

Chinese-English Edition / With Chinese Phonetic Symbols

300 GEMS OF CLASSICAL CHINESE POETRY

Translated by Xu Yuanchong



北京大学出版社
PEKING UNIVERSITY PRESS

许渊冲译

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序

荣获诺贝尔物理奖的杨振宁教授为我的回忆录《逝水年华》英文本写了序言。他说：“这是一个中英法三种文字的诗人写下的回忆录。我读后再一次体会到诗人的生活和科学家的是多么不同。许多年前，英国诗人艾略特（20世纪20年代荣获诺贝尔文学奖）来参观普林斯顿高等学术研究所，有一天，在所长奥本海默家举行的招待会上，奥本海默对他说：‘在物理方面，我们设法解释以前大家不理解的现象；在诗歌方面，你们设法描述大家早就理解的东西。’许在这本回忆录中写道：‘科学研究的是一加一等于二；艺术研究的是一加一等于三。’不知道他的意见和奥本海默有无相通之处。”

美国桂冠诗人弗洛斯特说过：诗说一指二（说的是一回事，意思却是另一回事）。而科学家说什么，意思就是什么（说一是一，说二是二）。换句话说，他讲的是真理，可以用公式表明如下： $1+1=2$ 。另一方面，诗人写诗却往意大于言，这就是说，写诗不是科学，而是艺术，可以用公式表明如下： $1+1=3$ 。例如唐代诗人李商隐在写给他情人的《无题》诗中有一个名句：“春蚕到死丝方尽”，如果这句诗的意思只是春蚕吐丝到死方休，那诗人说什么，意思就是什么，这句诗可以公式化为 $1+1=2$ 。但是诗句中的“丝”和“思”同音，实际上诗人的意思是说：他对情人的相思要到死方休。他说的是一回事，意思却是另一回事，而且意大于言，所以可公式化为 $1+1=3$ 。读者还可以把这句诗理解为：人人工作都该鞠躬尽瘁，死而后已，像蚕吐丝一样。那么读者理解的意思又大于诗人的原意，可以公式化为 $1+1=4$ 。

不管是3或4,反正都大于2,所以公式都是 $1+1>2$ 。在我看来,这是科学和艺术的分别之一。

科学和艺术不同,却对艺术有很大的影响,包括对译诗的艺术。杨振宁打破了宇称守恒定律,得到了诺贝尔物理奖,但“守恒”也可以应用于译诗的艺术,那就是对等和对称。如果诗人说什么,意思就是什么,译成外文,译文和原文是可能对等的。如果原文说的是蚕丝,意思却是相思,那只译蚕丝就和原文不对等了。根据宇称守恒定律,在强相互作用中,宇称是守恒的,也就是说,物理规律在最深的层次上是左右对等的,左边和右边是没有区别的;但在弱相互作用中,宇称却不守恒。应用到译诗的艺术中来,则可以说原文的内容和形式的关系是强相互作用,所以是统一的,是守恒的。但原文和译文的关系却是弱相互作用,并不守恒,也就是说,有时统一,有时矛盾。如以西方文字而论,统一大于矛盾,据电子计算机统计,90%以上可以对等;如以中文和英文而论,则矛盾大于统一,只有40%可以对等。在诗词英译时,如果形式对等而内容不对等,如译文吐丝并不表示相思,那就要使内容尽可能对等,化弱相互作用为强相互作用,说成诗人相思不尽,正如春蚕吐丝不止,到死方休。(这个译文可以联系李商隐的另一诗句“庄生晓梦迷蝴蝶”,说庄子梦见自己变成蝴蝶,也可能自己是蝴蝶变成的。因此这句中的春蚕也和诗人合而为一,吐出相思之丝,到死丝才尽了。)这个译文虽然忠实于原文的内容,但并不忠于原文的形式,读者可能认为并不对等。在我看来,内容的对等比形式的对等更重要。这就是运用宇称不守恒定律,来解释翻译理论所取得的一个成果。

上面谈的是文字对等的问题,至于文化问题,那就更加复杂,现在举李白的名诗《静夜思》为例。“床前明月光,疑是地上霜。举头望明月,低头思故乡。”天上月圆,地上家人团圆,所以中国诗人见月思家。但是西方人只说“团聚”(get together),没有“团圆”的观念,所以见到圆月,并不会想到一家人团圆。因此即使译文和原文的内容、形

式都对等,英美读者也不容易理解见月思乡的道理,因为中西文化有隔阂。所以翻译时不能选择对等的译文,而要用最好的译语表达方式,“明月光”译成 a pool of light(一片光),pool 有圆池子的意思,既可使人想到圆月,又把光比做水,“思故乡”译成 drowned in homesickness(沉浸在乡愁中),也把乡愁比做水,这样就把明月和思乡都用水(而不是用“圆”)联系起来了。我认为这是最好的译语表达方式。就是用这种“优化”法,我翻译了这本《中国古诗精品三百首》,还翻译了《诗经》和《楚辞》。美国加州大学韦斯特教授说:许译《诗经》读来是种乐趣;还有美国学者说许译《楚辞》可算英美文学的高峰。新世纪是全球化世纪,希望这本《中国古诗精品三百首》能对先进文化的全球化做出贡献。

许渊冲

2003 年 10 月于畅春园

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序

PREFACE

Nobel Prize winner C. N. Yang wrote a preface to my memoir *Vanished Springs*, in which he said, "*Vanished Springs* is Xu's autobiography. It is the autobiography of a poet in three languages: Chinese, English and French. Reading it I realize once more how very different the life of a poet is from that of a scientist. Many years ago T. S. Eliot visited the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and one day at a party in J. R. Oppenheimer's house, Oppenheimer said to him, 'In physics, we try to explain to each other what nobody has understood before. In poetry you try to describe to others what everybody has known from the beginning.' I wonder whether that is what Xu meant when he wrote in this autobiography that 'in science $1 + 1 = 2$, while in art $1 + 1 = 3$ '."

The American poet laureate Robert Frost defines poetry as "saying one thing and meaning another". A scientist says what he means, that is to say, the truth, which may be formularized as $1 + 1 = 2$. On the other hand, a poet may say one thing and mean another, he means more than what he says, that is not science but art, which may be formularized as $1 + 1 = 3$. For instance, Tang poet Li Shangyin wrote a wellknown verse to his unnamed lover, "Spring silkworm till its death spins silk." If he meant only the silkworm spins silk throughout its life, then he said what he meant, and it might be formulated as $1 + 1 = 2$. But in reality the poet meant he would be lovesick all his life long, so he said one thing and meant another, and he meant more

than he said, so this may be formulated as $1 + 1 = 3$. What is more, the reader may take this verse to mean that everyone should devote his life to his cause just as the silkworm spins silk all its life. This means even more than what the poet means, so it may be formulated as $1 + 1 = 4$. Whether one plus one may equal three or four, it is more than two, that is, $1 + 1 > 2$. In my opinion, this is one difference between science and art.

Science is different from art, but it has exercised great influence on art, including the art of verse translation. Yang won the Nobel Prize in Physics for his theory of non-parity. Parity in physics is equivalence and parallelism in verse translation. Yang's theory may be applied to the art of translation, for instance, the rendition of the above verse. If the poet meant only what he said, then there is equivalence between the original and the translated verse. Since the poet meant not only that the silkworm spins silk but also that he would be lovesick all his life, so there is no equivalence between them. How to make them equivalent? Here I think the theory of non-parity may be applied. The version "Spring silkworm till its death spins silk" is equivalent to the original only in form, but not in sense. In order to make them more equivalent in sense, I translate this verse as follows:

Spring silkworm till its death spins silk from lovesick heart.

This version may remind the reader that the poet is comparing himself to the silkworm just as a Chinese philosopher was dreaming of a butterfly without knowing whether he had become the butterfly or the butterfly had become him. This verse is more faithful to the original in sense, but not in form, so the reader may say that there is no equivalence (non-parity) between them. In my opinion equivalence in sense is more important than in form, that is my way of applying the theory of non-parity to verse translation. In this way I have translated this book.

Professor Stephen West of California University says of my version of

Book of Poetry as “a delight to read”, and Jon Kowallis of Melbourn University says of my *Elegies of the South* as peaks of English and American literature. As the new age is said to be a century of globalization, I wish this book would contribute to the globalization of advanced culture.

Xu Yuanchong
August 10, 2003

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