

VERSION OF CLASSICAL  
CHINESE POETRY

YUAN SONGS (I)

TRANSLATED BY XU YUANCHONG

許淵沖經典英譯

古代詩歌一〇〇〇首

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**许渊冲** 1921 年生于江西南昌，北京大学教授，著名翻译家。在国内外出版中、英、法文译著一百余部，是中国诗词英法韵译的唯一专家。1999 年他被提名为诺贝尔文学奖候选人，2010 年获得“中国翻译文化终身成就奖”，2014 年荣获国际翻译界最高奖项“北极光”杰出文学翻译奖，系首位获此殊荣的亚洲翻译家。

***Xu Yuanchong*** Born in Jiangxi, China, in 1921, Xu Yuanchong is a professor at Peking University and a famous translator. He has published more than 100 translated works in Chinese, English and French, being the only scholar on translating classical Chinese poetry into English and French rhymes. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1999 and obtained the Lifetime Achievement Award for Chinese Translation Culture in 2010. In 2014 he claimed Aurora Borealis Outstanding Literary Translation Award, the highest honor in the international field of translation, which is the first time for this award being conferred on an Asian translator.



王实甫撰、关汉卿续《奇妙全像西厢记》

*Romance of Western Bower* by Wang Shipu and Guan Hanqing  
(Illustrated Edition)



李斛《关汉卿像》

*Portrait of Guan Hanqing drawn by Li Hu*

破幽夢孤雁漢宮秋雜劇

元 馬致遠撰

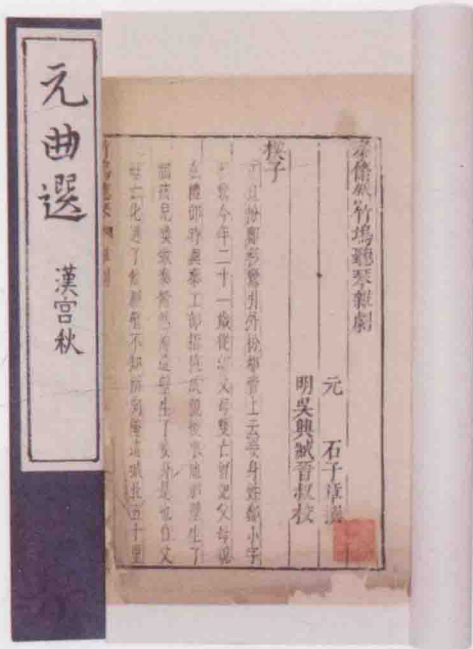
明吳興臧晉叔校

楔子

評本盼番王引部落上詩云：獨懷秋風送客，孤守  
廣夜月聽悲箭。控弦百萬為君長，秋塞何處無  
家。某乃呼韓耶單于是也。久居朔漠，國西北方以  
射獵為生，攻伐為事。文王曾遣使刺殺，獲孫冒頓  
斬之。今使使來，臣代易名單于，可汗，竟將稱帝。

《破幽夢孤雁漢宮秋》

Autumn in a Han Palace written  
by Ma Zhiyuan



《元曲選》

*Selected Yuan Songs and Plays*

(Autumn in a Han Palace)

(Yuan Edition) 1271–1368



## 许译中国古典诗词集序

2011年，我国提出了建设社会主义文化强国的号召。2012年，海豚出版社编印了十本许译中国古典诗词集，这就响应了在上世界上建立文化强国的号召。其实，早在二千五百年前，中国已经是世界上的文化强国。那时西方有希腊、罗马文化，有苏格拉底、柏拉图的哲学，有荷马的史诗，东方却有中国文化，有孔子和老子的哲学，有《诗经》的风雅颂。西方的史诗歌颂英雄，歌颂战争，东方的《诗经》却歌颂人民，歌颂劳动。《荷马史诗》中歌颂英雄和战争的名句如：

冲锋陷阵我带头，论功行赏不落后。

《诗经·大雅》中的《公刘》却歌颂了公元前1796年周民族大迁移的民主劳动生活，如：

京师之野，（京师田野形势好，）

于时处处，（于是定居建新邦，）

于时庐旅，（于是规划造住房，）

于时言言，（谈笑风生喜洋洋，）

于时语语。（七嘴八舌闹嚷嚷。）（程俊英译）

建造住房是劳动生活，七嘴八舌是民主讨论。可见我国早在四千年前，已经有自由民主的劳动生活，并有《诗经》记录在案，比西方早了两千多年，因此，把我国的文化经典《诗经》、《唐诗》、《宋词》、《元曲》等译成外文，向全世界宣扬先进的中国古典文化，

是把我国建设成为文化强国的重要部分，也是建设更加光辉灿烂的世界文化不可缺少的篇章。

现在世界上有十三亿人用中文，又有大约八亿人用英文，中文和英文是世界上用得最多，也是最重要的语文。因此，要在全世界宣扬中国文化，使中国成为文化强国，首先要把中文译成英文。如何进行翻译呢？现在西方用得最多的是美国奈达教授提出的“对等翻译”。但是奈达不懂中文，只能进行西方语文之间的翻译。而据电子计算机统计，西方语文（如英、法、德、俄、意、西）的词汇约有百分之九十可以在另一种西方语文中找到对等的表达方式，所以翻译时基本可以用对等原则。但是中文和西文不同，中文词汇大约只有百分之五十可以在西方语文中找到对等的表达方式。这就是说，中西互译时只有一半可以找到对等语，另一半却找不到。怎么办呢？那有两种可能：一种是译语的表达方式不如源语，那时只好不得已而求其次；另一种是译语优于源语，或超越了源语，那时，就应该尽可能发挥译语的优势，也就是用最好的译语表达方式，甚至超越源语，这就不是对等原则，而是超越原则了。下面就来举例说明。

唐代杜牧写了一首《清明》：“清明时节雨纷纷，路上行人欲断魂。借问酒家何处有？牧童遥指杏花村。”这首诗应该如何译成英文？能不能应用对等原则呢？首先，我们要问“清明”是不是天清气明，“时节”是不是时候或节日的意思？如果是，那“天清气明”的时节怎么又“雨纷纷”了？这不是矛盾吗？所以这里“清明”不是指天气，而是指悼念亡人的节日，译成英文，就不能选择字面上的对等语，而要选字面上不对等，却能传达原文意义的表达方式。其次，“纷纷”这个叠词在英文中也没有对等语。一个英译

本说是雨下得大，这种译文不如原文。另一种译文说：雨水像眼泪一般流下。这就超越原文了。但是考虑到原诗的主题是悼念亡人，把雨水比做眼泪更能体现哀悼之情，那译文就可以说是符合超越的原则了。第二句诗“路上行人”不是指一般的过路人，而是特指上坟悼念死者的亲友，所以译成英文不能用“行人”的对等词，而要用超越一般行人的“哀悼者”。下半句的“断魂”也没有英文的对等语，译成伤心可能略轻，译成心碎可能略重。一般认为过犹不及，我却认为“过之”可能胜于“不及”。第三句“借问”是婉转的说法，现代就会用“请问”了，英文可以不译，那却是以“不译”为“译”。“酒家”译成英文也是“形”对等而“实”不对等，因为英国的酒家太热闹，英文的“酒家”又可能指卖酒而不喝酒的酒店，所以严格说来并不对等。第四句的“牧童”有人译成“牛仔”，那就“形”同而“实”不同了。“杏花村”是酒店的名字，真译成“村”也是有名无实，又是“形”对等而“实”不对等。所以四句诗内，多半都不对等，对等的只有第一句的“雨”字，第二句的“路上”，第三句的“何处有”，第四句的“遥指”二字。有对等词的诗句，翻译时可以用对等词，没有对等词时，应该根据什么原则来翻译呢？

《老子》第一章说：“道可道，非常道；名可名，非常名。”第一个“道”是名词，是“道理”的意思。第二个“道”是动词，是“说道”或“知道”的意思，那就是说，道理是可以知道的，但不一定是你所知道的道理；事物是可以有个名字的，但是名字并不等于实物。或者简单点说，“名”并不等于“实”。这个“道”，包括翻译之道在内。所以翻译之道是可以知道的，但不一定是大家常说的“对等翻译”之道。至于“名可名”更可有几种解释：一种是名称并不等于实物，应用到翻译上来，可以说原文并不等于原文所描

写的现实；更进一步，又可以说，译文并不等于原文；再进一步，译文虽不一定等于原文，但距离原文所描写的现实，却不一定比原文更远。这就是老子关于翻译认识论的三步曲。联系到《清明》这首诗的翻译上来，“清明时节”并不等于“天清气明”，这就是“名可名，非常名”；而悼亡日却是“清明时节”所描写的现实，英译文用了“悼亡日”，那就比原文距离现实更近了一步。这就是应用《老子》来发展中国文学翻译理论的例子。

至于孔子呢，《论语》第二章中说到“从心所欲不逾矩”，朱光潜认为这是“一切艺术的成熟境界”，自然也是翻译艺术的成熟境界。“从心所欲”就是要发挥译者的主观能动性，“不逾矩”就是不能超越规律。《清明》的英译文中，把“雨纷纷”说成“雨水与泪水齐飞”，把借酒浇愁说成饮酒淹没哀思，都是“从心所欲不逾矩”的例子。这说明中国文学翻译已经进入“从心所欲”的自由王国，而西方翻译理论还在“不逾矩”的必然王国挣扎。由此可见，中国文学翻译的理论比西方更先进，那种认为中国译论落后于西方二十年的谬论，是没有根据的，是奴化思想的残余。至于实践，全世界只有中国人（包括华裔）出版了大量的中英互译作品，外国人没有一个出版过大量的中文文学作品的。因此，无论是理论或实践，中国翻译都走在世界前列，是建设世界文化强国的先声。

许渊冲 2012年8月18日于北京大学

## Preface

As early as three thousand years ago, China was a leading country in the world. So far as philosophy is concerned, there were Confucius and the Old Master in the 5th century B. C. while in the West there were Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in the 4th B. C. So far as literature is concerned, we had our *Book of Poetry* while the West had Homer's epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The difference is that Homer's epics glorify war and heroes while the *Book of Poetry* sings the praise of peace and the common people. For instance, in Homer's *Iliad* we find the wellknown couplet in Hector's farewell address to Andromache:

*Where heroes war, the foremost place I claim,*

*The first in danger as the first in fame.*

*But in the Book of Poetry we find the following verse in Duke Liu, the second legendary hero of the House of Zhou, who moved from Tai to Bin in 1796 B. C. :*

*He built a new capital*

*For his people all.*

*Some thought it good for the throng,*

*Others would not dwell there for long.*

*There was discussion free:*

*They talked in high glee.*

To build a new capital was hard labor, and discussion free showed that there was democracy in the throng. This verse glorifies the laboring life of the common people and their free discussion on the building of the capital. This shows that China enjoyed freedom and democracy far earlier than the West. Therefore, the translation of the *Book of Poetry* of Zhou dynasty, and poetry of other dynasties, such as *Tang poetry*, *Song lyrics*, and *Yuan songs*, will make Chinese culture known to the world on the one hand, and on the other, help the world make greater progress in political, economical and cultural development.

In the world of today, there are 1.3 billion people who use the Chinese language and about 800 million who use the English, so Chinese and English are the most important languages in the world, and the translation between them is also as important. But how to translate one into the other? In the West, Eugene Nida's translation theory is in vogue, that is the principle of dynamic equivalence. But Nida could only translate between Western languages and he did not understand the Chinese. Could his theory be applied to the translation between Chinese and English? According to statistics, about 90% of the vocabulary of one Western language can find its equivalent in another Western language. But between the Chinese and the English vocabulary, we can find no more than 50% of equivalence. That is to say, in translation between these two languages, the principle of equivalence can be applied only to half of the vocabulary of either

language. Then how about the other half to which the principle cannot be applied? When there is equivalence between two words or expressions, one says as much as the other. When there is not, one says more or less, better or worse than the other. In this case, I prefer more to less, and better to worse. That is to say, if the target language cannot say as much as the source language, I think it better to say more than to say less than the original, to excel the original than to fail to express the original idea. Therefore, the theory I put forward may be called Principle of Excellence, that is, when the principle of equivalence cannot be applied, we may try to find a better or an excellent expression. This may be illustrated by examples. Following are two versions of the same poem, one follows the principle of equivalence and the other that of excellence.

(A) *It drizzles thick on the Pure Brightness Day;*

*I travel with my heart lost in dismay.*

*"Is there a public house somewhere, cowboy?"*

*He points at Apricot Bloom Village faraway.*

(B) *A drizzling rain falls like tears on the Mourning Day;*

*The mourner's heart is going to break on his way.*

*Where can a wineshop be found to drown his sad hours?*

*A cowherd points to a cot 'mid apricot flowers.*

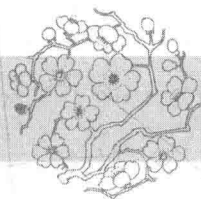
*The Pure Brightness Day* is equivalent to the original in word but not in sense, for it is contradictory to say *it drizzles on a pure bright day*. On the contrary, *the Mourning Day* is not equivalent

in word but succeeds in expressing the idea. *A drizzling rain falls like tears says* more than the original while *it drizzles thick* says less. Here I prefer more to less for the comparison between rain and tears makes the reader understand *the mourner's heart* in the second line. Likewise, *to drown his sad hours* also says more, but it also helps to understand why the mourner needs a wineshop. These examples show how to apply the principle of Excellence when that of Equivalence fails. As to further explication, please read the preface in Chinese.

***Xu Yuanchong***

**Aug. 18, 2012, at Peking University**





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