怖征服 (Conquest by Terror)	<i>World Today</i> 10, 1952.8.1
Tang Wenbing 唐文冰 (宋淇)	到新文藝之路 (<i>Path to New Literature</i>) (in Chinese; 1952.6)	到新文藝之路 (Path to New Literature) (Tang, 1952c)	<i>World Today</i> 12, 1952.9.1
Hantang 漢堂	莊子纂箋 (<i>Zhuangzi Selected Notes</i>) (in Chinese; 1951.12)	莊子纂箋 (<i>Zhuangzi Selected Notes</i>) (Hantang, 1952)	<i>World Today</i> 13, 1952.9.15
Wensun 文蓀	<i>Alexander of Macedon</i> (1946)	亞歷山大傳 (Alexander of Macedon)	<i>World Today</i> 13, 1952.9.15
Shao Yuanmei 邵元美	<i>Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession</i> (1951)	蘇聯大清黨 (Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession)	<i>World Today</i> 15, 1952.10.15
Wang Jicong 王集叢	<i>Gone With the Wind</i> (1936.6.3)	飄 (Gone With the Wind)	<i>World Today</i> 15, 1952.10.15
Chen Weiyuan 陳威遠	談民主生活方式 (<i>On Democratic Lifestyle</i>) (in Chinese; 1951)	談民主生活方式 (On Democratic Lifestyle) (Chen, 1952)	<i>World Today</i> 15, 1952.10.15
Mingzhi 明之	金匱論古初集 (<i>First Collection of Ancient Discussions on the Golden Casket</i>) (in Chinese; 1952)	金匱論古初集 (First Collection of Ancient Discussions on the Golden Casket) (Mingzhi, 1952)	<i>World Today</i> 18, 1952.12.1

Note. 1. This table presents reviewers who published under identified names in *World Today* (*America Today*) between 1950-1955. Where a reviewer used more than one name, the pseudonym is given first and the person's real name follows in parentheses (Sang Jianliu 桑簡流 = Shui Jiantong 水建彤; Tang Wenbing 唐文冰 = Stephen C. Soong 宋淇); Shui signed the four 1952 reviews with his real name and the 1955 review with the pseudonym. The table excludes anonymous reviews.

2. The reviewer of *Gone With the Wind* is 王集叢 (Wang Jicong). Wang Jicong, a prominent Kuomintang cultural figure who served as editor at KMT Central Party headquarters and chief editor of *Saodang Bao* 《掃蕩報》, would represent potential KMT-USIS institutional connections. This reviewer's participation suggests that USIS drew upon KMT-affiliated intellectuals as part of broader anti-Communist coalition-building, revealing its entanglement with Chinese Nationalist networks in operating its propaganda projects.

As shown in Table 2, reviewers for *World Today* can be largely divided into two categories: Core contributors such as Sang Jianliu (Shui Jiantong) and Tang Wenbing (Stephen C. Soong), who published multiple reviews or articles, and maintained long-term, stable relationships with the magazine, functioning as core members of USIS's Hong Kong cultural network; and non-regular participants including Shouzhong, Shao Yuanmei, Wensun, Hantang, Chen Weiyuan, Wang Jicong and Mingzhi, who contributed only one or two reviews, either based on specialized expertise in specific fields or through occasional invitations via personal connections, maintaining varying degrees of distance from USIS. These two types of reviewers differed in their ideological consistency and writing styles, with core contributors demonstrating more consistent anti-Communist political frameworks while non-regular participants produced more varied reviews. Our discussion focuses primarily on book reviews that served as instruments of cultural diplomacy and ideological warfare.

Specifically, among the nine reviewers spanning from 1950 to 1955, Sang Jianliu 桑簡流 is the most frequent book reviewer, reviewing at least five books. Sang Jianliu, originally named Shui Jiantong, studied at St. John's University in Shanghai in the 1940s, majoring in history and international law, where he became acquainted with senior figures such as Xu Xu 徐訏, and Stephen C. Soong, among others. Beginning in the 1950s, Sang Jianliu made a temporary stay in Hong Kong, occasionally contributing to literary magazines such as *World Today*, *Everyman's Literature* 《人人文學》 and *Hot Wind* 《熱風》 (The Chinese University of Hong Kong Library, 2026b, para. 1). In our study, it is found that Sang Jianliu writes both

essays and book reviews for *World Today*.

Stephen C. Soong (his pseudonyms include Lin Yiliang 林以亮, Yu Huai 余懷, Tang Wenbing 唐文冰, etc.)¹⁰ was a distinguished literary critic, translator, “redologist,” poet and editor. After relocating from the Chinese mainland to Hong Kong in 1949, Soong devoted himself to literature, translation and cross-cultural exchanges. He played a pivotal role in coordinating the American book translations program funded by USIS and co-founded the influential translation journal *Renditions*. Furthermore, Soong established the Hong Kong Translation Society, later serving as its President. Stephen C. Soong is one of the central architects of *World Today*. Working as chief editor for translation works at the Hong Kong office of the United States Information Service (1951-1952) (Li & Liu, 2021, p. 45), he curated a hybrid content strategy blending anti-communist propaganda with high-cultural discourse. Soong’s dual role as an editor and literary broker is evident in his commissioning of prominent writers. Meanwhile, Soong enjoyed considerable editorial autonomy within the USIS framework. While operating under American patronage, he exercised significant freedom in selecting materials, determining editorial standards, and shaping the magazine’s literary character. This autonomy allowed Soong to pursue his literary aesthetics alongside propaganda objectives (Li & Liu, 2021, p. 45).

The concentration of reviewing activity among a small core of contributors reflected intersecting structural constraints, ideological imperatives, and individual motivations within USIS’s Hong Kong operation. Professional scarcity constituted the primary limitation. Book reviewing demanded rare competencies that few possessed simultaneously. While early 1950s Hong Kong hosted substantial

¹⁰ Pseudonyms were strategically employed, not only for political safety but also to compartmentalize contributors’ roles across genres. The pseudonymous practice allowed contributors to maintain apparent critical distance from each other’s work while reinforcing shared anti-communist narratives.

mainland refugee populations, those willing and able to work for USIS remained limited. Many left-leaning intellectuals rejected collaboration on ideological grounds, while conservative scholars worried that overt American association might compromise their standing in Hong Kong's politically delicate colonial environment. Once individuals demonstrated necessary capabilities through successful contributions, editorial logic naturally favored repeated engagement rather than recruiting untested contributors.

Economic incentives and professional reputation-building reinforced participation patterns. For intellectuals in precarious exile lacking stable institutional affiliations, writing for *World Today* provided reliable income streams. The magazine's regular schedule and USIS's consistent funding offered recurring income that few other Chinese-language platforms could match. Simultaneously, repeated publication enhanced professional reputations as cultural critics, accumulating symbolic capital valuable for career development. This convergence of immediate economic necessity and longer-term professional ambition created powerful motivations for sustained engagement. Contributors were not merely fulfilling commissioned work but building professional identities through accumulated publications.

Understanding these structural and motivational factors provides essential context for examining how individual reviewers approached their work, as revealed through their own articulated views on translation and cultural mediation. The viewpoints of the above two reviewers towards translation, discussed independently (with the authors' original name [水建彤] and pseudonym [唐文冰] respectively) in three articles in the magazine in 1952, may offer insights into the interpretation of these book reviews. Shui Jiantong employs strategic interpretation techniques that transform texts into cultural and ideological vehicles.

His reviews demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of “external dialogics” between translated works and other cultural materials, creating meaning through contextual juxtapositions rather than isolated textual analysis. Writing under his own name Shui Jiantong 水建彤, his selective reviews of works like *Lenin: A Biography*, *One Who Survived* and so forth reveal his approach to translation as ideological recontextualization, the process through which reviews selectively represent, interpret, and reframe source texts to align them with specific political agendas. He signed all four of his 1952 book reviews with this name; the pseudonym Sang Jianliu 桑簡流 appears on his 1955 review of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Rip Van Winkle*. Tang Wenbing’s (Stephen C. Soong) translation philosophy emphasizes cultural transfer beyond mere linguistic conversion. In his seminal work “On the Difficulty of Translation” 〈論翻譯之難〉, Tang articulates that “beyond understanding the literal meaning, we must also comprehend the cultural background and spirit behind the language” (Tang, 1952a, p. 18).¹¹ More significantly, as editorial architect of *World Today*, Tang arranged translations and reviews to function as cultural diplomacy instruments, viewing translation as:

the most effective tool for breaking through both ideological and physical iron curtains or bamboo curtains [它是打破思想上以及實質上的鐵幕或竹幕最有效的工具]. (Tang, 1952b, p. 23)

His reviews of ostensibly non-political texts like *Path to New Literature* also demonstrate his belief that translation should reveal hidden meanings relevant to contemporary contexts.

Apart from book reviews of translations, five book reviews reviewed books written in Chinese in *World Today* in this time period, and it is found in our study that two among the five works were reviewed with far-fetched connections to

¹¹ Source text: “我們在了解字面的意義之外，還得懂語言背後的文化背景和精神” (Tang, 1952a, p. 18).

politics, revealing the reviewer's political standpoint.

Concluding Remarks

This article investigates the various book reviews in the periodicals funded by the USIS in Hong Kong at the beginning years of the Cultural Cold War. Against the background of Cold War, the book reviews in USIS-commissioned periodicals serve to discredit the Soviet Communist Party and to portray the US as a beautiful paradise. This study demonstrates how book reviews in *World Today* functioned as sophisticated instruments of cultural diplomacy through their relationship with translation practices.

The various book reviews show a remarkable level of consistency in terms of selection, presentation, and manipulation that served clear ideological objectives while maintaining the seemingly professional standards of literary criticism and translation. The practice effectively created a hybrid form of cultural mediation, positioned between traditional book reviewing and selective translation. This pattern of partial translation through book reviews demonstrates how book reviews could function as sites of ideological mediation, where the act of selecting and translating specific passages served broader political objectives, forming complex dynamics within the same issue, between different issues of the same magazine and even across diverse magazines and other media platforms. This suggests that the relationship between translation and ideology operates not only through direct textual manipulation but through a complex network of paratextual elements, institutional constraints, and professional practices.

These insights remain relevant to contemporary translation studies, particularly in understanding how translation practices operate within political contexts. While the material conditions of cultural transmission have transformed

dramatically since the 1950s, the fundamental mechanisms revealed by our analysis of *World Today*'s book reviews remain strikingly relevant to understanding contemporary cultural diplomacy and information warfare. The core practice we have documented has not disappeared but rather proliferated and intensified in today's digital media environment. Like the USIS reviewers who emphasized certain aspects while downplaying others, contemporary content creators curate knowledge for audiences who may never read the full texts.

For translation practice and ethics, our historical analysis also offers cautionary insights. On the one hand, it reminds practitioners that translation never occurs in an ideological vacuum. Even seemingly neutral decisions about what to translate, how to frame translations, and which passages to emphasize carry political freight. Translators and reviewers should cultivate critical reflexivity about their own positioning within structures of power and patronage. On the other hand, it suggests the need for greater transparency about the conditions of cultural production. Just as contemporary audiences deserve to know when content is sponsored or algorithmically promoted, readers of translation deserve information about who commissioned translations, under what institutional auspices, and with what intended purposes.

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