



Gems of
Classical
Chinese
Poetry

in Various English
Translations

中詩英譯比錄

Edited by

Lü Shu-xiang and Xu Yuan-zhong



A JPC PUBLICATION

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呂叔湘 許淵冲編著

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編者簡介

呂叔湘，著名語言學家。1904年生，1926年畢業於前國立東南大學，歷任蘇州中學等校教員。1936—37留學英國。回國後先後在雲南大學、華西大學、金陵大學、中央大學、清華大學擔任教學和研究工作。1952年起在中國科學院語言研究所任研究員、所長，今為名譽所長。他的主要著作有《中國文法要略》(三卷本1942—44，一卷本1956)，《文言虛字》(1944)，《中國人學英文》(1947)，《語法修辭講話》(與朱德熙合著，1952)，《漢語語法論文集》(1955，增訂本1984)，《漢語語法分析問題》(1979)，《現代漢語八百詞》(主編，1980)，《語文常談》(1980)，《呂叔湘語文論集》(1983)，《呂叔湘譯文集》(1983)。

許淵冲，1921年生於江西南昌，1943年畢業於昆明西南聯大外文系，後在清華大學研究院研究英國文學，又在巴黎大學研究法國文學，1950年得文學研究文憑。回國後在北京等地外語院校教授英文、法文，現為北京大學國際文化教授，兼英語系文學翻譯教授。英譯漢作品有德萊頓詩劇《一切爲了愛情》；法譯漢有《雨果戲劇選集》，巴1956)，《文言虛字》(1944)，《中國人學英文》(1947)，《語法修辭講話》(與朱德熙合著，1952)，《漢語語法論文集》(1955，增訂本1984)，《漢語語法分析問題》(1979)，《現代漢語八百詞》(主編，1980)，《語文常談》(1980)，《呂叔湘語文論集》(1983)，《呂叔湘譯文集》(1983)。

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Lü Shuxiang (1904 –), B.A. National Southeastern University (Nanjing). Some time visiting scholar at Oxford and London Universities. Professor at Yunnan, West China Union, Nanjing Central and Tsinghua Universities. Research Fellow of The Institute of Linguistics, The Academy of Science since 1952 and Director of the Institute from 1961 to 1983. Chief works: *Essentials of Chinese Grammar* (1942 – 44), *Studies in Chinese Grammar* (1955, revised 1984), *Problems in Grammatical Analysis of Contemporary Chinese* (1979), *800 Words of Contemporary Chinese* (editor, 1980), *Collected Translations* (1983).

Xu Yuanzhong (1921 –), professor of comparative poetry at Beijing University, Beijing; author of *Art of Translation* (1987); translator 1) from English into Chinese of Dryden's *All for Love* (1956) and Scott's *Quentin Durward* (1987); 2) from French into Chinese of Hugo's *Théâtre* (1986), Balzac's *Un Debut dans la Vie* (1983), Maupassant's *Sur l'Eau* (1986) and Rolland's *Colas Breugnon* (1958); 3) from Chinese into French of *Earth-shaking Songs – Epic of Chinese Revolution* (1981), *Su Dong-po – A New Translation* (1982), *150 Tang Poems* (1984), *100 Tang and Song Ci Poems* (1986), *Selected Poems of Li Bai* (1987) and *500 Classical Chinese Poems*.

Gems of 中詩英譯比錄

Classical **C**hinese **P**oetry
in Various English Translations

Foreword

Chinese poetry has always been greatly admired by Western scholars. As early as the 18th century, Sir William Jones (1746 – 94) said about *The Book of Poetry*:

“It is a composition of wonderful dignity and brevity; . . . the obscurity of the style adds to its sublimity.”

And he gave a double version of a fragment of *The Book*, one literal and the other metrical – “the only method of doing justice to the poetical compositions of the Asiatics,” he said.

In the mid-19th century, James Legge (1814 – 97) began to translate *The Book of Poetry* in two versions, but his cumbersome verse is hardly adequate for representing the simple and plain original (see the first Ode).

It was not until the end of the 19th century that Herbert A. Giles (1845 – 1935) began to produce better versions of Chinese poetry. Of his translation Lytton Strachey said in *Characters and Commentaries*:

“The book . . . is worth reading, not only for its curiosity, but for its beauty and its charm. It was published ten years since, and one would be tempted to say that the poetry in it is the best that this generation has known . . .”

“. . . it is through its mastery of the tones and depths of affection that our anthology holds a unique place in the literature of the world.”

And Arthur Waley praised Giles for uniting “rhyme and literalness with wonderful dexterity.”

But Giles’ Victorian rhetoric seemed not to the taste of the 20th century readers. In 1915, the Imagist poet Ezra Pound (1885 – 1972) entered the field of translation with his *Cathay*. In spite of its small size and its extravagant errors, the book possessed abundant color, freshness and poignancy and was in spirit and style the first product of the new school of free verse translators. Since classical Chinese poetry suggests and hints rather than expresses fully (“the words stop, but the sense goes on”), the Imagists, under the Oriental influence, use suggestion rather than complete statement in their poetry.

Another remarkable free verse translator was Arthur Waley (1889 – 1966). “He writes as one might talk;” comments a writer in *New Statesman*, “he accommodates the deep with the trivial; he delicately, coolly enchants.” Waley finds that the essentials of English poetry are rhyme, stress and alliteration, whereas those of Chinese poetry are rhyme, length of line and tone. But he does not use rhyme in his translation, for, “if one uses rhyme,” says he, “it is impossible not to sacrifice sense to sound.” As to stress, he makes one stressed syllable represent one word in Chinese.

But, as George Steiner says in his Introduction to the *Oxford Book of Verses in English Translation*, “Arguments against verse translation are arguments against all translation,” since “there can be no exhaustive transfer from language A to language B . . .” It is not difficult to find that Waley has not been able to preserve intact the sense of the original although no rhyme is used in his translation.

In the 1920s appeared a third remarkable free verse translator, Witter Bynner. He finds that the Tang poets “perform the miracle of identifying the wonder of beauty

with common sense.” And he predicts that “future Western poets will go to school with the masters of the Tang Dynasty.” His translations are more ingenious and follow the original less closely than those of his predecessors.

In the 1930s appeared the translations done by two Chinese scholars, Tsai Ting-kan in Chicago and Chu Da-gao (Chu Ta-koa) in Cambridge, one in rhyme and the other in free verse. “In translating these poems,” said Tsai, “the rule followed was that each Chinese word be equaled to one foot or two syllables in English.” He tried thus to preserve the spirit and music of the original and to attain at the same time natural flow of language in the translation.

In the 1940s appeared a collection of Chinese poems translated by a group of Chinese scholars in Kunming and edited by an American poet, Robert Payne. “We can understand a people best through their poetry,” says the editor in the Introduction, “and the Chinese, who have written poetry since the beginning of time, have regarded poetry as the finest flower of their culture.” As to the method of translation, “it has seemed best to translate the poems as simply and literally as possible,” says the editor. “The Chinese has therefore been translated line by line – without rhyme, for to have succeeded in rhyme would have necessitated padding out the lines or so changing their forms that they would have become unrecognisable.” “We have aimed then at literal translations, without paraphrases and without any attempt to recapture the sounds of the original or to follow the exact pattern of the syllabic line.”

This method of translation was followed in the 1950s by Kenneth Rexroth in “One Hundred Poems from the Chinese”; in the 1960s by Kotewall and Smith in *The Penguin Book of Chinese Verse*, and in the 1970s by the translators of *Sunflower Splendor, Three Thousand Years of Chinese*

Poetry.

However, in *A Golden Treasury of Chinese Poetry* published by the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1976, John Turner (1909 – 1971) says: “Chinese Literature is the high artistic peak of the most literary, the most artistic, the longest-established civilization that exists.” “My intention is to make the translation of a poem read like a poem itself. Accordingly, I do not comply with the modern fashion of putting Chinese verse into line by line prose . . . I believe that poetry cannot really be translated into prose. The translation of a poem into prose, which is merely verbally accurate, is not itself a poem and remains a crib. It misses the point and soul and reason of a poem, its specific beauty.”

Early in the 1980s appeared Weng Xian-liang’s *Translations of Classical Chinese Poems*, in which the translator identified himself so well with the poets that his rhythmic prose became impassioned poetry and proved a greater success than the free verse translation. On the other hand, Xu Yuanzhong advanced a theory that a verse translation should not only be faithful, but also beautiful, as beautiful as the original in sense, in sound and in form, and he put his theory into practice in translating Tang poems and Song lyrics. So the first half of the 1980s may be in a sense called the Renaissance in China of classical Chinese poetry in English translation.

As a French saying goes, “la vérité est diverse” (truth is diverse), and an English poet writes, “beauty is truth and truth beauty,” so we may also say, “la beauté est diverse” (beauty is diverse). This applies to the individual poems variously translated as well as the anthology as a whole. This anthology may be likened to a beautiful peak, viewed from various angles, of “the most literary, the most artistic, the longest-established civilization that exists”. We believe

that the more translations we have, the more clearly the reader will see the true face of this beautiful peak.

The book was first compiled by Lü and published in a slenderer form in Shanghai in 1948 and reprinted in 1980. It has been greatly augmented in the present edition, firstly by incorporating new translations appearing since the forties, and secondly by the addition of poems of the genre of *ci* (詞) of the 9th to the 12th centuries. This part of editorial work is done by Xu.

The Editors

Beijing, China
July 7, 1985

呂 序

PREFACE BY LÜ SHU-XIANG

海通以還，西人漸窺中國文學之盛，多有轉譯，詩歌尤甚；以英文言，其著者亦十有餘家。居蜀數載，教授翻譯，頗取爲檢討論說之資，輒於一詩而重譯者擇尤比而錄之，上起風雅，下及唐季，得詩五十九首，英譯二百有七首。¹ 客中得書不易，取資既隘，掛漏實多，然即此區區，中土名篇，彼邦佳譯，大抵已在。研究譯事者足資比較；欣賞藝文者亦得玩索而吟咏焉。將以付之剞劂，輒取昔日講說之言弁之卷首；所引諸例，雜出各家，不盡在所錄之內也。²

一

以原則言，從事翻譯者於原文不容有一詞一語之誤解。然而談何容易？以中國文字之艱深，詩詞鑄語之凝鍊，譯人之誤會在所難免。前期諸家多尚“達旨”，有所不解，易爲閃避；後期譯人漸崇信實，詮解訛誤，昭然易曉。如韓愈山石詩，“僧言古壁佛畫好，以火來照所見稀，” Bynner (p. 29) 譯爲

And he brought a light and showed me, and I called
them *wonderful*.

以“稀少”爲“希奇”，此爲最簡單的誤解字義之例。

又如古詩爲焦仲卿妻作，“妾不堪驅使，徒留無所施”，Waley

1 其中有友人楊憲益先生伉儷所譯數首，蒙假原稿過錄，於此致謝。

2 各家書名見後附書目。

(*Temple*, p. 114) 譯為

I said to myself, "I will not be driven away."

Yet if I stay, what use will it be?

以“驅使”為“驅逐”，因而語意不接，遂誤以上句為自思自語，則又因字義之誤而滋生句讀之誤。

其次，詞性之誤解，亦為致誤之因。如杜詩聞官軍收河南河北：“却看妻子愁何在？漫卷詩書喜欲狂”句，*Bynner* (p. 154) 誤以“愁”為動詞，譯為

Where is my wife? Where are my sons?

Yet crazily sure of finding them, I pack my books and poems.

讀之解頤。杜公雖“欲狂”，何至愁及妻子之下落？且“却看”之謂何？

中文動詞之特殊意蘊，往往非西人所能識別，如杜詩“感時花濺淚，恨別鳥驚心”，淚為詩人之淚，心亦詩人之心，“濺”與“驚”皆致動詞也，而 *Bynner* (p. 148) 譯為

... Where petals have been shed like tears

And lonely birds have sung their grief.

頓成膚淺。

然一種文字之最足以困惑外人者，往往不在其單個之實字，而在其虛字與熟語，蓋虛字多歧義，而熟語不易於表面索解也。此亦可於諸家譯詩見之。*Waley* 在諸譯人中最為翔實，然如所譯《焦仲卿妻》中，以“四角龍子幡”為

At its four corners a dragon-child flag (*Temple*, p. 121),
“子”字實解；又譯“著我綉袂裙，事事四五通”為

... Takes what she needs, four or five things (*ibid.*,
p. 116), 以“通”為“件”，皆因虛字而誤。

余人譯詩中亦多此例。如 *Fletcher* (*More Gems*, p. 12) 譯太白月下獨酌“月既不解飲”作

The moon then drinks *without a pause*,

由於不明“解”字作“能”講；譯“行樂須及春”作

Rejoice *until* the Spring come in,

由於不明“及”字作“乘”講。又如 *Giles* (*Verse*, p. 99) 譯杜詩“今

春看又過，何日是歸年？”作

Alas! I see another spring has died ...

因不明“看”字之等於後世之“看看”或“眼見得”，遂誤“將過”爲“已過”，雖小小出入，殊失原詩低回往復之意也。

以言熟語，有極淺顯，不應誤而誤者。如年月序次只以基數爲之，不加“第”字，凡稍習中文者不應不解，而 Fletcher (*Gems*, p. 8) 譯太白長干行“五月不可觸”句爲

For five months with you I cannot meet.

亦有較爲生僻，其誤可原者。如同篇“早晚下三巴”句不獨 Fletcher (*ibid.* p. 9) 誤爲

Early and late I to gorges go,

Lowell (p. 29) 亦誤爲

*From early morning until late in the evening, you
descend the three Serpent River,*

惟小畑 (p. 152) 作

Some day when you return down the river,

爲得其真象。

熟語之極致爲“典故”，此則不僅不得其解者無從下手，即得其真解亦不易達其義蘊。如小杜金谷園結句“落花猶似墜樓人，” Giles (*Verse* p. 175) 譯作

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This morn thy dream is o'er...

固是荒謬；而 Bynner (p. 25) 譯爲

Last night my girdle came undone,

And this morning a luck beetle flew over my bed.

仍不得不乞靈於附注 (p. 244)，且亦僅注出一“蟻子”，於“裙帶”仍不得其解也。（王建宮詞“忽地下階裙帶解，非時應得見君王。”）

Bynner 所譯詩中亦時有類此之錯誤，如譯孟浩然秦中寄遠上人詩“黃金燃桂盡，壯志逐年衰”作

Like ashes of gold in a cinnamon-flame,
My youthful desires have been burnt with the years
(p. 111),

亦復不知所云也。

若干歷史的或地理的詞語亦具有熟語之性質，常為譯家之陷阱。如香山贈夢得詩（長慶集卷六六）“尋花借馬煩川守，弄水偷船惱令公”，

Waley (*More Translations*, p. 90) 譯為

When, seeking flowers, we borrowed his horse, the
river-keeper was vexed;
When, to play on the water, we stole his boat the
Duke Ling was sore.

以“川守”為“river-keeper”固已以意為之，以“令公”為“Duke Ling”尤可見其疏於考索。時裴度以中書令晉國公為東都留守，史稱其與劉白過從甚密，長慶集同卷頗多題詠贈和之作，只應曰 Duke P'ei 或 Duke of Chin，不得以“令”為專名也。

又如“山東”一名，古今異指，而 Fletcher (*Gems*, p. 70) 譯杜詩兵車行“君不聞漢家山東二百州，千村萬落生荆杞”，作 Shantung；“河漢”指天河，而 Waley (*Poems*, p. 44) 譯古詩十九首之十“迢迢牽牛星，皎皎河漢女”，作 Han River 皆易滋誤會，顯為違失。

至如 Giles (*History*, p. 170) 譯長恨歌“漁陽鼙鼓動地來”作

But suddenly comes the roll of the *fish-skin* war-drums,
誤以地名為非地名；Lowell (p. 98) 譯太白聞王昌齡左遷龍標遙寄，“楊花落盡子規啼”作

In Yang-chou, the blossoms are dropping,

又誤以非地名為地名：與“山東”、“河漢”相較，雖事類相同，而難易有別。“漁陽”安得謂為“魚皮”，“楊”、“揚”更字形懸異，其為謬誤，尤難宥恕也。

二

中文常不舉主語，韻語尤甚，西文則標舉分明，詩作亦然。譯中詩

者遇此等處，不得不一一爲之補出。如司空曙賊平後送人北歸，云：“世亂同南去，時清獨北還。他鄉生白髮，舊國見青山”，Bynner (p. 133) 譯爲

In dangerous times *we* two came south;
Now *you* go north in safety, without me.
But remember *my* head growing white among strangers,
When *you* look on the blue of the mountains of home.

四句皆補出主語，除第三句容有可商外（亦可指友或兼指二人），餘均無誤。

然亦往往緣此致誤，如上引詩更下一聯云“曉月過殘壘，繁星宿故關”，“過”與“宿”之主語仍爲 *you*，而 Bynner 譯爲

The moon goes down behind a ruined fort,
Leaving star-clusters above an old gate.

誤以“曉月”與“繁星”當之，不知此二語之作用如副詞也。

又如古詩十九首之十二，“燕趙多佳人……當戶理清曲”繼之以“馳情整巾帶，沈吟躑躅”，乃詩人自謂聞曲而有感也，Waley (*Poems*, p. 45) 誤以蒙上佳人，譯爲

To ease their minds they arrange their shawls and belts;
Lowering their song, a little while they pause,

索然寡味矣。

又如 Fletcher (*More Gems*, p. 9) 譯李白長干行“早晚下三巴，預將書報家，”作

Early and late *I* to gorges go,
Waiting for news that of thy coming told.

不明“早晚”之爲詢問，遂以“下”爲“我下”，不知自長干至三巴不得云“下”，兩地之相去亦非朝暮可往來者。

又如劉長卿逢雪宿芙蓉山，“柴門聞犬吠，風雪夜歸人”，聞者詩人自聞也，Fletcher (*Gems*, p. 184) 譯爲

The house dog's sudden barking, *which* hears the
wicket go,
Greets us at night returning through driving gale and
snow.

誤爲犬聞門響而吠，不知中文不容有“賓——動——主”之詞序，杜詩

“香稻啄殘鸚鵡粒”之得失至今猶聚訟紛紜也。

此等錯誤往往因涉上下文主語而來，如上舉“馳情整冠帶”誤承“當戶理清曲”，“早晚下三巴”則其上既有“坐愁紅顏老”，其下復有“相迎不道遠”，不諳中文之常常更易主語而又從略者自易致誤。如杜詩兵車行，“況復秦兵耐苦戰，被驅不異犬與鷄”，即此土不學之人亦難免誤解，Bynner (p. 169) 譯為

Men of China are able to face the stiffest battle,

But their officers drive them like chickens and dogs.

其情可原。然“役夫”來自“山東”，與“秦兵”正為敵對，上下文足以確定被驅者非秦兵，B.氏有江亢虎氏為助，不容並此而不達。

又因主語之省略而誤解動詞之意義者。如 Waley 譯焦仲卿妻“謂言無罪過，供養卒大恩” (Temple, p. 116) 作

Never in spoken word did I transgress or fail ... 又“十七遺汝嫁，謂言無鴛鴦” (p.118) 作

... and hears you promise forever to be true,

此兩“謂言”同於後世之“只道”、“只說是”，宜作 I thought 解，Waley 不了此義，殆由未舉主語。

又如古詩十九首之十九“客行雖云樂，不如早旋歸”，Waley (Poems, p. 48) 譯作

My absent love says that he is happy,

But I would rather he said he was coming back,

又古詩上山採蘼蕪“新人雖言好，不及古人姝” (p. 35) 譯作

Although her talk is clever ...

其實此處“云”、“言”皆無主動詞，it is said 之義，仍實字之近於虛字者，綴於“雖”字之後，作用類似襯字，今語亦有“雖說是”，可為比較；waley 視為尋常動詞，遂有“言談”之解。

與主語省略相似者又有賓語之省略，亦為譯家致誤之由。如元稹遣悲懷，“尚想舊情憐婢僕，也曾因夢送錢財”，Bynner (p. 216) 譯為

... Sometimes, in a dream, I bring you gifts.

謂夢中送錢財於亡妻，無乃費解？此則遠不及 Fletcher (More Gems, p. 191) 所譯

The slaves' and servants' love moves me to love,

And presents I gave them, when I dreamed of you.