

Aesthetic differences between chinese and western poetry

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Aesthetic differences between Chinese and Western Poetry —critics on Xu Yuanzhong's Chinese poetry translation

1 Introduction Nowadays in China, there are mainly two kinds of different opinions on translating classical Chinese poems. On one side, Xu Yuanzhong, as a representative, hold that classical Chinese poems should be translated in the form of poems(rhymed verse translation). Xu Yuanzhong put forward the Theory of Three Beauties and the Theory of Rivalry. On the other side, scholars such as Lu shuxiang insist that classical Chinese poems should be translated in form of prose (free verse translation).

This paper will discuss the two ways of translating poems and show the Aesthetic differences between Chinese and Western Poetry. Before that, one thing that should be pointed is that this paper support Lu's theory, that is, Chinese poems should be translated in form of prose (free verse translation). Beyond that, this paper holds that poem translation should be different from general literature translation, which requires translators be more than just translators.

2 A Case Study Here is a case study of two translated versions of Chang Gan Xing by Ezra Pound and Xu Yuangchong respectively. ???? , ??????????? , ?????? Version 1(by Ezra Pound) At fifteen I stopped scowling, I desired my dust to be mingled with yours Forever and forever, and forever. Why should I clime the look out? Version 2(by Xu Yuangchong) I was fifteen when I composed my brows. To mix my dust with yours were my dear vows. Rather than break faith, you declared you'd die. Who knew I'd live alone in a tower high? This stanza embodies the merchant's wife's faithful love. The last three sentences are similar in meaning, which means that the wife is faithful to her husband.

There are allusions in them and repetition in meaning. Xu tries his best to show these allusions, but conveys to readers an obscure meaning. However, Pound finds another way to show that affection, using three “ forever” to emphasize it. The wife’s profound love and fidelity are sealed in reader’s heart. At the same time, this style creates a kind of repetition like the unending waves, which beautified itself in sound. Xu focuses on the allusion and fails to inspire his reader. ????? ,???????????? ,?????? Version 1(by Ezra Pound)

The paired butterflies are already yellow with August over the grass in the west garden— They hurt me, I grow older. Version 2(by Xu Yuangchong) The yellow butterflies in autumn pass Two by two o’er our western garden grass. This sight would break my heart, and I’m afraid, Sitting alone, my rosy cheeks would fade. It seems that “ They hurt me/I grow older” lacks logic relation; But it is just this “ leap” breaks the order of original text and intrigues readers’ imagination. Readers still can appreciate the melancholy entangled in the wife’s heart despite this “ leap”.

Actually, it is a little ironic that this kind of skill is typical in Chinese poems and Xu has omitted it. ????? ,?????? Version 1(by Ezra Pound) At fourteen I married My Lord you. I never laughed, being bashful. Version 2(by Xu Yuangchong) I was fourteen when I became your young bride, I’d often rum my bashful face aside. “???” is translated by Xu as “ I became your young Bride” in order to express the meaning “ being his wife”. But in ancient time, Chinese women had very statuses, and “ wife” can’t show this kind of phenomenon.

In Pound's version, "my lord" has a similar meaning of this and is acceptable to western readers. 3 Characteristics of Chinese Poems We should have a basic knowledge of traits of Classical Chinese poetry: Usually, the Chinese poem is fairly simple on the surface. Western culture, which was influenced by Shakespeare, Milton, and the Romantic poets, had a pronounced tendency to think of poems as ornate, elaborate creations made by a few men of genius. Chinese culture, influenced by the anonymity of the Shih Ching, had a tendency to think of poems as something written by common humanity for the eyes of other humans.

Usually the poem deals with either agrarian imagery, courtship and marriage, or dynastic concerns. The Zhou (or Chou) dynasty was agrarian in its roots, and for its people, "their sense of beauty and order is closely related to the cycles and abundance of the agricultural year," as Stephen Owen suggests. Likewise, the poems often revolve around the sorrows and joys of romance, or dealt with the heroic and legendary exploits of rulers and kings. Each poem is usually composed of lines of four syllables, usually with rhymed endings in the original Chinese.

Often these four syllables appear as four pictograms. The normal form of the courtship and marriage songs is three verses of four lines each. Only a single non-fragmentary poem consists of a single quatrain, the form that later became popular in modern Chinese poetry. The poetic principle organizing the poem is often one of contrast. Often Chinese poetry will juxtapose a natural scene with a social or personal situation. The reader of the poem

sees the similarity in the natural description and the human condition, and comes to a new awareness of each by this contrast.

In Chinese, this idea is embodied in the terms fu, bi, and xing (pronounced “shing”). Fu refers to a straightforward narrative with a beginning, middle, and conclusion, which stands by itself. Bi, literally “against,” implies a comparison or contrast, placing two things side by side. When one takes two different fu, and places them together, the two create a bi. This results in xing, a mental stimulation or “lightning” that pervades the mind of the reader, bringing new insight or awareness into the nature of the individual fu that compose the poem.

Confucius stated that this xing is the purpose of poetry, which the point of a poem was to make the mind contemplate its subject deeply. 4 Poem

Translation We must be aware that poem translation is special, let's look at the characteristics of poem translation Poem translation is quite different from the translations of novels, dramas, proses and film scripts. This is determined by its own characteristics. Then what are its characteristics?

Generally speaking, there are three prime aspects. Firstly, poem emphasizes on the beauty of tempo and meter.

A beautiful poem must have much attractiveness between the lines. When you hear some reading the charming poem, it seems that you are listening to a beautiful song. Secondly, from a lingual perspective, the languages of poem is quite succinct and the information in one unit structure. Its structure is rather different from some common lingual structures, due to the

requirement of its meter, rhythm and form. Finally, a poem is the most senior form of literature, its meter, form and idea becoming integration.

The lack of anyone of them will lead to the destruction of the whole poem. What's more, the significance should be read between the lines, because the lines consist of many constituents of imagination when the author produces the poem. That is to say, we can always see the beauty of obscurity from poems. The understanding and feeling towards a poem depends on the appreciator, time and space.

5 Appreciate Poems Based on Chinese Aesthetics Chinese art has a long history of varied styles and emphases. In ancient times philosophers were already arguing about aesthetics. Confucius emphasized the role of the arts and humanities (especially music and poetry) in broadening human nature and aiding "li" (etiquette, the rites) in bringing us back to what is essential about humanity. His opponent Mozi, however, argued that music and fine arts were classic and wasteful, benefiting the rich but not the common people. By the 4th century A. D. , artists were debating in writing over the proper goals of art as well. Gu Kaizhi has 3 surviving books on this theory of painting, for example, and it's not uncommon to find later artist/scholars who both create art and write about the creating of art.

Religious and philosophical influence on art was common (and diverse) but never universal; it is easy to find art that largely ignores philosophy and religion in almost every Chinese time period. Yihui, professor of Chinese University of Hong Kong, once said euphemistically: " brave but sometimes misguided efforts", and she explained in detail: I have no a priori objection to translations in rhymed verse; I just do not believe practising mainland

Chinese translators — in fact most translators, regardless of nationality and geographical location — have the ability to do it.

My point of view is very simple, and can be summed up as follow: 1: Only people who have the ability to write creatively in English should translate literary material into English. 2: Only people who can write creditable rhymed verse in English should try to rhyme when they translate into English. 3: The majority of mainland Chinese translators do not have the ability to write creatively in English, and I have not seen any examples of creditable English rhymed verse produced by them, i. e. here is no evidence that they have the basic skills for such a type of translation. The main problem of Xu is that he underestimate the English poems and thinks that through his translation theory he can handle every poem well. In his translation, we see many difficult words which would be even hard for western readers to understand. It serves as an inappropriate, if not wrong, example for Chinese poem translators, making them believe that any poem can be translated without much concerns. 6 Conclusion:

In aesthetics, Chinese and English literature differ a lot, which results in the difficulty in translating poems. Now many translators try to translate Chinese poems into English; but translated version always lacks beauty in the westerner's eyes. The reasons are that they don't pay much attention to the differences and still have the Chinese style thought in their mind. Poems differ a lot; literatures differ a lot; cultures differ a lot; aesthetics differ a lot. Translation should be aware of all this and find a good way to reflect the beauty, not to change it or lose it.