

REWRITING AS RECEPTION: GARY SNYDER'S REPRESENTATION OF CHUANG TZU IN HIS ECO-POETIC LITERATURE

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Abstract: Authored by the Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi, *Chuang Tzu* is a culturally significant Taoist canon, aside from *Tao Te Ching*. Due to its essential role in the development of Chinese philosophy and literature, *Chuang Tzu* has drawn the attention of sinologists worldwide to introduce this oriental masterpiece to their cultures and influenced the local literati. Burton Watson's high-quality rendition *The Complete Work of Chuang Tzu* (1968) has been well-received by the renowned American poet Gary Snyder, who, based on Watson's translation, rewrote *Chuang Tzu* in his eco-poetic literature to show his agreement with Zhuangzi's philosophies. Most of scholars studying Snyder, however, seem to ignore his reception of *Chuang Tzu* and are more inclined to credit *Tao Te Ching* alone for his familiarity with Taoism. Thus, this study explores Snyder's understanding of *Chuang Tzu*. Borrowing André Lefevere's concept of rewriting and seeing it as a method of reception, this article conducts a comparative analysis between Snyder's compositions and (Watson's translation of) *Chuang Tzu* and investigates how Zhuangzi's philosophies were rewritten and interpreted in Snyder's context. It is found that Snyder rewrote *Chuang Tzu* mainly through commentary and imitation, and that some ideas were embraced directly while others were redefined and repositioned.

Keywords: Gary Snyder, *Chuang Tzu*, eco-poetic literature, rewriting, reception

1. Introduction

Gary Snyder (1930-) is a known as American essayist, lecturer and environmental activist, but he is best-known as the "poet laureate of deep ecology" and is considered the "only surviving voice of the Beat today" (Chen 2009: 101). His poems focus on the ecosystem and all its contents, namely humans and living beings. His eco-poetics believes that literary creations are forms of life and living practices, and that the task of literature is to call on each individual to build a sense of responsibility for their places of living and to love the earth. Although he is an accomplished American poet, he would not have been as successful without his exposure to the Chinese culture. In his twenties, Snyder studied Chinese language at the University of California, Berkeley;

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later, he read on his own many translated texts of Chinese Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, including *Tao Te Ching* (道德经, *Chuang Tzu* (庄子), *The Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra* (六祖坛经), and *The Analects of Confucius* (论语), all of which, more or less, exerted an influence on his understanding of ecology and contributed to his own compositions. For example, Ou (1994: 33) finds that Snyder has borrowed at least 51 lines straight from these Chinese writings and used them in his poems or essays. Among the Chinese ideologies he absorbed, Taoism seems to be the most far-reaching for him. According to McLeod (1990), Snyder has a Taoist mysticism, a humorous sense of spontaneity, a lack of restraint in his dress, and a principle of inaction.¹ Besides, among the Chinese texts he read, Snyder's passion and appreciation for *Tao Te Ching* linger throughout his life. When he was 20 years old, he read Arthur Waley's English translation *The Way and Its Power: A Study of the Tao Te Ching and Its Place in Chinese Thought* (1934); at the age of 57, when he was invited to perform his poetry in Alaska, he was still carrying a translation of *Tao Te Ching* with him and lent it to a local feminist leader as an opportunity to promote Taoist thoughts (Hua and Li 2020). The impact of Taoist philosophy on Snyder is never a new topic, for many scholars (Zhong 2006; Xu 2015; Tan and Qiu 2016) have already expressed their insights in this regard. Tan & Qiu (2016), for instance, hold that Snyder's understanding of *Tao* can be divided into five kinds: the path that can be followed, the path off the trail (or no path), the practice, the method to *Tao*, and the method to Zen. But they all appear to centre on the knowledge Snyder gained from *Tao Te Ching* but ignore one essential fact: apart from *Tao Te Ching*, *Chuang Tu* is another important source from which Snyder learned about Taoism.

Chuang Tzu (or *Zhuangzi*) was penned by the great philosopher Zhuangzi (庄子), or Zhuangzhou (庄周) and his disciples during the late Warring States period (around 476 BC–221 BC). After the Han Dynasty when Zhuangzi was revered as Nanhua Zhenren (南华真人), "Immortal of Nanhua," the book was also called *The Holy Canon of Nanhua* (*Nanhua Jing* 南华经). This canon not only introduces Zhuangzi's philosophies but also manifests his views on art, aesthetics, politics, society and cosmogenesis, all of which display the richness and profundity of its substance. Thus, *Chuang Tzu* is much more than a philosophical masterpiece; it is also an exemplary allegorical compilation of literature and aesthetics that has had an inseparable influence on the development of related fields both in China and across the globe. The version of *Chuang Tzu* that Snyder read is the English translation *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (1968) by his friend and an outstanding translator, Burton Watson, which was chosen for inclusion in *The Norton Anthology of World Literature* and the *UNESCO Collection of Representative Works (Chinese Series)*, both attesting to the exceptional quality and high readability of this rendition. A few scholars (Zhong 2006; Xu 2015; Hua and Li 2020) have indeed noticed the significance of investigating Snyder's reception of Zhuangzi's philosophies, and have preliminarily found that Snyder rewrote excerpts from *Chuang Tzu* in his eco-poetic literature, but their analyses are not

¹ Since the original English article "Some Images of China in the Works of Gary Snyder" by Dan McLeod is not retrievable now, this statement was transcribed from the Chinese translation of his text. The original version was published in *Tamkang Review* (Vol. 10, No. 3, 1979~1980).

systematic and comprehensive. To further our knowledge of this subject, this research, following the steps of foregoers, intends to explore how Snyder was inspired by *Chuang Tzu*. To be more precise, this study aims to answer the following questions:

- (1) In what forms has Gary Snyder accepted Zhuangzi's philosophies?
- (2) Which of Zhuangzi's core thoughts have been received by Snyder?
- (3) What are Snyder's responses to these ideas?

In order to seek answers, this article employs André Lefevere's concept of rewriting as a form of reception and probes into how Snyder reproduced *Chuang Tzu* in his manner.

2. Rewriting as Reception

Rewriting, originally called "refraction" by Lefevere (2000, 234), refers to "misunderstandings and misconceptions," through which a writer's work is adapted to fit diverse reader groups from other cultures in order to gain "exposure" and exert "influence." Lefevere (2000, 235) has listed some categories of rewriting, inclusive of an obvious form of rewriting – translation – and other less obvious ones, such as criticism, commentary, historiography, teaching, the collection of works in anthologies, and the production of plays. Furthermore, Lefevere (1992) has identified three main factors that may "manipulate" rewriting: poetics, ideology, and patronage. The emergence of his rewriting theory, together with other theories of cultural translation studies (such as Itamar Even-Zohar's poly-system theory), is without doubt pivotal to the whole translation academia because it provided a fresh angle for researchers to review "translation" from a cultural perspective, that is, translation is no longer merely considered a textual shift from one language to another, but a means of spreading culture beyond its source background. In agreement with this, many academics (Zhao 2009; Lv and Li 2013; Bai 2020; Liu 2020) have adopted rewriting theory as a theoretical framework or foundation to advance their own studies. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to discover that rewriting theory, though inspiring, has been monotonously discussed because the researchers seem to seldom re-evaluate it so as to rejuvenate it for the modern age of translation studies. How should we reflect upon this classic theory then? Presumably, revisiting what else "rewriting" can be would be a solution.

When looking back at the definition of "rewriting" by Lefevere, we are very likely to be attracted to its paraphrase "misunderstandings and misconceptions" and thus would easily neglect the other two key words – "exposure" and "influence," two ultimate goals of rewriting. In this regard, one thing that deserves noticing is: exposure and influence do not happen only once. Given this perspective, a literary work will have countless chances to be read and innumerable readers to influence through times of rewriting. In this study, the original *Chuang Tzu* was first rewritten (translated) by Watson, so his translation helped *Chuang Tzu* to gain exposure and exert an influence in the first round where Snyder accessed Zhuangzi's philosophies. Following that, Snyder rewrote (the translation of) *Chuang Tzu* and the second round of exposure and

influence occurred. In this continuous process, we can see three interesting phenomena. First, Watson's translation as well as Snyder's rewriting derive from the original *Chuang Tzu*, and the thoughts of *Chuang Tzu* are interpreted and thus evolve in the translation and rewriting, so these three texts become a continuum that witnesses intertextuality among them. Second, Watson and Snyder serve as both an influencee and an influencer. Third, for Snyder, the moment he starts reading Watson's translation of *Chuang Tzu* is also the moment he simultaneously commences his "misunderstanding" and "misconception" that are embodied in his eco-poetic works. In brief, Snyder receives *Chuang Tzu* by rewriting, so rewriting can be thought of as Snyder's approach to reception.

Given that Snyder did not read the original *Chuang Tzu* but Watson's rendition, this research first compares Snyder's rewriting and *Chuang Tzu* with the translated text as a bridge to help figure out his rewriting methods, and then contrasts his interpretation of Zhuangzi's thoughts with those in the original to analyse what is preserved and what is developed.

3. Snyder's Meeting with *Chuang Tzu*

The story that Snyder attentively read *Chuang Tzu* is easy to tell, but it is necessary to first recall his prior reading experiences of Chinese culture because they lay a solid foundation for his study of *Chuang Tzu*. As previously said, it was Waley's translation of *Tao Te Ching* that directed Snyder to begin learning about Taoism. From the translated book, Snyder was able to master some basics of Taoism, such as the meaning of *Tao* (the Way 道), *inaction* (无为), *yin* and *yang* (阴阳) (Liu 2021). After *Tao Te Ching*, he read *The Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra* and *The Diamond Sutra*, which kindled his incipient interest in Buddhism (especially Zen). Followingly, in the 1950s when the American Beat Generation was suffering a spiritual void, the celebrated Japanese Buddhist scholar Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki (鈴木大拙 貞太郎) brought to the US Zen, which was later appreciated by the Beats (Snyder included) as a remedy for their lost souls. Henceforth, Snyder continued to go down the road of Zen, which he found initially stemmed from China during his visit in Japan, and where he assimilated ideas, such as non-anthropocentrism, holism, life of all things and respect for life, that were parallel to his past learning of Taoism and also fundamental to his subsequent mastery of *Chuang Tzu* (Chen 2009: 216-221).

Since the Second World War spurred an increased interest in Asia, the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures of Columbia University established itself as one of a handful of universities in the US to offer courses on Asian languages, history, literature, religion, and politics. However, the usable English materials for the teachers and undergraduate students were very few. To address the problem, with the support of institutions such as American International Education Foundation and Columbia University Press, Professor William Theodore de Bary, as the project leader and the editor in chief, launched a monumental program of Translation from the Oriental Classics, which contains Watson's first partial translation *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, published in 1964, and second full translation *The Complete Work of Chuang Tzu*,

published in 1968 (Lin 2017: 173-174). As a friend of Watson's, Snyder was surely inclined to read his translation of *Chuang Tzu* out of his continuing enthusiasm for Taoism.

One of the core thoughts from *Chuang Tzu* is *tiān-rén-hé-yī* (天人合一), which literally means “the heaven and man become one.” This is an extension of *wù-wǒ-liǎng-wàng* (物我两忘), or “the external world and I both forget,” as was further developed from Zen's *zì-wǒ-xū-wú* (自我虚无), or “self-emptiness.” When you forget yourself, you are immersed in the outside world, which is all nature. As you feel that you are part of nature, you are able to comprehend the *Tao* of nature. It is also a prime example of ecological holism and non-anthropocentrism because humans could realise that they, being part of nature, have nothing special and are identical to all other beings as well as non-beings in the world, and that they, together with everything, are as a whole. When you are feeling the *Tao* of nature and proceeding with *wú-wǒ* (无我), or “no self,” you are able to *xiāo-yáo-yóu* (逍遥游), or “wander freely and easily”; to put it another way, you are not bound by any external forces and do not require any external conditions to do what you desire to do, and then you obtain absolute freedom, which Snyder refers to as “the practise of freedom” (Tan and Qiu 2016: 179). According to Snyder, if one could reach the state of no self, where the spirit and practise merge into one, he should feel at ease and liberated, whether he is doing his work or not. While *Chuang Tzu* highlights the ecological ethic of *wù-wǒ-tóng-yī* (物我同一), or “things and I are the same,” Zen stands on sympathy, both showing respect for nature. In light of this, Snyder presented an idea of ecological protection – not to hurt anything (Ren and Liu 2004: 234).

Snyder (1990: 145) perfected his cognition of *Tao* by reframing it in the context of the real world. He believes that *Tao* could also be the practise of an art or craft. For instance, in Japanese culture, *kadō* (華道) means “the way of flowers” and *sadō* (茶道) is “tea ceremony.” This unique interpretation of *Tao* is in consonance with that demonstrated in the parable of “Cook Ting Cutting up an Ox” (庖丁解牛) from *Chuang Tzu*. Also, agreeing with Laozi and Zhuangzi on “the useless is actually useful,” Snyder (1990: 126) said, “Daoist philosophers tell us that surprise and subtle instruction might come forth from the Useless,” so he argued that “the useless can be rendered useful” (Tsai 2009: 73).

If *Tao Te Ching* and Zen act as the basics for Snyder to form his ecological values featuring oriental philosophies, *Chuang Tzu* upgrades his views by providing more in-depth and concrete thinking that is associated with western culture.

4. Snyder's Rewriting of *Chuang Tzu*

Through an inch-by-inch search for the scent of *Chuang Tzu* in Snyder's eco-poetic literary works, his rewriting falls into two primary types: commentary and imitation.

4.1 Commentary

It is found that Lefevere has not shed much light on ‘commentary’ but elaborated on its analogue – ‘criticism.’ Nevertheless, criticism is not adopted in this section as a kind of Snyder’s rewriting in that it, in contrast to commentary, indicates those more negative opinions, as evidenced by Lefevere (2000: 235), who takes an example of “the wholesale allegorization of the literature of Antiquity by the Church Fathers.” Thus, commentary, referring to explanation and discussion, appears more appropriate in this case. Then, how did Snyder comment on the philosophical thoughts of *Chuang Tzu*? If one concurs with the view of a sage, the easiest way to show his or her consent is to cite the sage, which is what Snyder did. He quoted Zhuangzi’s statements, explicitly and implicitly, in his literary creations, always with detailed illustrations to simplify the concepts and make them understandable to his western readers, who might not have sufficient knowledge to fully appreciate the eastern traditional wisdom. Here are a few typical examples of his commentary.

A clear quote that is unquestionably ascribed to *Chuang Tzu* appears in Snyder’s classic *The Practice of the Wild* (1990):

Native abilities may be nourished by discipline, but discipline alone will not get one into the territory of “free and easy wandering” (a Zhuang-zi term). (Snyder 1990: 150)

“Free and easy wandering” is the translation of *xiāo-yáo-yóu*, the heading of *Chuang Tzu*’s very first chapter and also a central idea of Zhuangzi. What does “free and easy wandering” mean? Zhuangzi responds with this paragraph:

夫列子御风而行，泠然善也，旬有五日而后反。彼于致福者，未数数然也。此虽免乎行，犹有所待者也。若夫乘天地之正，而御六气之辩，以游无穷者，彼且恶乎待哉！故曰：至人无己，神人无功，圣人无名。(Zhuangzi 2007, 11)

Lieh Tzu could ride the wind and go soaring around with cool and breezy skill, but after fifteen days he came back to earth. As far as the search for good fortune went, he didn't fret and worry. He escaped the trouble of walking, but he still had to depend on something to get around. If he had only mounted on the truth of Heaven and Earth, ridden the changes of the six breaths, and thus wandered through the boundless, then what would he have had to depend on? Therefore I say, the Perfect Man has no self; the Holy Man has no merit; the Sage has no fame. (Zhuangzi 1968: 32)

The explanation tells us that only when we master the natural laws of the universe (the Way) can we obtain absolute freedom in spirituality and physicality. In another word, leading a dependent-on-nothing life marked by “no self,” “no merit” and “no fame” is the true connotation of the so-called freedom and ease. With the teaching of “free and easy wandering,” Snyder discussed freedom at work. He thinks that self-discipline and hard work, though admirable traits, can occasionally become “hindrances” that will “lead one astray” and obscure one’s awareness of “what one’s more playful capacities might have been,” so when people do not persist in self-discipline or let go of the self, they can become ones with “all of the phenomenal world” and finally enter the territory of “free and easy wandering” (Snyder 1990: 150).

While Zhuangzi talks about the true essence of life, Snyder applies it as a working principle: do not let yourself limit your potential.

In addition to using Zhuangzi's phrase directly, Snyder further elucidated the concept by citing an excerpt of *Chuang Tzu's* first chapter in his song "Little Songs for Gaia" from his collection *Axe Handles* (1983):

*Chuang-tzu says the Great Bird looking down,
all he sees is
blue* (Snyder 1983: 54)

This part echoes *Chuang Tzu* in the following way:

天之苍苍，其正色邪，其远而无所至极邪？其视下也，亦若是则已矣。(Zhuangzi 2007: 11)

Wavering heat, bits of dust, living things blowing each other about – the sky looks very blue. Is that its real color, or is it because it is so far away and has no end? When the bird looks down, all he sees is blue too. (Zhuangzi 1968: 23)

In actual fact, the last sentence of the original text should be translated as "if the bird looks down, it will perhaps see the same scenery"; however, Watson straightforwardly represented this utterance by replacing "the same scenery" with "blue," which explains why Snyder wrote alike. Zhuangzi wrote the above paragraph to indicate that "the bird" (P'eng 鹏), though bigger than other species, is too small compared with the sky because, even though looking down rather than up, he can see the blueness of sky. The sky in this context symbolises the cosmos while the bird represents humans. Notwithstanding how great a man can be and how much power he possesses, he just weighs as heavy as dust in the universe, which corresponds to the previously said "free and easy wandering" with "no self," "no merit" and "no fame." In a slight departure from *Chuang Tzu*, Snyder in his song does not mean to show much about his interpretation of the philosophical idea; instead, he uses Zhuangzi's words to extol the beauty of the earth and the vastness of the sky.

Additionally, Snyder (1999: 287-318) borrowed the term "the Great Clod" (大块) from *Chuang Tzu's* second chapter "Discussion on Making All Things Equal" (齐物论) to name a section as "The Great Clod Project" in *The Gary Snyder Reader: Prose, Poetry and Translations 1952-1998* (1999). This expression made its debut in the following line of the original text:

夫大块噫气，其名为风。(Zhuangzi 2007: 23)

The Great Clod belches out breath and its name is wind. (Zhuangzi 1968: 36)

Though the Great Clod means 'the earth' or 'the nature,' Watson just gives it a literal translation and explains that the term, together with others, such as "Supreme Swindle" (吊诡) and "True Man" (真人), essentially refers to one thing – the inexpressible Absolute (Zhuangzi 1968, 25). Snyder must have read Watson's note about this phrase, so he continued to use it in his reader. Where Snyder shows his understanding of "the Great Clod" can be found in another book, *The Great Clod:*

Notes and Memoirs on Nature and History in East Asia (2016), in which he quotes a short paragraph of Watson's translation of the sixth chapter of *Chuang Tzu*, "The Great and Venerable Teacher" (大宗师):

The Great Clod burdens me with form, labors me with life, eases me in old age, and rests me in death. So if I think well of my life, for the same reason I must think well of my death. (Zhuangzi 1968: 36; Snyder 2016: 8)

These words were said by Master Lai who believed that life and death are interconnected, so only when we calmly face gain and loss as well as life and death can we experience the Way, or "freeing of the bound," as summarised in the same chapter:

且夫得者，时也；失者，顺也。安时而处顺，哀乐不能入也，此古之所谓县解也。
。(Zhuangzi 2007, 129)

I received life because the time had come; I will lose it because the order of things passes on. Be content with this time and dwell in this order and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you. In ancient times this was called the 'freeing of the bound.' (Zhuangzi 1968: 84)

Once during an interview, Snyder spoke of his grip on "the Great Clod" by paraphrasing Zhuangzi's line as "The Great Clod nourishes me, comforts me, chills me, feeds me. If I appreciate my life I should appreciate my death" (Elder 2017), which proves his full comprehension of the concept. However, in his book that bills itself as an essay collection on the ecological history East Asia (mainly China and Japan), he did not inherit the profound meaning of "the Great Clod" but only viewed the term, hailing from an oriental canon, as a pronoun of (East Asia's) nature and a proper book title congenial to its content.

Another classical example of Snyder's commentary on *Chuang Tzu* is in the article "On the Path, Off the Trail" of *The Practice of the Wild*, where he abridged and modified Watson's rendition of the story "Cook Ting Cutting up An Ox" from *Chuang Tzu*'s third chapter "The Secret of Caring for Life" (养生主). The caring for life, in Zhuangzi's utterance, does not imply keeping good health but preserving a sound spirit, which also reflects going with the Way. Evidence of this philosophy includes lines, such as "I go at it by spirit and don't look with my eyes," "I go along with the natural makeup," and "follow things as they are" (Zhuangzi 1968: 50-51). Snyder took the story as an example in his book when he illuminated *Tao* because he assumed that the practise of arts and skills was also an extension of *Tao*. He also reckoned that this narrative is able to manifest the connection between one's spirit and deed, and intended to convey a message that the only way to achieve total achievement was to commit oneself to a certain field or profession (Snyder 1990: 147).

4.2 Imitation

Though Lefevere does not classify "imitation" as a type of rewriting, he recognises the existence of other forms of rewriting, and imitation, as well as its synonym

“emulation,” has been talked about in his writings. Yan (2022) has detailedly reviewed Lefevere’s discussion on imitation and put that it conforms to Lefevere’s definition of rewriting and should be conceived as a distinctive type of rewriting. On this basis, this research consequently subsumes imitation under rewriting.

One of Snyder’s most well-known parodies is “Coyote Man, Mr. President, & the Gunfighters,” which was based on “Discoursing on Swords” (说剑), the thirtieth chapter of *Chuang Tzu*, and was included in *Left Out in the Rain* (1986). The source text tells a story of “Zhuangzi” as a lobbyist who persuaded King Wen of Chao not to forget about his duties as a monarch despite his addiction to swordsmanship. In his imitative text, Snyder replaced the characters with a whole set of counterparts from the western political system. For instance, he substituted “King Wen of Chao” with “Mr. President,” “the swordsmen” with “the Gunfighters,” and “Zhuangzi” with “the Coyote Man,” and the venue was altered from the palace into “the White House.” Besides, three swords were transformed into three revolvers, and so were their symbolic meanings. Specifically, three swords, including that of the Son of Heaven, that of the feudal lord, and that of the commoner, represent three social classes in ancient Chinese society – the king, the feudal lord and the commoner. Among them, the king took the dominant place in the palace and ruled the whole kingdom with no need to take action on his own; the duke was given autonomy by the king to govern his territory and the people therein; the people were the humblest ones and kept busy all day long with pastimes like cockfighting. Zhuangzi excogitated these three swords as metaphors to counsel the king not to consider sword fights as amusement. Developed on Zhuangzi’s thought, Snyder’s field of vision was much broader. In his text, he encompassed everything in the world and, at the same time, took modern society into consideration, so he expounded his views at three levels: everything (namely the cosmos), species (represented by mankind) and human organisations (represented by the state), which are in line with the three revolvers of the cosmos, mankind, and the state. As delineated in *Chuang Tzu*, the sword of the Son of Heaven consisted of territories, protected by regions, and controlled by five principal elements (i.e., wood, fire, earth, water, and metal) as well as the *yin* and *yang* (Zhuangzi 1968: 342), which means the sword of the Son of Heaven, being the most powerful object in the world, had dominion over everything. Contrastively, Snyder’s revolver of the cosmos was made up of the Milky Way and asterisms, integrated by 92 chemical elements and smelted with anything in the world; if it were concealed, galaxies would immediately become nihilistic (Snyder 1986: 208). They had one thing in common: both could control all the things, and everything was dependent on them, but the revolver was discussed within a broader range than the sword since the cosmos coincided more with *Tao*. As truths come from *Tao*, all beings are from cosmos. Zhong (2006: 71-72) once compared Zhuangzi’s sword of the feudal lord with Snyder’s revolver of mankind, concluding that the sword could lead the lords to discover able people and put them at suitable posts while the revolver covered the entirety of civilization and encouraged man’s moral self-reflection. The last counterpart pair is the sword of the commoner and the revolver of state. Compared with the king (the Son of the Heaven), commoners are rude and violent, and holding the sword of the commoner is no different from cockfighting (Zhuangzi 2007: 353). Similarly, those who hold the revolver of state are barbarous as

well. Finally, “the Coyote Man,” functioning the same as the character “Zhuangzi” in the story, suggested to “Mr. President” that he should devote himself to anything except gunfighting. In a nutshell, Snyder expected to diffuse a slant that the one with the highest power is expected to have the broadest horizon to think about national affairs from a cosmic perspective, which exhibits an essential thought of Zhuangzi – all things are equal as a whole (万物齐一).

Speaking of the most classic parables from *Chuang Tzu*, the tale of “Chuang Chou (Zhuangzi) Dreaming of Becoming a Butterfly” (庄周梦蝶) must be on the list. The original narration is recorded as follows:

昔者庄周梦为胡蝶，栩栩然胡蝶也，自喻适志与！不知周也。俄然觉，则蓬蓬然周也。不知周之梦为胡蝶与，胡蝶之梦为周与？周与胡蝶，则必有分矣。此之谓物化。(Zhuangzi 2007, 51)

Once Chuang Chou dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Chuang Chou. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Chuang Chou. But he didn't know if he was Chuang Chou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Chou. Between Chuang Chou and a butterfly there must be some distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things. (Zhuangzi 1968: 49)

“Chuang Chou,” representing the ego, and “butterfly,” symbolising other beings in nature or the world, are undoubtedly two disparate creatures. However, Chuang Chou was not certain whether it was he himself who transformed into the butterfly or it was the butterfly that became him. This bespeaks the philosophy of “forgetting the boundary between oneself and the external world” (物我两忘), with which Zhuangzi was able to enter the realm of “the external world and I being the same” and even feel “heaven and man becoming one.” With this story as a model, Snyder composed a poem, “Ripples on The Surface,” which ends with:

*The vast wild
The little house in the wild,
The Wild in the house.
Both forgotten.
No nature
Both together, one big empty house.* (Snyder 1992: 381)

“The wild” in this poem refers to nature, while “the house” stands for civilization, both coexisting in harmony. A paradox arises though: is it on earth “the little house in the wild” or “the wild in the house”? The question is not answered and is of no consequence because there is “no nature,” “the wild” and “the house” are “both forgotten,” and they combine to form one thing, “one big empty house.” Snyder’s discussion of “the wild” and “the house” displays a “beautiful everlasting world” of “I being transformed with things,” as shown in the story of “Chuang Chou Dreaming of Becoming a Butterfly” (Xu 2015: 122).

Other chapters that were rewritten by Snyder include “Lieh Yu-k’ou” (列御寇), which characterises the paragraph below:

庄子将死，弟子欲厚葬之。庄子曰：“吾以天地为棺槨，以日月为连璧，星辰为珠玑，万物为赇送。吾葬具岂不备邪？何以加此！”(Zhuangzi 2007: 370)

When Chuang Tzu was about to die, his disciples expressed a desire to give him a sumptuous burial. Chuang Tzu said, “I will have heaven and earth for my coffin and coffin shell, the sun and moon for my pair of jade discs, the stars and constellations for my pearls and beads, and the ten thousand things for my parting gifts. The furnishings for my funeral are already prepared – what is there to add?” (Zhuangzi 1968: 361)

Zhuangzi considered heaven and earth as his coffin, the sun, moon and stars as the decorations in his coffin chamber, and everything else as his burial objects. This notion tells us that we should not be enslaved by worldly possessions. He needed nothing else because he wanted to be obedient to nature and depart the world with *inaction* (i.e., the practise of taking no action to accord with the natural course of the universe). Likewise, Snyder, in his poem “By Frazier Creek Falls” of *Turtle Island* (1974), wrote the following line:

*We could live on this Earth
without clothes or tools!* (Snyder 1974: 41)

Contrary to Zhuangzi, Snyder did not talk about death but focused on life by emphasising the significance of life by stating that one should live his own life by relying on nothing but his own, which tallies with the aforementioned Zhuangzi’s philosophy of leading a dependent-on-nothing life. This is what life is authentically like and is the content of *Tao*, the Way that people live and die.

5. Conclusion

This research has discussed Gary Snyder’s reception of *Chuang Tzu* through a textual comparison between his rewritings and the original text using Watson’s translation. It is found that Snyder mainly rewrote texts from four chapters of *Chuang Tzu*, and that he received some thoughts (such as “free and easy wandering” and “the Great Clod”) by redefining and repositioning them in his works and others (including “all things are equal as a whole” and “the external world and I both forget”) by implicitly implanting them in his creations. Thanks to Snyder’s reproduction, *Chuang Tzu* is no longer a recondite Chinese Taoist canon for the anglophone community but a volume of concrete, understandable, and thought-provoking insights into the world (life and death, the relationship between humans and nature, and the universe), which everybody, be they Chinese or westerners, may find relevant to their courses of life.

Aside from systematically collating information about Snyder’s assimilation of *Chuang Tzu*, this study also contributes to scholarship with regard to the research stance. Rewriting has always been used among the translation academics as a manoeuvre to investigate the manipulation during the production of translated texts, yet this research thinks out of the box and reinspects rewriting as a process of reception for the rewriter. Over and above that, it reexplores the types of rewriting and anticipates

scholars to continue extending the scope of rewriting, for example, to involve adaptation from texts into texts, films, comics, and video games, to name but a few.

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