

从诗到诗

中国古诗词英译

FROM POEM TO POEM

An English Translation of Classical Chinese Poems

Translated by REN ZHIJI YU ZHENG

任治稷 余正 译



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前言

朱绩崧 译

罗伯特·弗罗斯特氏尝言：“夫诗者，失于译者也。”未必尽然。极目宇内，诗词译作何止千万，足证斯言之非。而读者诸君凡经眼此卷译诗者，即可知其佳胜之处有三：词义忠信，风神依旧，文采瞻郁。即有所失，不亦微乎。

然论译诗之艰，弗氏此语可谓通人剖言之至。窃以为，译诗人非有生就诗才不可，得以风骚玄悟，饕纳原诗，然后消之化之，融汇性灵，腹中心中，羹沸迭荡，为梦为魔。其神入之深，情专之初，即金圣叹^①所谓“必欲说出之一句说话”是也。于译入之文字，更须渤涉嵩览，静味细玩，方可译出原诗意境。一如歌人，曲不竟讴，则须臾难休。是故，必先吞隋珠，后吐和璧，而诗之良译可待矣。

任兄治稷教授先生，乃吾四十年老友，昔日长与畅论英文并其余诸事，多承惠泽教益。一至“文革”兴起，共为肖小诬作“裴多菲俱乐部互相吹捧之徒”。以其造诣精微，翻译诗词，固非峻业。兄生而具奥德赛之气质，此非言有贪奇弄险之趣，实谓有怀旧追往之好。遥记当年，以英文酬唱，互指疵瑕，相与为乐。兄文中有一佳句，未尝或忘：“忽听子规啼。山深空留音。闻者思慈亲。”

任兄移寓美国之时，已逾盛年。异域新邦之奇固亦娱人，然淹留者惟冥思过往而已。是以所译诗词，多遡柬抚昔恋乡之作，未足奇也。大凡善感游子，若非犷然逞志于他国主流者，其必如米兰·昆德拉氏，回望前尘，心情悸动，于焉萌甦之情，何其渊默，犹如荷马史诗，任兄佳译如“独怆然而涕下”句（见第6页）亦然如此。若夫“儿童……笑问客从何处来”（见第4页）之语，看似戏谑，然内中自有深隽慨叹。窃以为兄或以此诗句，聊慰入异乡随异俗之无奈。由此观之，兄之所译，非特囿于歌诗一区，洵为美利坚羁客文学之一例哉。

以诗艺论，任兄雅好凝炼，不拘文法之桎梏，不落赘词冗句之巢臼，真知

诗之三昧者。修辞藻绘，若“联觉”之类（如“复照青苔上”之译句，见第17页），惟契合文脉处，方得见用。韵律之于诗歌，齐格高氏^②所谓“非此即彼，不可兼得”者。而兄犀心梦笔，无不信手拈来。英美诗学，素尊家法，究其本源，则莎士比亚之“白诗”也。兄之译作，遣句宁舍韵而从律，琅琅可诵，盖俾英语读者习惯便利之故耳！

余正老弟，襄理译事，惜我与其交识尚浅。曩在海上，负笈复旦，任兄与我尝授课业，以为有卓越同伦之秀。因知此君，勤勉谦退，讷于虚言而敏于躬践。拙序嘉赞未多，千祈勿罪。

1. 金圣叹（1608—1661），本名采，字若采，入清后改名人瑞，字圣叹。吴县（今江苏苏州）人。在致家伯长文昌书信中，尝云：“诗非异物、只是人人心头舌尖所万不获已，必欲说出之一句说话耳。”
2. 通译“克尔凯郭尔”。

FOR
MY DEAREST GRANDDAUGHTERS
AUDREY & CLAUDIA

Foreword

Lu Gusun

Robert Frost said, "Poetry is what gets lost in translation." Not necessarily: that thousands upon thousands of poems get translated back and forth in the world is evidence enough to the contrary. And if you, dear Reader, take a look at the poems translated in this book, you'll find the meaning conveyed faithfully, cultural milieu kept intact, and the poetic ethos enriched. Little, if anything, is lost.

Nevertheless, nobody has dwelt with greater cogency upon the enormous difficulty involved in poetry translation than Frost in the above-quoted remark. As I see it, translation of poetry requires that the translator has the makings of a poet in him or her. He / She absorbs the source poems with innate poetic sensibilities until they become part of his / her aesthetic being. The empathy is such that the absorbed poems stir, agitate, even haunt him / her, making the utterance of them an absolute must as Jin Shengtian (a literary critic of the Ming Dynasty) said. By now the translator has to turn to be a poet in the target language in his / her own right, relying on an abundance of prior poetic experience in it. A songster, as it were, cannot enjoy a minute of peace of mind unless the song is sung. Poetry translation worth its salt invariably involves such a receptive-productive process.

Professor Ren Zhiji or Charles Jen as he is known in the US, as old friend of mine since the 1960s, from whom I've learned a lot as it was our wont to discuss matters concerning English and other subjects so much so that during the "cultural revolution" in China we were accused of "scratching each other's back in a coterie like the Hungarian Petrofi Club", has enough qualifications of this kind and to spare. He was born an Odysseus, not that he seeks adventures, but that he is a nostalgic by nature. I remember swapping writings in English with him for comment or pleasure reading in the early 1960s. One sentence in one of his essays has never escaped my memory: "Suddenly a cuckoo called. The only audibility in the mountains. And we were thinking of mother."

For Ren, emigration happened when he had outlived an ardent age. What remains now is no longer the ecstasy of new horizons but rather the apotheosis of memory. No wonder he has zeroed in on ancient Chinese poetry mostly with a motif of nostalgia and homesickness. People notice that unless he / she is a *dolce vita* in the mainstream, a feeling *émigré*, like Milan Kundera, cannot but look back and sing with a heart throbbing with emotion worthy of a Homeric epic: "Alone, in a sadness sublime, / And tears come." (see page 6) Greater pathos is couched in seemingly light-hearted lines such as "Kids... / Asked me smiling where's my home" (see page 4) I feel my old friend is tackling a reconciliation with the finitude of life with these lines. In this sense, the value of Ren's translations far exceeds poetry alone but is a good sample of diasporic literature.

Technically, Ren's preference to condensed, succinct phrasal utterances instead of to drawn-out, grammatically viable sentences shows how well he grasps the quintessence of poetry. Stylistic devices like synesthesia (e.g. "Green moss lit up by the echoing flare", see page 17) abound only

where they are comfortably apt. Rhythm and rhyming are continuously a Kierkegaard Either / Or proposition in poetry translation. Ren handles both with aplomb; unrhymed but pleasantly rhythmic lines are fully justified especially when the translator aims at an English-speaking readership accustomed to a time-honored poetic tradition traceable to Shakespeare's blank verse.

Mr. Yu Zheng, the other translator, is but a slight acquaintance. He did excel among his age peers when he studied at Fudan University, Shanghai, in a class which both Ren and I taught. He has since been remembered as an assiduous and affable young man—with few words but a lot of promise. If he doesn't feature prominently in this foreword, I sincerely beg his pardon.

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