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A Yi's "The Doctor" in English Translation

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"The Doctor" is a dark, edgy piece that is said to draw on A Yi's previous life as a police officer. His work has something in common with traditional Chinese Gothic literature, a genre that focuses on monsters, the supernatural, and the beast within humans, and has a history going back to the very beginning of literary records. There is also some similarity with more recent British Gothic fiction of the 18th and 19th centuries, and the "horror" literature and movies of the 20th century, as exemplified in the writing of Stephen King and James Herbert. While horror and fear are elements common to both Chinese and English Gothic fiction, in the Chinese genre, there is also a didactic function that exposes society's dark side. According to Jing Cao and Linda Dryden (18-25), Chinese Gothic represents humanity, while British Gothic dwells on the beastliness of humans.

A Yi writes in both traditions, aiming to shock but also to provide a social commentary. "The Doctor" is more than just a weird tale about a remote village populated by murderous hillbillies. A contemporary Chinese reader would be reminded of the many media accounts in recent years of medical practitioners who were killed by aggrieved patients or family members. These media reports suggest that the medical profession in China no longer enjoys the respect and high standing it once had, in the wake of a dramatic rise in the incidence of disputes between patients and hospitals.

A Yi's language is unadorned and spare, though his meaning can be obscure. The main challenge in translating this story was to achieve an equivalent level of unease and slight bewilderment by both English and Chinese readers of the text. The end result was a largely literal translation that sought to be faithful to the source text, rather than to present a freer version that would use more idiomatic English. A free translation seemed to run the risk of blunting the tension that A Yi creates with each sentence arriving in almost staccato-like bursts.

One departure from the source text was to provide an elaboration on the description of the doctor, which appears in the source text as 长着大理石脸庞 (literally: "his face of marble"). The literal translation seemed inadequate, suggesting "his marbled face", which, of course, would be quite wrong. In the end, "his face hewn out of marble" appeared to best capture the original without undue diversion.

A more definite deviation from a literal translation, which may be frowned upon by the purist, was translating 他们看着警察浑然不知地走近他们 (literally: "they watched the policeman walk in among them without any idea") as "they watched the policeman plod clueless into their midst". This seemed a rather obvious allusion to the derogatory term for a policeman of "PC Plod", and a pun on "clueless". I allowed myself this licence as I felt it was consistent with the underlying dark humour and irony of the short story.

The late Pierre Ryckmans once said that the key to a good translation was to love the text one translates. I can only add that the profession and the art of translating should always be a labour of love. I have to thank AALITRA for its great work in supporting Australia's literary translators, and express gratitude for the generous donations of the Chinese Cultural Centre in Sydney, Text Publishing, Giramondo, and Margaret River Press.

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医生
阿乙

医生的鬼魂骚扰整个村庄。但是巨大的恐怖其实由人心引起,他们害怕,只要有点风就吓坏了。自从杀了医生,他们就觉得因果必来,很久时间没人管这事让他们不安。几个月后,当第一个警察走进乡村,他们才感到踏实。他们既觉得应该逮捕人,又本能地觉得不会。他们看着警察浑然不知地走进他们。每个人都出了一份力,在杀死医生时。

他们将医生杀得不成样子。

在一次问诊时,医生和少女建立类似于邪教的关系。长着大理石脸庞、深邃眼窝和洁白牙齿的他将听诊器贴到少女胸上,说“不抽烟的”,然后转过头来,对少女说:“不要紧的。”寡言少语的他就说了这么四个字,便拥有了无限的支配权,可以命令她做任何事。但他不这样,他矜持、冷漠。有时怕得罪对方,才挤出笑容或客套话。一切的主动在于信徒。少女在医生喝了她家一碗水后,不许家人碰那只碗,将它供奉在床头;医生的袜子露出一只洞,她心里便永记他白皙的脚踝,整个冬天都在打毛线袜子,打了很多,送不到对方手里——当别人想要穿时,她羞愤地要去死。

她终于死掉了。

在医生无意做出一个冷淡的动作后,她明白掉彼此间的关系。她知道他宽厚的手永

The Doctor

By A Yi

Translated by Andrew Endrey

The doctor's ghost was harassing the entire village. But the great terror was in fact all in their minds. They were afraid, and the slightest breeze would scare them witless. Ever since they had killed the doctor they thought that the day of reckoning was sure to come. It made them uneasy that for some time no one had bothered about it. They were relieved when, after several months, the first policeman walked into the village. They felt that an arrest was bound to be made while instinct told them that it was not going to happen. They watched the policeman plod clueless into their midst. They had all done their bit, in the killing of the doctor.

It was horrendous how they had done the doctor in.

During a consultation, the doctor had entered into a cult-like relationship with a young girl. With his face hewn out of marble, his deep-set eyes and dazzling white teeth, he placed his stethoscope to the girl's chest and said: "Non-smoker". He then turned his head to her, saying: "Nothing serious". A man of few words, this was all he needed to have said to gain total control over her, and to have her obey his every command. But that was not him, he was reserved, detached. At times, afraid of offending his interlocutor, he would put on a forced smile or come out with some polite chit-chat. The initiative was entirely in the hands of his disciple. After the doctor had drunk from a bowl of water at her place, she would allow no one in the family to touch that bowl which she then placed beside her bed to be venerated. She had fixed in her memory the sight of his fair ankle peeping through a hole in his sock. She spent the whole winter knitting woollen socks, a pile of them, which she could not present to the other party. When others wanted to wear them, she burned with shame and resentment.

She died in the end.

When the doctor, not giving it a thought, behaved indifferently towards her, she saw their relationship for what it was. She knew

远不可能抚摸她的乳房,就像朝圣者跋涉千里,被神一脚踢翻。她自杀了,留下一封信,欲言又止,欲止又言,终于越说越开,进入谵妄状态。在信里:医生和少女亲吻、拥抱、不穿衣服行走在雪地、交媾。医生绝情、背叛、伟大、冷漠、温和。

一个医生让一个姑娘喝了农药,同时还救不活她。因此村民处死医生。

填补医生空缺的会计的儿子,吊儿郎当,被县城卫校开除,连自己的感冒也治不好。人们在他身上建立不起崇拜、迷信,不能拜倒在他的权威之下,得到他的保佑。从此,村里人看病要去几十里外的县里。有些人宁死不去。

医生是在一个大风之夜来到村庄的。他说他能治疗他们肚子里的虫,以此换取到定居的资格,由此也背负起由无尽期望带来的风险。村庄一直没死过人,但在医生死掉一个儿子后,死亡像阴影笼着它。

他不能责怪那些一起游泳的小孩。他搬走的消息传出来,但一直没走。直到他的第二个儿子长大可以读书了,他还是背着医疗箱像知识分子走在田野。他就像一块冰拒绝了少女的诱惑,灿烂而遥远地走在南方暖和的村庄。有一天这个儿子也死掉了,应该是疯子掐死的。没什么能解除这种悲伤。因此当疯子被放回来后,就死在水泥桥上。因为洪水冲刷,桥是歪斜的。疯子吊在桥板

that his generous hands would never stroke her breasts; it was as if she had trekked a thousand *li* to see a holy man and the spirit had booted her aside. She took her own life, leaving behind a letter that was both guarded and rambling. She eventually became more open as she wrote, whipping herself into a state of delirium. The letter said that the doctor and the young girl had kissed, embraced, strolled naked through the snow, and had intercourse. The doctor had broken off the affair, forsaken her, great, indifferent, gentle.

A doctor had made a young lady take pesticide and at the same time was unable to save her life. And so the villagers had executed the doctor.

The accountant's son who filled the doctor's vacancy was a slob who had been expelled from medical school in a county town; he couldn't even treat his own cold. Nothing about him could inspire adulation or blind faith, and people would not prostrate themselves before his authority to receive his blessing. From then on, villagers had to travel tens of *li* within the county to see a doctor, and some of them simply preferred to die.

The doctor had come into the village on a night when the wind howled. He said that he could cure their intestinal parasites; it gave him in exchange the right to reside there permanently, and it endowed him with the risk of meeting their boundless expectations. No one in the village died but when one of the doctor's sons died, the death cast a pall over the village.

He couldn't blame the youngsters who had been swimming with his son. Word got around that he was moving away but he never left. Right up to the time that his second son was of school age, he still walked around the fields carrying his medical kit like an intellectual. He spurned the seductions of young women like a block of ice. Resplendent yet remote, he walked into this warm village of the south. One day, the second son died as well, most likely throttled to death by the lunatic. There was nothing that could dispel this kind of sadness. And so, after the lunatic had been released and returned to the village he was put to death on the cement bridge. As

上,赤身裸体。村庄没有任何反应,那只是一个疯子,由阎王爷寄托在这里的虱子。

两个月后,在少女喝农药死掉后,人们谋杀了医生。医生的房子开始长出青苔,青蛙在里边跳跃。没有人给他和他两个儿子上香。

医生第一次出现在村庄时,背上背着一个孩儿,手里牵着一个孩儿。一个睡熟了,一个困死了。这个鳏夫找到这个距最近的卫生所有四十里的地方。他冷峻而理性地走进村长家。这是冷峻和理性这两个词,第一次出现在村庄。

flood waters had washed over it, the bridge sloped at an angle. The lunatic was hung off the bridge, stark naked. There was no reaction in the village as this was just a lunatic, a louse placed in their care by the King of Hell.

Two months later, after the young girl had died from drinking the pesticide, the doctor was murdered. Moss began to grow over the doctor's house and frogs hopped around inside. No one burned incense in memory of him and his two sons.

When the doctor first appeared in the village, he carried a child on his back and led another by the hand. One was sound asleep, the other about to nod off. This widower had found this place that was forty *li* from the nearest clinic. He strode sober and rational into the home of the village head. It was the first time that the words "sober" and "rational" had ever turned up in the village.