

Communications to the Editor

ARTHUR J. DOMMEN responds to GEORGE DUTTON's review of *The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans: Nationalism and Communism in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam*, *JAS* 62(2):701–3.

I am most grateful for the review of my book by George Dutton. Two criticisms made by Dutton, however, are without foundation and would have been avoided by a more attentive reading of my book.

First, Dutton taxes me with a failure to define the terms “nationalists” and “communists,” as if a history with the subtitle “Nationalism and Communism in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam” could somehow omit defining these terms. Dutton also raises a problem of “overlap” (p. 701), which I am said not to acknowledge. In fact, in my discussion of the origins of nationalist movements in Indochina, under the subheading “Revolutionary Organizations,” I write:

The Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth Association was intended to be a nursery for the training and education of committed Marxist-Leninists, but it was also to serve for propaganda and mass mobilization purposes. Its stated objectives were impeccably revolutionary and nationalist: the overthrow of the French and the restoration of independence through the organization of an anti-imperialist front of all progressive factions in Vietnam.

... Thus, while the programs announced by Quoc's [Ho Chi Minh's] front organizations throughout his long career often sounded like those of other nationalist organizations, the big and lasting difference that separated them was that Quoc's final objective was the imposition of a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship.

(pp. 40–41)

The political elites who constituted the leaderships of the Vietnamese Communist Party, the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party, the Communist Party of Kampuchea, and the Lao People's Revolutionary Party understood this principle perfectly, as I have sought to point out throughout my book.

Second, Dutton sees my Indochinese subjects as “conceptually problematic figures” (p. 701) because the cable traffic of American embassies that I use as sources commented only on political elites. In this, Dutton is wrong. The embassy officers paid extensive attention in their reporting to the social, economic, and cultural conditions of the countries in which they served. I would devoutly have wished to include more of this information, but in a political and diplomatic history of this scope, it was just not possible, and, as a result, for instance, my treatment of the role of Buddhism in Vietnam was constrained largely to my narration of the 1963 crisis and the post-1975 efforts of the Communist leadership to repress the nongovernmental Buddhist organizations. Dutton could have been disabused of his notion, however, had he paid attention to my citations of reports of public opinion, indexed on p. 1163 of my book.

KEVIN O'ROURKE responds to PETER H. LEE's review of *The Book of Korean Shijo*, *JAS* 62(1):302–4.

There are a number of serious problems with Peter Lee's review of *The Book of Korean Shijo* in terms of his understanding of the book, his familiarity with the related criticism, and his ability to appreciate beauty in English poetry. The old *shijo* vehicle of the first generation of modern Korean scholars is no longer roadworthy. Kwon Tuhwan, Cho Kyuik, Ch'oe Tongwon, and Kim Taehaeng, among others, have revolutionized the field. Their work opens the doors to a new prosody—one that is truly Korean, not just an imported prosody practice—and it offers a vision of *shijo* that can throw off the shackles of old restrictive formulations. Translations of *shijo* into various line formats (three, four, five, six, seven, and more), and indeed into a prose format, are now possible. The translator uses the traditional three *chang* approach, but he presents it in a five-line format, amply supported by the criteria of the *kagok-ch'ang*, which has five sung parts and two musical interludes. The debate over five-line *shijo* versus the three-line *shijo* is not the core issue. The *umbo* (breath unit), not the line, is the central unit in *shijo* prosody. The introduction presents the state of *shijo* criticism today; it does not draw conclusions. The reviewer misunderstands the basic import of the introduction, draws his own conclusions, and then says they are the translator's conclusions. A balanced review would examine the book within the context of contemporary *shijo* criticism, but the only bow that the reviewer makes to contemporary criticism is to dismiss Professor Cho Kyuik's meticulous research as "bravado" (p. 303). Instead of discussing contemporary criticism, the reviewer discusses contemporary *kagok* practice, which is irrelevant, and he quotes Yi Pyonggi, a scholar of the old school, dead now for thirty-five years, as an authority on the number of lines in *shijo*, as if this were somehow relevant. He jumps from one unrelated criticism to the next, without ever presenting a coherent argument. He even says that the translations are meant for the eye rather than the ear, which is an extraordinary statement. The iambic music of the line is integral. The five-line format, of course, provides a new and pleasing visual aspect to a poetry form unknown in English, and this is also important. But English poetry that ignores the ear? One would not wish to be accused of that kind of heresy!

The poems and notes to the poems are the major part of the volume. The reviewer reads six-hundred-plus poems and does not find a single line of poetry. He finds instead romanization errors: Cho instead of Chu, Sukjong instead of Sukchong, Sun instead of Shun (p. 303). Guilty as charged! He says that the translator does not know what Taishan is, what Wuling is, or what *mushim* means (p. 303). Simply not true! He says that there are misreadings "ranging from single words and technical terms to whole phrases and lines" (p. 303). What translator can survive a critique that says "abstracted" is a mistranslation of *mushim* (p. 303), when "abstracted" clearly has the meaning of "withdrawing from the world." The line reads:

And when the moon
shines white on the water, I'm even more abstracted.

(43)

The translation highlights the interplay of "moon," "shines," "white," and "abstracted" (in the sense of innerness), with all of the symbolic allusiveness of these images, and features a final line that begins and ends with verb forms, all deliberate word choices in the making of a finely balanced poem. *Sunhu*, he says, means "pure and honest." Any dictionary will tell him that it also means "warm hearted." The translator must be allowed to dig into the wordhoard, to use the resources of the

language to craft credible poems. A translation theory is barren if it insists on word-for-word correspondence at the expense of the symbolic, allusive, and rhythmic elements of poetry discourse. With the reviewer's methodology, I can bore holes in his own work or in that of any other translator. For example, there is a phrase in poem 2 of the spring section of *The Fisherman's Calendar* which I translate as "Fish jump in the water." The reviewer translates it in his *Columbia Anthology of Traditional Korean Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) as "Fishes float in the blue" (p.117.2). Floating fish are dead fish! But perhaps he means flying fish!

In the case of the Fu Xi poem (2), it would appear that I have misconstrued the text. The error occurred because subjects in the Korean text are not specified. I wanted to give the poem focus, so I built it around Fu Xi. Expert opinion at the time concurred, and I thought it made for so much a better poem. The linguistic experts now tell me that my interpretation is tenable but unlikely. As to the Yi Cho'nyon poem (6), my sources do not mention the plum-branch story. Interestingly, the reviewer provides no gloss to his own translation (Lee 2002, p. 72). In fact, he does not even list Yi Cho'nyon in his index of authors.

The reviewer's criticism of the translation of the refrains in *The Fisherman's Calendar* is fussily fastidious. I have seen so many variant explanations of these refrains that I cannot remember them all, everything from nonsense rhymes, to the sound of the anchor chain, to the pull of the oars, to a chant to the rhythm of the oars. Perhaps the unkindest cut of all is the assertion that pondweed and redshank (p. 303) are incorrect designations. My dictionary lists water chestnut and pondweed as similar. In poem 240, my ear for the English line suggests pondweed rather than water chestnut. Chong Pyong'uk (*Shijo sajon*) says that the other flower in poem 250 is *pulgun yokkui*, which translates as "redshank" in my dictionary. If the reviewer wants to say that they are white clover ferns and pink knotweed, I will not raise any objections. He might note, however, that "the twist" in poem 250 has only two syllables, hence the predilection for redshank.

The reviewer has the right to point out errors, especially if they are substantive, but cataloguing minor mistakes and so-called misreadings, while ignoring both the poetry and the criticism, is nitpicking, not scholarship. *Shijo* reviewing went this route twenty years ago, to the embarrassment of all involved. A balanced review should address the poetry issues. What is the current state of *shijo* criticism in Korea; are these translations good poems; do they sing with the authentic voice of old Korea; how do they rate in *shijo* translation literature? The reviewer addresses none of these issues.

Poetry, of course, is all about language, and the language of academe, unfortunately, is not the language of poetry. The giveaway occurs when the reviewer says that Yujöm-sa Temple is a pleonasm—what an ugly word!—and goes on to suggest that the proper rendering would be Yüjom Monastery. The temples of Korea have been called Haeinsa Temple, Pulguksa Temple, Yujömsa Temple, and so on for more years than I care to recall. Most native English speakers do not have the word pleonasm in their vocabulary, but they would not dream of calling a Korean temple a monastery. Add to this the reviewer's hilarious declaration that Sejo killed Kim Chongso with an iron hammer (p. 304)! Where I come from, a hammer is a hammer. The wooden variety is called a mallet. Clubs are a different matter; they can be made from various materials. Hammer, mallet, club, whatever the weapon, I must admit that I loved the idea of Sejo rushing to the palace carpentry shop to collect a hammer before heading off to perpetrate the murder. There is the makings of a poem.

I am a senior member of the Korean translation community. I have lived in Seoul for forty years. I have published in reputable houses in Korea, Ireland, the U.K., and the U.S. The Poetry Society in London has recommended my translations; *World Poetry: An Anthology of Verse from Antiquity to Our Time* (Katharine Washburn, John S. Major, and Clifton Fadiman, eds. [New York: W. W. Norton, 1997]) contains a substantial segment of my work. Half of the *sasol shijo* section, a significant part of the anonymous shijo section, and several regular shijo in Lee's *Columbia Anthology* are my work. Criticism is a part of life; one must learn to deal with it. This review, however, is unacceptable. It distorts the book's introduction, and it ignores poetry values. A few words in the final paragraph about the translator's "sympathetic sensibility" do not balance the scales. More stitching and unstitching lie behind the "straightforward and unpretentious diction" (p. 304) of these poems than the reviewer acknowledges. Reviews like this do a great disservice to Korean poetry in English.

PETER H. LEE responds to KEVIN O'ROURKE

I regret that Kevin O'Rourke seems to have taken offense at my review. It was not my intention to belittle him or his work. I simply believed that there are a number of issues of translation which I felt should be brought to the reader's attention. There can be honest differences of opinion as to how to translate terms and phrases. Translation is a contested field of interpretation, its controversial nature intensified by the fact that there is no perfect equivalence between words belonging to two distinct linguistic communities. I feel it my duty as a reviewer and teacher of Korean literature to point out what I think might be problems, so that readers and students will be aware of the different perspectives involved.

MIMI HERBERT responds to MATTHEW ISAAC COHEN's reply to her response to his review, *JAS* 62(2):553.

I do not want to prolong unnecessarily the debate with Mr. Cohen over the significance and legitimacy of the insights into the *wayang golek* theater of Indonesia provided through *Voices of the Puppet Masters*, but I do think that it is important to get the facts right.

In the exchange between Cohen and me in the May 2003 issue of *JAS* following his review of *Voices* in the November 2002 issue, he makes statements which simply are wrong. He also does a disservice to Indonesian artists and scholars by insinuation.

Mr. Cohen seems to believe that the interviews with the puppet masters were conducted with "assistants, collaborators, interpreters, or translators." In fact, I conducted all of the interviews—alone or with Nur Rahardjo. He also implies that *dalang* Tizar Purbaya is merely a puppet merchant, not an active puppet master, and that Tizar's recent performance activity has been limited to "demonstrations arranged by Herbert in connection with her book tour." He seems lamentably unaware of Tizar's very active performance activity in Indonesia, Japan, and Cambodia and of his recent creation of a new genre of *wayang golek* theater, *wayang Betawi*, to honor and help preserve the culture of the *Betawi* of Jakarta. Pak Tizar employs artisans to carve puppets for sale to help them preserve their craft and to support his many creative activities. As in the West, not all artists are born rich. In June 2001, Soemadi Brotodiningrat, ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, and USINDO (the United States Indonesia Society) invited Pak Tizar to perform at a reception for the launching of *Voices* at the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D.C. Tizar's accompanying me on a book tour is a figment of Cohen's imagination. Perhaps the good professor can arrange such a tour.

Cohen condescendingly refers to Saini Kosim's English as "charming." Saini is one of Indonesia's most respected poets and playwrights and a scholar of *wayang golek*. As I presume Cohen knows, he was the director of the Academy for the Performing Arts in Bandung (1988–94) and from 1995 to 1999 was director of the Directorate of Culture in the Ministry of Education and Culture. We spent many hours together discussing wayang golek, and he was one of the readers of the manuscript for *Voices*.

After reading the manuscript for the first time, Bpk. Saini issued the following prescient warning: "Mimi, this book is open—like poetry. Be sure to keep it that way. Some academic will try to make a dissertation out of it. Don't let them!"