

diverse selection of methodological approaches to the questions of empire, exchange, family and community to rethink questions of genre, Tina Lu presents new and sometimes brilliant readings of works on late-imperial fiction and drama. While readers may not agree with all of its points, there are more than enough truly original insights in *Accidental Incest* to provoke and delight even those scholars long familiar with the late-imperial literary field.

MARAM EPSTEIN  
*University of Oregon*

*Mencius*. Translated by Irene Bloom. Edited by Philip J. Ivanhoe. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. Pp. xxii + 174. \$29.50.

As Philip J. Ivanhoe explains in his “Editor’s Preface” (p. vii), Columbia University Press asked him to edit and complete Irene Bloom’s draft translation of the *Mencius*, which illness prevented her from finishing. The resulting work is accurate and very fluid; in addition to their other strengths, Bloom and Ivanhoe are both gifted writers of English, and have produced a translation that can be consulted profitably by all classes of readers, from novices to specialists. As but one example of a felicitous passage, take the translation of 1B.6:

Mencius said to King Xuan of Qi, “Suppose that one of the king’s subjects entrusted his wife and children to his friend and journeyed to Chu. On returning he found that the friend had subjected his wife and children to cold and hunger. What should he do?”

The king said, “Renounce him.”

“Suppose the chief criminal judge could not control the officers. What should he do?”

The king said, “Get rid of him.”

“Suppose that within the four borders of the state there is no proper government—then what?”

The king looked left and right and spoke of other things. (p. 20)

This ably captures the understated rhetoric of the Chinese original, which, in its very terseness, invites the reader to contemplate the patent analogy between the king and the commoner’s friend, and thereby work out independently the moral import of the dialogue.

I have two general concerns about this translation, however. The first has to do with this statement in Ivanhoe’s preface:

I have done my best to preserve not only the meaning but also the spirit of Professor Bloom’s translation, making only a few minor changes in passages

where I am confident she would have been persuaded to change her mind had we the chance to discuss matters.

How can Ivanhoe pretend to know which changes Bloom would or would not have been persuaded to accept? Moreover, since Ivanhoe did not indicate any of his emendations in the text, it is impossible for a reader of the published book to tell who was responsible for what. Consequently, it is not possible to refer to this as the Bloom translation of *Mencius*; instead, one has to call it the Bloom-Ivanhoe translation. A less intrusive editorial method would have been to preserve as much of the original translation as possible, and state one's own disagreements, if necessary, in footnotes. (Indeed, the editor might have done inquisitive readers a greater service by laying such controversies bare instead of squelching them.)

My second concern is that the need for a new English translation of the *Mencius* is nowhere explained—neither in Ivanhoe's "Introduction" (pp. ix–xxii) nor anywhere in Bloom's words. On the one hand, *Mencius* is undoubtedly one of the most influential texts in Chinese history; on the other hand, this is now, as far as I am aware, the ninth complete English translation (and the fourth since 1998).<sup>1</sup> Not all of these are equally viable today, but several are still widely used (especially that of D. C. Lau) and by no means obsolete. Readers are therefore entitled to a statement of how this new translation differs from the many other available choices. Moreover, at a time when some important classical Chinese texts remain unavailable in any Western language (for example, *Yi Zhoushu* 逸周書, *Guoyu* 國語, and *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋), it is disheartening to see academic presses issuing new translations of works for which there is no urgent need. One can only guess that anticipated classroom sales drive such choices—but from that point of view the Bloom-Ivanhoe translation cannot be considered more desirable than either D. C. Lau's translation, which is bilingual (with the Chinese and English on facing pages), or Bryan W. Van Norden's, which includes a sizable selection of traditional commentary. Bloom-Ivanhoe is merely a straight English version with minimal annotation. In sum, it is difficult to judge this book as more of an accomplishment than "yet another English translation of *Mencius*."

<sup>1</sup> The others are: David Collie (d. 1828), *The Chinese Classical Work Commonly Called the Four Books* (Singapore: Printed at the Mission Press, 1828; reprint, Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1970); James Legge (1815–1897), *The Works of Mencius*, vol. 2 of *The Chinese Classics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1895; reprint, Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1992); Leonard A. Lyall, *Mencius* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1932); James R. Ware, *The Sayings of Mencius: A New Translation* (New York: New American Library, 1960); W.A.C.H. Dobson, *Mencius: A New Translation Arranged and Annotated for the General Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963); David Hinton, *Mencius* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1998); D. C. Lau, *Mencius: A Bilingual Edition*, rev. ed. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003); and Bryan W. Van Norden, *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 2008).

Finally, there are some minor problems that a reviewer would be remiss not to point out:

The name Duangan Mu 段干木 is misconstrued as “Duan Ganmu” (p. 67).

The Chinese word *shi* 士 is too often translated as “scholar,” and I suspect this has something to do with the evident overreliance on the Neo-Confucian commentary of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200). (Almost all the commentarial opinions cited in the notes derive from either Zhu Xi or David S. Nivison.) In certain cases, “scholar” is more than simply misleading. For example: “When the scholars are put to death though they are guilty of no crime . . .” for 無罪而殺士 (p. 87). That sounds like the Ming dynasty, with its heroic scholar-officials (and where Bloom did most of her earlier work), not the world of Mencius. (Even the word “the” before “scholars,” which suggests that they constituted a cohesive social class, miscolours the original.) Elsewhere, Bloom-Ivanhoe say “man of service” for *shi*—a much more plausible rendering that I have occasionally used myself.

The famous maxim of Gaozi 告子, *sheng zhi wei xing* 生之謂性, is transmogrified by the highly unlikely translation, “Life is what is called nature” (p. 121). If that is truly what Gaozi meant, it would be hard to understand why Mencius objected. Rather, as we see from 6A.4, where Gaozi specifies appetite for food and sex as *xing*, he means *what is inborn*, not “life.” Lau’s translation of the same sentence is better: “That which is inborn is what is meant by ‘nature’” (p. 241)—and the quotation marks around “nature” are important, inasmuch as Gaozi is attempting to define a *terminus technicus*.

The original draft seems to have used Wade-Giles Romanization, which was then systematically but incompletely converted to *pinyin*. Some vestiges of Wade-Giles remain, and they are distracting (e.g., “Yingong To” for Yingong zhi Tuo 尹公之他, p. 91; also “The Announcement Concerning Lo” for Luo 洛, p. 136, n. 10).

PAUL R. GOLDIN  
*University of Pennsylvania*

*Making Transcendents: Ascetics and Social Memory in Early Medieval China.* By Robert Ford Campany. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009. Pp. xviii + 300. \$48.00.

In *Making Transcendents*, Robert Campany delves into a large corpus of Chinese writings from 220 B.C. to A.D. 343 that tell the stories of men and women who, through a variety of esoteric and ascetic practices and often with the assistance of holy beings, transcend the mundane world, earning places for themselves among the divinities and achieving immortality. The mysterious heroes of these stories live on strange pills, pine resin, lead, fungi, dew, *qi* 氣 or their own saliva. Their esoteric and ascetic practices transform them into extraordinary beings capable of passing through walls, flying, disappearing in a cloud