The Dancer and the Dance

The Dancer and the Dance: Essays in Translation Studies

Edited by

Laurence K. P. Wong and Chan Sin-wai

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING

The Dancer and the Dance: Essays in Translation Studies,
Edited by Laurence K. P. Wong and Chan Sin-wai

This book first published 2013

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-4737-2, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4737-7

CONTENTS

PREFACE

In an essay entitled "Toward a Theory of Translating" published some fifty years ago, I. A. Richards declared that translation "may very probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos." While there may be people who consider Richards's pronouncement an exaggeration, many of those who have had some experience of translating a formidable text from one language into another will agree that translation *is* a highly qualified candidate for Richards's ultimate complexity. In trying to tease out meaning from an obscure passage or in searching for the *mot juste* in the target language, they must have seen how the source text often refuses to be pinned down and come to realize why the perfect target text, or the "transparent" translation, is just a figment of some theorists' imagination. With first-hand experience of the complexity of translation, they will reject any suggestion that a translation theory can be as universally applicable as Einstein's equation, $E = mc^2$. Even if no consensus can be reached about the ultimate complexity or otherwise of translation, one thing is certain: that translation is profoundly mysterious and tantalizingly intriguing, alluring and thwarting the inquirer at the same time. Hence the endless discussions of the subject from Cicero to Saint Jerome, from Benjamin to Derrida, from Xuan Zang 玄奘 to Yan Fu 嚴復, and from Tytler to Nida, all of whom have tried, each in his own way, to come to grips with translation.

Over the centuries, particularly over the past decades, the views put forward by translation studies scholars have been extremely diverse: some of them scientific and verifiable findings worthy of the status of theories, some of them reliable principles deduced from practice, some of them observations about isolated phenomena, some of them mere speculations serving to spawn further speculations.… More often than not, many of these views—or theories, as their originators would like to call them—are at variance with each other, testifying just too cogently to the complex, mysterious, and protean nature of translation. No wonder volume after volume of essays in translation studies keeps appearing year after year, all intended to tackle the complex, probe the mysterious, or tame the protean.

Amidst the continuous churning out of essays in translation studies, a few words by way of justification for yet another collection are in order.

Over the past decades, the majority of collections have been confined to specific topics or areas, put out by those who have a theory to defend, an ideology to spread, a school of thought to champion, or a target to destroy. While such collections do have their value, and can serve various purposes, they all have similar limitations: far too narrow in scope, they tend to base their conclusions on isolated examples.

Unlike many previous collections of essays in translation studies, *The Dancer and the Dance* is a wide-ranging dialogue between many topics as well as between many types of translation: between theory and practice, between linguistic and cultural approaches, between literary and non-literary texts, between computer-aided and non-computer-aided translation…. It does not privilege any particular school or theory; through this polyphonic dialogue, it is aimed at helping the reader gain a deeper understanding of translation.

Like literary theories, many translation theories that dominate the scene today may be refuted or superseded with the passage of time. In publishing *The Dancer and the Dance*, we do not have any pretension to set up principles or theories that can last for ever, but we believe that, by providing an open forum for practitioners of translation and scholars of translation studies alike and covering as much scope as possible, we hope to be able to look at translation more objectively.

Another feature of this collection is the diversity of the authors' backgrounds. A joint effort of thirteen scholars and scholar-translators from Britain, mainland China, Taiwan, the United Arab Emirates, and Hong Kong, it contains essays which have benefited from various specialties: literary translation, linguistics, cultural studies, computer-aided translation, Chinese literature, English literature, comparative literature, creative writing, and so on. Of the scholar-translators, some, with widely read and highly acclaimed translations to their credit, are arguably among the most outstanding, particularly in the English-Chinese direction. Of the scholars of translation studies, many have played important roles in trying to unravel the mystery of translation in their monographs and journal articles. Needless to say, quite a number of authors in the collection are "amphibian"—that is, they are both theorists and practitioners.

Over the past years, more and more people have been voicing dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs in translation studies. One of the most commonly heard charges is that many articles and books on translation are nothing more than vague generalities and high-sounding jargon that befuddle rather than enlighten the reader, hardly corresponding with what is happening in actual translation. Mindful of this concern, we have considered it appropriate to steer clear of theorizing in a vacuum.

In his famous poem, “Among School Children,” Yeats, after putting a philosophical question to the chestnut-tree, goes on to reflect upon the relationship between the performer and the performance:

> O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
> Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
> O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
> How can we know the dancer from the dance?

In many ways, the relationship between the translator and the translation is similar to that between the dancer and the dance, especially in view of the fact that what goes on in the translation process—the synapse, as it were, that connects the translator and the translation—is determined by a myriad of inexplicable factors: linguistic, cultural, ideological, psychological, and idiosyncratic. In view of this, if Yeats cannot know the dancer from the dance, what hope is there for theorists of translation to know the translator from the translation? Thus, we may perhaps never be able to understand “the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos”; still, we hope that, after reading this collection of essays, the reader will be able to appreciate the dancer / translator and the dance / translation in a clearer light.

—Laurence K. P. Wong and Chan Sin-wai
April 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Dancer and the Dance is a collection of thirteen papers presented at the International Conference on Translation Studies and Translation between Chinese and English, jointly organized by the Department of Translation, The Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Warwick and held on 11-12 December 2008 at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Selected as the activity of the Faculty of Arts to celebrate the Forty-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of The Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Founding of New Asia College, it was jointly sponsored by The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Chung Chi College, and New Asia College. Although five years have now passed, we are still deeply appreciative of our sponsors' generosity and of the honour bestowed on the Conference by the University and New Asia College. Our gratitude is due especially to Professor Lawrence Lau and Professor Kenneth Young, then respectively Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University, to Professor Archie Lee, then Dean of the Faculty of Arts, to Professor Henry N. C. Wong, then Head of New Asia College, to Professor Wing Yun Kwok, then Acting Head of New Asia College, to Professor Philip Leung Yuen Sang, Head of Chung Chi College, to Professor Nigel Thrift, Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Warwick, and to Professor Susan Bassnett, then Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Warwick and Director of its Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies, all of whom have given us support in more ways than one.

Privileged to have had the delightful experience of collaborating with eleven distinguished conference participants, we would like to thank them in the order in which their papers were presented (which is also the order followed in this volume): Professor Yu Kwang-chung (Keynote Speaker), Dr. Lynne Long, Dr. Piotr Kuhiwczak, Dr. John T. Gilmore, Professor Basil Hatim, Professor Wang Ning, Professor Ching-hsi Perng, Professor Guo Jianzhong, Professor Luo Xuanmin, Professor Jin Di, and Professor Yanwing Leung. Without their scholarly papers, it would not have been possible for *The Dancer* to begin dancing. Just one month before the Conference was due to open, though, we were deeply grieved to learn that Professor Jin Di had passed away; consequently, his paper had to be read by his friend Dr. K. K. Sin, whose kindness we here gratefully acknowledge.

Our warm thanks are also due to colleagues in the Department, especially to Ms. Rosaline Chan, Ms. Florence Li, Ms. Miranda Lui, and Mr. Andy Liu, all of whom, in helping organize the Conference, admirably convinced us that a wonderful job could be done under great pressure of time. Assisting Dr. Piotr Kuhiwczak of the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Warwick, Ms. Manita So of the British University's Hong Kong Office did indispensable co-ordinating work for us. To her let us say a special "Thank you."

From the moment we decided to put together the conference papers as a collection of essays in translation studies, Ms. Miranda Lui has been tirelessly communicating with the authors, helping prepare the manuscript of the volume for publication in accordance with the *Chicago Manual of Style*. For her quality work, we owe her many heartfelt thanks. We would also like to thank our colleague Mr. Duncan Poupard, who has read the proofs with a keen eye for detail and made many valuable suggestions.

Working on the book since 2009, we have been in constant touch with Ms. Carol Koulikourdi of Cambridge Scholars Publishing. For her efficiency and professionalism, we would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation. Finally, we owe a special debt of gratitude to Cambridge Scholars Publishing, without whose acceptance of our book proposal *The Dancer and the Dance* would not have been able to see the light of day.

—Laurence K. P. Wong and Chan Sin-wai
April 2013

THE POET AS TRANSLATOR

YU KWANG-CHUNG
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS,
SUN YAT-SEN UNIVERSITY, TAIWAN

[I]

It is said that "poetry can be translated by poets only." This view, however, is challenged by the fact that noted recent translators of poetry, such as Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋, Yang Xianyi 楊憲益, Shi Yingzhou 施穎洲, Wang Zuoliang 王佐良, Xu Yuanchong 許淵沖, Arthur Waley, David Hawkes, Ching-hsi Perng 彭鏡禧, and Serena Jin 金聖華, are not themselves poets. As no one insists that "essays can be translated by essayists only" or "novels can only be rendered by novelists," it implies that of all literary genres poetry is the hardest to translate and poetry translation, therefore, should be left to poets.

The sorry truth is that most poets are inadequate for the task, for a poet is free to choose his own subject matter and verse form, but a translator must comply with that of the original work. A poet is expected to express himself at his best, yet a translator is expected to best serve his author. But how can contemporary poets, who have not disciplined themselves in regular prosody, and who advocate and practise "free verse," be expected to tackle such conventional forms as the sonnet, the couplet, or the quatrain? How can the same hand, long used only to "free verse" in its habitual looseness, at a moment's notice, turn to classical forms with all their prosodic constraints? No wonder the unpleasant encounter often results in uneven lines and unnatural rhymes.

Besides, a translator must know at least one foreign language, to render which he must have full understanding of the source, full mastery of the target, and sufficient knowledge of what the original work is about. Thus, I often assert that the translator is a scholar without a treatise and a writer without creative writing. Basically, a translator is a kind of scholar, yet ordinary poets are not necessarily competent scholars, not even in terms of poetics. Furthermore, they may not be adequately bilingual.

[II]

When I was in senior high, I was thrilled to find translated poems in my textbook of Chinese. The original was "The Isles of Greece," an excerpt from Byron's epic satire *Don Juan*, translated by Su Manshu 蘇曼殊, Ma Junwu 馬君武, and Hu Shi 胡適 respectively in forms of seven-character stop-short, seven-character old verse, and rhapsodic *Li sao* style. As soon as I received the textbook, I chanted the translations to myself again and again and, deeply touched, promised myself that one day I would also be a translator.

All these translators were poets: Su and Ma in the classic tradition, while Hu, though essentially not a poet *par excellence*, had ridden high on the New Literature Movement and become a pioneer of modern Chinese poetry. Fortunately, for the translation of Byron's poem, his choice was the rhapsodic style of Qu Yuan 屈原, which reads much better than the vernacular style he did his best to promote.

Usually, a poet renders poetry in three ways: from a foreign language into his mother tongue, from his mother tongue into a foreign language, or from his own poetry into a foreign tongue.

The most popular practice, of course, is translating foreign poetry into one's mother tongue, which requires thorough understanding of the former and sure mastery of the latter, a process of "entrance" into the mother tongue. On the other hand, translating poetry from one's mother tongue into a foreign language requires a sufficient grasp of the former and a full mastery of the latter, a process of "exit," which also means "entrance" into an alien realm, a process, as is to be expected, less convenient than the other way round. Understandably, since the May-Fourth Movement, most Chinese poets, including Hu Shi, Guo Moruo 郭沫若, Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, Liang Zongdai 梁宗岱, Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, Feng Zhi 馮至, and Mu Dan 穆旦, have rendered foreign poems into Chinese, but very few have made efforts in the opposite direction. The same is true, recently, of the English-speaking world, as exemplified by John Ciardi's version of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Rex Warner's of Euripides's *Medea*, Horace Gregory's of Catallus's lyrics, and Roy Campbell's of Calderon's *La vida es sueño*. But examples in the opposite direction are rare, not to mention turning contemporary works into ancient languages. The same, again, applies to the history of English literature before the twentieth century, which abounded in poet-translators like Wyatt and Surrey, Chapman, Dryden, Pope, Cowper, and Rossetti, who contributed so much with their English versions of Homer, Dante, Villon, and other classics.

[III]

In translating foreign classics into one's mother tongue, however, there is yet a suspicious realm where certain translations can be accepted in the name of adaptation, rewriting, transfiguration, or transformation, in a word, what Shakespeare called "sea change," without necessarily becoming "rich and strange." Positive examples should include Jonson's "To Celia," adapted from the *Epistles of Philostratus*, and Pope's "Solitude," modelled upon Horace's *Epode II*. A famous but not positive example is Ezra Pound's "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter," borrowed from Li Bai's 李白 "*Changgan Xing*"〈長干行〉("A Song of Changgan"), in the music-bureau style:

妾髮初覆額，折花門前劇。
郎騎竹馬來，遶床弄青梅。
同居長干里，兩小無嫌猜。
十四為君婦，羞顏未嘗開。
低頭向暗壁，千喚不一回。
十五始展眉，願同塵與灰。
常存抱柱信，豈上望夫臺？
十六君遠行，瞿塘灩澦堆，
五月不可觸，猿聲天上哀。
門前遲行跡，一一生綠苔。
苔深不能掃，落葉秋風早。
八月蝴蝶黃，雙飛西園草，
感此傷妾心，坐愁紅顏老。
早晚下三巴，預將書報家。
相迎不道遠，直至長風沙。

The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.
At fourteen I married My Lord you.
I never laughed, being bashful.
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
Forever and forever and forever
Why should I climb the lookout?
At sixteen you departed,
You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,
And you have been gone five months.
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.
You dragged your feet when you went out.
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
Too deep to clear them away!
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
Over the grass in the West garden;
They hurt me. I grow older.
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,
Please let me know beforehand,
And I will come out to meet you
As far as Cho-fu-sa.

Let us look first at the verse form. The Chinese original is a poem in five-character old verse which is less strict in its rhyme scheme. The English version is unrhymed, which is passable, but the uneven lines are at variance with the neatness of the original. A saving merit, however, is that most of the lines in English are end-stopped like their Chinese counterparts. Semantically, there are quite a few errors. "Bamboo horse" (*zhu ma* 竹馬) is misread as "bamboo stilts," resulting in a grotesque scene. The allusion in "faith that holds to a bridge" (*bao zhu xin* 抱柱信) would be too complicated to keep; its omission is only reasonable. "You have been gone five months" (*wu yue bu ke chu* 五月不可觸) is again a misreading: it means "you should steer clear of the midstream rocks in the fifth month (when they are submerged by the summer flood)." The error in "You dragged your feet … the different mosses" (*menqian chi xingji, yiyi sheng lütai* 門前遲行跡，一一生綠苔) arises from a misinterpretation of "wait" for "late" (遲). The two lines actually mean: "The footprints I left while waiting for you have one by one been overgrown with moss." "Yellow with August" is very beautiful and worthy of Imagism, but, here, according to the Chinese lunar calendar, the "eighth month" refers rather to September. Lastly, "They hurt me. I grow older." is too prosaic, too weak to suggest the keenly lyrical complaint of a helpless young wife vainly waiting at home, not to mention the visual appeal of youthful rosy countenance (*hongyan* 紅顏).

The three place names in the poem, full of echoes of ancient China, were transliterated into Japanese as Chokan, Ku-to-yen, Cho-fu-sa, which ring no bell, of course, to the English ear. "Cho-fu-sa" (*chang fengsha* 長風沙), for instance, means "long wind and sand," highly suggestive in Chinese of inclement weather on a long journey and is a felicitous association with "I will come to greet you, however long the way" (*xiangying bu dao yuan, zhizhi chang fengsha* 相迎不道遠，直至長風沙). The absurd fact is Pound did not know Chinese: his free handling of *The Book of Songs* and Li Bai owed much to the manuscripts of Fenellosa. His pretentious "translation" of Chinese classics is thus only retranslation which retains even Japanese transliterations of proper nouns and presents Li Bai as Riha-Ku. Godfather of modernism and "Big Brother" (*il miglior fabbro*) of Hemingway, Joyce, and, in particular, T. S. Eliot, Pound was a polyglot of erratic erudition, who delighted in mixing the ancient with the modern, the English with the European, and the Western with the Oriental, into an impressive *mélange* of culture. He had a way of salvaging classicism, medievalism, and orientalism and gleaning something out of these new themes and forms so that his brilliant open smuggling across international literary borders has passed as "translation," but somehow reminds me of collage in modern art. T. S. Eliot, his junior partner, even boasted that Pound "invented Chinese poetry." No wonder his daring and resourceful piracy was described by Yeats as "more style than form … a style constantly interrupted, broken, twisted into nervous obsession, nightmare, stammering confusion" and as typical of "a brilliant improvisator translating at sight from an unknown Greek masterpiece."

[IV]

To date, I have written nearly 1,000 poems of my own and translated nearly 500 pieces by other poets. The latter category includes about 200 from English and American verse, and sixty Turkish poems retranslated from English versions. Of the 200 or so rendered into English are some one hundred from my own poetry and the rest from classical Chinese poetry and contemporary poetry from Taiwan. I can assert without hesitation that my translations of English and American poets are positively much more reliable than Pound's adaptations from Chinese verse. My mastery of Chinese is no less competent than Pound's of his mother tongue, but, since I have taught English poetry for forty years at college, my knowledge of the subject naturally far exceeds Pound's slight acquaintance with his. I hope the statement will not be taken as self-complacency. English has been a compulsory course in our high

school curriculum for almost a century; the English proficiency of the Chinese people is, of course, greater than the Chinese proficiency of the English so that our language has been increasingly anglicized to a point where it is much more convenient to render English into Chinese than vice versa. Through sustained conditioning of the education system, our language has come a long way in adapting itself to English, but, on the other hand, English has not yet begun its adaptation to Chinese. This may be easily explained by looking at Cui Hao's 崔顥 "*Changgan Xing*"〈長干行〉("A Song of Changgan"):

家臨九江水，
來去九江側：
同是長干人，
生小不相識。

Such a sentiment, if expressed by a present-day poet in the so-called "new verse," may read as follows:

我家啊就在長江的邊上，
所以來來去去都不外岸邊：
我們原來是南京的同鄉，
卻從小就沒有機會見面。

In what way is the new verse "new" after all? There is nothing new here except the grammar, which is more anglicized and features additional form words. This is why it is more convenient today to render English into Chinese, which is to some extent already anglicized, than to render Chinese into English, which is not sinicized at all. This is also why a reader of my Chinese translations of English poetry, which closely follow the versification of the original, whether in rhyming or in line pattern, can tell, even at a glance, how the original looks and sounds. John Dryden's "Epigram on Milton" is a typical example:

三位詩人，遠生在三個時代，
為希臘、義大利、英國添光采。
第一人以思想之高超出眾，
第二人以雄偉，第三人兼通：
造化之功更無力向前推移，
為生第三人惟將前二人合一。

Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed,
The next in majesty, in both the last:
The force of nature could no farther go;
To make a third, she joined the former two.

Obviously, my lines are composed in heroic couplets. The next example is Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," composed in a unique combination of English quatrain and the typical Dantesque *terza rima*, the rhyme scheme closely associated with *The Divine Comedy*:

我想我認得這座森林。
林主的房子就在前村；
卻見不到我在此歇馬，
看他林中飄滿的雪景。

我的小馬一定很驚訝，
周圍望不見什麼人家，
竟在一年最暗的黃昏，
寒林和冰湖之間停下。

馬兒搖響身上的串鈴，
問我這地方該不該停。
此外只有微風拂雪片，
再也聽不到其他聲音。

森林又暗又深真可羨，
但是我已經有約在先，
還要趕多少路才安眠，
還要趕多少路才安眠。

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

It is demanding to translate a poem in traditional prosody. On the other hand, no less difficult is it to render a poem in "free verse" into a style spontaneous and fluent yet free from sloppy prose. The following is the first passage from my translation of T. S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi":

「好冷的，那次旅途，
撿到一年最壞的季節
出門，出那樣的遠門。
道路深陷，氣候凌人，
真正的隆冬。」
駝群擦破了皮，害著腳痛，難以駕馭，
就那麼躺在融雪之上。
好幾次，我們懊喪地想起
半山的暑宮，成排的坡屋，
還有裸衣少女進冰過的甜食。
然後是駝奴們罵人，發牢騷，
棄隊而逃，去找烈酒和女人，
營火熄滅，無處可投宿，
大城仇外，小城不可親，
村落不乾淨，開價還很高:
苦頭，我們真吃夠。
終於我們還是挑夜裡趕路，
趕一陣睡一陣，
而一些聲音在耳邊吟唱，說
這完全是愚蠢。

"A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter."
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.

There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters.
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

[V]

From my experience of translating into English from classical Chinese poetry, from modern Chinese poetry in Taiwan, and from my own poems, I find the first to be the hardest task. Brevity is the soul of classical Chinese poetry, that is, brevity enriched with condensed suggestiveness and associations. Such concentration often dispenses with grammatical elements, such as preposition, conjunction, pronoun, and even subject and object, elements indispensable in English. These have to be provided in English translation with the result of uncontrollable syntax and unwieldy lines. For instance, in Chinese two closely related nouns often go together without the help of a preposition or conjunction, such as "river village" instead of "village by the river" or "riverside village," or "river moon" instead of "moon on the river." Again, to be fully intelligible in translation, the last line of Su Shi's 蘇軾 famous poem, "*Chibi huaigu*"〈赤壁懷古〉("Nostalgic Thoughts at Red Cliff"), "*yi zun huan lei jiang yue*" "一樽還酹江月" (literally, "a cup to toast river moon"), has to be elaborated as "Let me offer a libation to the moonlit river" or even "I'll pour a cup of wine on the moon's reflection on the river," which would be too verbose to sound poetic.

Allusion is also a problem. Literal translation would be hardly intelligible and downright cumbersome, to say nothing of the interruption of the smooth flow of syntax. On the other hand, free translation would miss the associations with history or myth. Furthermore, places called by their old names, such as "*Wu tou Chu wei* 吳頭楚尾" ("where Wu began and Chu ended") or "*sai bei jiang nan* 塞北江南" ("north of the Wall and south of the River"), would sound flat and abstract.

Yet the worst ordeal, perhaps, is to cope with prosody. In lines of either five characters or seven, the variety attained by dividing a line into two sections or phrases, one of even-number characters (two or four) and the other of odd (three), can hardly correspond with the shifting caesura in English prosody. The balance and contrast of even tones with deflected ones, too, are the translator's despair. Also, to sound steady and spontaneous, rhyming demands experienced virtuosity. It takes a masterly craftsman to arrange the syntax so that the rhyming word appears at the end of the line. Such a manoeuvre often involves the restructuring of neighbouring lines, even a whole stanza. An awkward hand often betrays itself where the rhyming is contrived. I have translated about forty classical Chinese poems, many of which I did for quotation in my English articles. The following are two examples, the former by Su Shi and the latter by Gu Xiong 顧敻:

〈題西林寺壁〉

橫看成嶺側成峰，
遠近高低各不同。
不識廬山真面目，
只緣身在此山中。

〈訴衷情〉

永夜拋人何處去？
　絕來音，
　香閣掩，
　眉斂，
　月將沉，
爭忍不相尋？
　怨孤衾，
　換我心，
　為你心，
始知相憶深。

Inscribed on the Wall of Xilin Temple

A ridge in full view, but, sideways, a peak:
With distance and angle the spectacles change.
The truth about Mount Lu is hard to tell
So long as you're within the mountain range.

The Heart's Complaint

Whither have you gone all night long,
Message there's none?
My bower's shut,
My brows knit,
The moon about to set.
How could you keep me awaiting?
O the lonely bed:
Just exchange
Your heart with mine
To know how much I pine.

[VI]

Among contemporary poets in Taiwan there are quite a few who are scholarly and well versed in English: some did translate their own poetry, and even compiled a whole anthology of poetry in English translation, Wai-lim Yip and Dominic Cheung being two good examples. To the *Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Literature* in English translation, compiled by the National Bureau of Compilation and Translation in Taipei, I also contributed my translations of eighty poems by my fellow poets. The bilingual *Shouyeren* 《守夜人》(*The Night Watchman*), published in 2004, is a selection of eighty-five of my own poems, which I personally rendered into English.

In the long history of English literature I have not yet found a single case of any noted poet who published a book of his own verse rendered into a foreign language all by himself. This is perhaps because poets in the West can wait to be translated after they have won international fame. The fact is that European writers and scholars are often polyglots, even in the major languages. Now that English has practically become a world language, writers in the English-speaking countries can concentrate on mastering their mother tongue without worrying about wining foreign readers directly in the original or through translation. Our ancestors, poets like Li Bai, Bai Juyi 白居易, and Su Shi, did not have to worry either. Students in neighbouring Japan, Chosen, and Annam used to know Chinese; so Chinese writers did not need the mediation of translators. Yet contemporary Asian poets, including those writing in Chinese, do need such mediation if they wish to appeal to the English-speaking world or even to their Asian neighbours. Since competent translators in verse are even fewer than those in other literary genres, the poor poets themselves, who think they are able, have to try their own hands at it.

I have heard a witticism that there are three things one has to do in one's mother tongue: swear, say one's will, and write poetry. I can think and write in English while working on a paper, but cannot express my lyrical feelings, namely, compose a poem, in any language except my mother tongue. It is a different matter, however, to render my own poetry because the feeling is already there in full expression, ready to be transformed into another tongue. Misunderstanding is impossible, but so is the demand to match up with the original. The best one can expect is approximation, with the degree of approximation depending on one's mastery of the target language.

I have studied English poetry for sixty years and taught it off and on for more than thirty. Its imagery, rhythm, rhyme, and syntax have been absorbed into the depths of my sensibility to become a part of my *ars poetica*. The basic metrical patterns, such as iambic pentameter and tetrameter, have long taken root in the recesses of my auditory memory so that I breathe iambs and trochees, so much so that when I divide a poem into equal sections, the stanzaic form is readily available; and when I compose a poem without stanzaic division, blank verse offers itself to combine with the undivided verse of seven-character lines in the Chinese tradition into a rich alloy of flexibility to allow, on the one hand, a sustained complex sentence to expand across many lines and, on the other, more freedom in the rhyme scheme. Since my poetry has benefited so much from English versification, it becomes easier, of course, for it to be rendered into English, a process of mutual compatibility and agreeable exchange, widely different from the ordeal of turning classical Chinese verse into English.

The English translations by Shelley from Greek, Roman, and German poets, though not on a large scale, proved to be a fruitful discipline. His exercise in rendering fifty lines or so from *The Divine Comedy* did acquaint himself with *terza rima*, so that, when he wrote "Ode to the West Wind," he was resourceful enough to combine Dante's stanza and Shakespearean sonnet with great success in rhyming sonority and syntactical suspense. In addition to my study and teaching of English verse, I have translated much from it and so have subjected myself to a severer discipline than Shelley, which I find quite rewarding when it is my turn to ask its help. Thus to a bilingual poet creation and translation may be complementary and fruitful to his poetic art. The following are four poems of mine in my own English rendition. The former two are in the traditional form of regular stanzaic division. The latter two are undivided whole pieces partly inheriting ancient Chinese style and partly adopting blank verse from Western prosody.

〈民歌〉

傳說北方有一首民歌
只有黃河的肺活量能歌唱
從青海到黃海
　風　也聽見
　沙　也聽見

如果黃河凍成了冰河
還有長江最最母性的鼻音
從高原到平原
　魚　也聽見
　龍　也聽見

如果長江凍成了冰河
還有我，還有我的紅海在呼嘯
從早潮到晚潮
　醒　也聽見
　夢　也聽見

有一天我的血也結冰
還有你的血他的血在合唱
從 A 型到 O 型
　哭　也聽見
　笑　也聽見

A Folk Song

By legend a song was sung in the north
By the Yellow River, with her mighty lungs.
From Blue Sea to Yellow Sea,
　It's heard in the wind,
　And heard in the sand.

If the Yellow River froze into icy river,
There's the Long River's most motherly hum.
From the plateau to the plain,
　It's heard by the dragon,
　And heard by the fish.

If the Long River froze into icy river,
There's myself, my Red Sea howling in me.
From high tide to low tide,

It's heard full awake,
And heard full asleep.

If one day my blood, too, shall freeze hard,
There's the choir of your blood and his blood.
From type A to type O,
It's heard while crying
And heard while laughing.

〈冰姑雪姨〉
—— 懷念水家的兩位美人

冰姑你不要再哭了
再哭，海就要滿了
北極熊就沒有家了
許多港就要淹了
許多島就要沉了
不要哭了，冰姑

以前怪你太冷酷了
可遠望，不可以親暱
都說你是冰美人哪
患了自戀的潔癖
矜持得從不心軟
不料你一哭就化了

雪姨你不要再逃了
再逃，就怕真失蹤了
一年年音信都稀了
就見面也會認生了
變瘦了，又匆匆走了
不要再逃了，雪姨

以前該數你最美了
降落時那麼從容
比雨阿姨輕盈多了
潔白的芭蕾舞鞋啊
紛紛旋轉在虛空
像一首童歌，像夢

不要再哭了，冰姑
鎖好你純潔的冰庫

關緊你透明的冰樓
守住兩極的冰宮吧
把新鮮的世界保住
不要再哭了，冰姑

不要再躲了，雪姨
小雪之後是大雪
漫天而降吧，雪姨
曆書等你來兌現
來吧，親我仰起的臉
不要再躲了，雪姨

Aunt Ice, Aunt Snow
— in memory of two beauties in the Water family

Aunt Ice, please cry no more
Or the seas will spill all over,
And homeless will be the polar bear,
And harbors will be flooded,
And islands will go under.
Cry no more please, Aunt Ice.

We blamed you for being so cold,
Fit to behold, but not to hold.
We called you the Icy Beauty,
Mad with self-love on keeping clean,
Too proud ever to become soft.
Yet, when you cry so hard, you melt.

Aunt Snow, please hide no more
Or you will truly disappear.
Almost a stranger year after year,
When you do come, you're less familiar,
Thinner and gone again sooner.
Please hide no more, Aunt Snow.

You were beloved as the fairest:
With such grace you used to descend,
Even more lightly than Aunt Rain.
Such pure white ballerina shoes
Drift in a whirl out of heaven
Like a nursery song, a dream.

Cry no more please, Aunt Ice.
Lock up your rich treasury,

Shut tight your translucent tower,
And guard your palaces at the poles
To keep the world cool and fresh.
Cry no more please, Aunt Ice.

Hide no more please, Aunt Snow.
“Light Snow is followed by Heavy Snow.”
Descend in avalanche, Aunt Snow!
Your show the Lunar Pageant waits.
Come and kiss my upturned face.
Hide no more please, Aunt Snow.

〈如果遠方有戰爭〉

如果遠方有戰爭，我應該掩耳
或是該坐起來，慚愧地傾聽？
應該掩鼻，或應該深呼吸
難聞的焦味？我的耳朵應該
聽你喘息著愛情或是聽榴彈
宣揚真理？格言，勳章，補給
能不能餵飽無饜的死亡？
如果有戰爭煎一個民族，在遠方
有戰車狠狠地犁過春泥
有嬰孩在號啕，向母親的屍體
號啕一個盲啞的明天
如果有尼姑在火葬自己
寡慾的脂肪炙響絕望
燒曲的四肢抱住涅槃
為了一種無效的手勢。 如果
我們在床上，他們在戰場
在鐵絲網上播種著和平
我應該惶恐，或是該慶幸
慶幸是做愛，不是肉搏
是你的裸體在懷裡，不是敵人
如果遠方有戰爭，而我們在遠方
你是慈悲的天使，白羽無疵
你俯身在病床，看我在床上
缺手，缺腳，缺眼，缺乏性別
在一所血腥的戰地醫院
如果遠方有戰爭啊這樣的戰爭
吾愛，如果我們在遠方

If There's a War Raging Afar

If there's a war raging afar, shall I stop my ear
Or shall I sit up and listen in shame?
Shall I stop my nose or breathe and breathe
The smothering smoke of troubled air? Shall I hear
You gasp lust and love or shall I hear the howitzers
Howl their sermons of truth? Mottoes, medals, widows,
Can these glut the greedy palate of Death?
If far away a war is frying a nation,
And fleets of tanks are ploughing plots in spring,
A child is crying at its mother's corpse
Of a dumb and blind and deaf tomorrow;
If a nun is squatting on her fiery bier
With famished flesh singeing despair
And black limbs ecstatic round Nirvana
As a hopeless gesture of hope. If
We are in bed, and they're in the field
Sowing peace in acres of barbed wire,
Shall I feel guilty or shall I feel glad,
Glad I'm making, not war, but love,
And in my arms writhes your nakedness, not the foe's?
If afar there rages a war, and there we are
You a merciful angel, clad all in white
And bent over the bed, with me in bed
Without hand or foot or eye or without sex
In a field hospital that smells of blood.
If a war O such a war is raging afar,
My love, if right there we are.

〈翠玉白菜〉

前身是緬甸或雲南的頑石
被怎樣敏感的巧腕
用怎樣深刻的雕刀
一刀刀，挑筋剔骨
從輝石玉礦的牢裡
解救了出來，被瑾妃的纖指
愛撫得更加細膩，被觀眾
艷羨的眼神，燈下聚焦
一代又一代，愈寵愈亮
通體流暢，含蓄著內斂的光
亦翠亦白，你已不再
僅僅是一塊玉，一棵菜

只因當日，那巧匠接你出來
卻自己將精魂耿耿
投生在玉胚的深處
不讓時光緊迫地追捕
凡藝術莫非是弄假成真
弄假成真，比真的更真
否則那栩栩的螽斯，為何
至今還執迷不醒，還抱著
猶翠的新鮮，不肯下來
或許，他就是玉匠轉胎。

The Emerald White Cabbage

Ore-born of Burmese or Yunnan descent,
By whose hand, sensitive and masterly,
Driving and drilling its way so surely,
Leaving clean all the tendons and bones,
Are you released from the jadeite jail?
Refined further by the fingers of Jin,
The royal concubine, and polished bright
By the spectators' adoring gaze
Focused under the light, year after year,
Until a liquid clarity is lit within,
Verdant and pearly; no longer are you
Merely a piece of jade or a cabbage
Since the day the sculptor set you free
And left, instead, his own devoted soul
Reincarnate in the womb of the jade,
Beyond the relentless pursuit of time.
Art is simply play become truth,
Truth at play, even truer than real.
Or why is that vivid katydid,
Unmoved in its belief, still holding on
To the fresh green without regret?
Perhaps it's the sculptor in his rebirth.

For half a century in Taiwan, modern poetry has been composed without punctuation marks, especially at the end of a line, leaving its reader to find out for himself where the sentence begins and ends and how a line is related grammatically to its context, a cause for frequent misunderstanding. It has been my practice in translation to fill up all the missing marks to enable the reader to fully grasp what I mean and, at the same time, to show that my poem can stand close grammatical analysis. It is my belief that a poem is liable to obscurity if it fails the test of logic.