

Children of the Revolution: Conservative Reform in Zeng Pu's Translation of Victor Hugo's *Ninety-Three*

Robert Moore
University of Oregon

Abstract

In 1912, the Francophile translator and novelist Zeng Pu 曾樸 published his translation of Victor Hugo's final novel, *Ninety-Three*. Zeng significantly altered the text, changing the focus of several key sections, and leaving out a thirty-page chapter entirely. What seems like a disregard for Hugo's novel is in fact the demonstration of a different perspective on the goal of translation. For Zeng Pu, translation was a reformative technology, one that worked to directly affect the readers' hermeneutic protocols such that through the experience of the translated narrative, they were brought to read and see the world around them in a manner cognizant with the concerns of the translator. In service to that, the translator's responsibility was to consciously alter the text such that a new, and in Zeng Pu's case socially transformative, set of hermeneutic skills was fostered. This paper explores Zeng Pu's overall philosophy on translated literature, both through later writings and through a close reading of several key changes made to Hugo's text, and poses the question of how we are to study an approach to translation that does not believe in the fidelity of the source text.

Keywords

translation, reform, late Qing, Victor Hugo, Zeng Pu