
2016

Whether You See Me or Not by Tan Xiaojing

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Recommended Citation

Tang, Jun (2016) "*Whether You See Me or Not* by Tan Xiaojing," *Transference*: Vol. 3: Iss. 1, Article 14.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/transference/vol3/iss1/14>

Jun Tang
Whether You See Me or Not

Tan Xiaojing
见与不见

Whether you see me or not,
I am still there,
not happy, not unhappy.
Whether you miss me or not,
the attachment is still there,
not coming, not going.
Whether you love me or not,
love is still there,
not increasing, not decreasing.
Whether you are with me or not,
I'll put my hand in yours,
not drawing away, not letting go.
Stay in my arms.
Or,
let me live in your heart.
Love doesn't need words.
Neither does happiness.

Tan Xiaojing (1978–) is a Buddhist believer and freelance writer who publishes under the pen name “Trashi Lhamo Duoduo.” She first published “Whether You See Me or Not” (also known as “Padmasambhava’s Silence”) in her blog on May 15, 2007. The poem was repeatedly reproduced in personal blogs and posted messages and had been misattributed to Tshangs-dbyangs-rgya-mtsho (1683–1706), the sixth Dalai Lama who is well known for his poems about passionate love. The misattribution was further supported by the October 2008 issue of *Readers*, a Chinese magazine with an average monthly circulation of over 8.9 million. In 2010, “Whether You See Me or Not” gained enormous popularity on a national scale because the Chinese movie *If You Are the One 2* (known as *Fei Cheng Wu Rao 2* in Chinese) used it in a scene to create emotional appeal.

“Whether You See Me or Not” was originally intended as a religious reflection on the teaching of Padmasambhava. However, Chinese readers have persistently presented and interpreted it as a poem reflecting an unusual philosophy of love—love unconditionally rather than love for reciprocity.

Many Chinese-speaking translators are expected to translate into English at some point in their careers. Hence translation trainers must increase the intercultural awareness of translation trainees. This poem has been used in one of the postgraduate translation courses I’ve taught to underscore the difficulty of translating from one’s native language into a non-native one. This translation has been done upon requests from postgraduate students to demonstrate how to tackle linguistic problems (e.g. lexical ambiguity, sentence structure, subjectless sentences) to produce an adequate version.