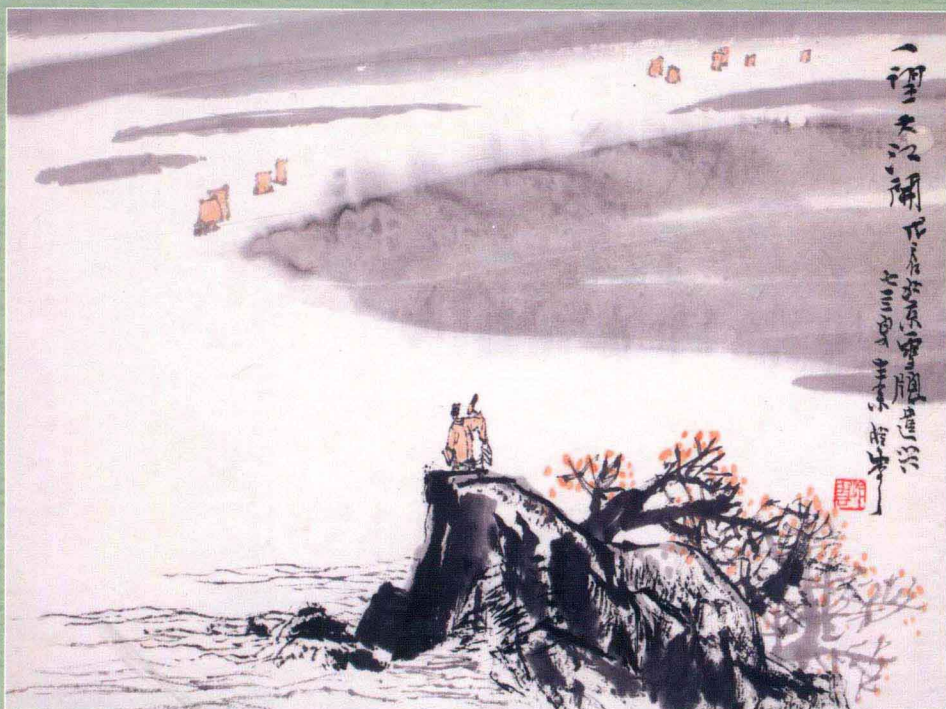


中國文化研究所 訪問教授講座系列（三）



Institute of Chinese Studies
Visiting Professor Lecture Series (III)

中國文化研究所學報特刊
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訪問教授講座系列(三)

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Visiting Professor Lecture Series (III)

《中國文化研究所訪問教授講座系列(三)》

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Foreword

This volume marks the tenth year of the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) Visiting Professorship at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. The ICS Visiting Professorship, which was introduced in 2003, brings eminent scholars in Chinese studies to conduct research as well as teach an advanced course or seminar at the university. Their presence brings intellectual stimulation to the scholarly community in Chinese studies on campus, and also contributes to the advanced training of students in this area. Each Visiting Professor also delivers a public lecture during his or her tenure, and this volume is based on the lectures delivered by the ICS Visiting Professors in residence between 2008 and 2013.

The collection of papers reflects the broad scope and diverse nature of “Chinese studies” as an area of inquiry. In his “Rose or Jade? Problems in Translating Medieval Chinese Literature,” David R. Knechtges discusses the pitfalls and traps in the translation of Chinese texts, and how translation can be a form of high-level scholarship if one can be aware of and overcome these pitfalls and traps. In his “Concepts That Make Multiple Modernities: The Conceptual Modernisation of China in a Historical and Critical Perspective,” Christoph Harbsmeier considers how concepts emerge in specific cultural and historical contexts, and in his “Language Contact: Spoken, Written, European, Asian,” Cornelius C. Kubler discusses the mutual influences that languages or dialects can exert upon each other when they come into contact. Edward L. Shaughnessy’s paper focuses on a more specific topic, “A Special Use of the Character 鄉 in Oracle-Bone Inscriptions and Its Significance for the Meaning of Early Chinese Divination: With Comments on the First Line of the *Yi Jing*.” By contrast, in his “Epistemological Nativism and the Inner Logic of Chinese Philosophy,” John Makeham discusses the much broader theme of the contemporary study of Chinese philosophy, whether paradigms and norms derived from the West are appropriate to the articulation of China’s philosophical lineage. In a more historical bent, Patricia Ebrey considers the reign of “Emperor Huizong as a Daoist,” while in his “The Enduring Costs of Forgetfulness: Europe, Asia and the Wars of the Twentieth Century,” Peter W. Preston discusses how contemporary politicians might have lost sight of the astonishing costs of warfare.

The Institute of Chinese Studies is delighted to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the ICS Visiting Professorship, and looks forward to welcoming more eminent scholars in the years to come.

SHUN KWONG-LOI
Director, Institute of Chinese Studies

Rose or Jade? Problems in Translating Medieval Chinese Literature

David R. Knechtges

In 1937 the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) published in an Argentine newspaper the article titled “La Miseria y el esplendor de la traducción” (The Misery and the Splendour of Translation).¹ In this article Ortega y Gasset identifies two important facets of translation, one that he calls “misery,” and the other that he designates “splendour.” The “misery of translation” stems from the pessimistic proposition that except for scientific works, which basically are written in their own special language, it is impossible to translate from one language to another. The reason for this miserable state of affairs is that there is a vast linguistic and cultural gulf that separates different languages. As Ortega y Gasset puts it, “Languages separate us and discommunicate, not simply because they are different languages, but because they proceed from different mental pictures, from disparate intellectual systems—in the last instance, from divergent philosophies.”² Despite this ostensibly pessimistic view of translation, Ortega y Gasset is actually optimistic, for he sees in the process of translation a redeeming quality that he calls the “splendour of translation.” To him, a translation is not a “magic manipulation” from one language to another, or even a “duplicate of the original text,” but rather is one that draws attention to the cultural and linguistic differences in order to “force the reader from his linguistic habits and oblige him to move within those of the author.”³ Thus, a good translation is one that allows the reader to undertake a metaphorical “voyage to the foreign, to the absolutely foreign, which another very remote time and another very different civilization comprise.”⁴ This enhanced “historical consciousness” has the beneficial result—or in Ortega y Gasset’s words, the “splendour”—of introducing new perspectives that may challenge the reader and even jolt him out of his conventional way of viewing the world.

¹ See *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), May–June 1937; reprinted in José Ortega y Gasset, *Obras completas*, 11 vols. (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1946–1969), vol. 5, pp. 429–48. For a translation of this article into English by Elizabeth Gamble Miller, see Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, eds., *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 93–112.

² Miller, trans., in Schulte and Biguenet, eds., *Theories of Translation*, p. 107.

³ Ibid., p. 108.

⁴ Ibid., p. 109.

An alternative title to my essay could be the “The Perils and Pleasures of Translation,” substituting “perils and pleasures” for Ortega y Gasset’s “misery and splendour.” Inserting the words “perils and pleasures” in the title of course would allow me to observe the Anglo-American convention of devising an alliterative title for my paper, and perhaps by this device attract more attention from potential readers. However, what I wish to convey by these two terms is something of my view of translation, especially as it concerns medieval Chinese literature. The use of the word “peril” may sound like a peculiar way of characterizing translation, but what I shall discuss here are some of the pitfalls and traps into which a translator of Chinese texts, including myself, easily falls. I shall argue that if one is aware of these pitfalls and traps, and even tries to overcome them, translation need not be the miserable and degrading activity that it often is considered to be. I shall even dare to suggest that translation, if done properly, is a form of high-level scholarship that is as rewarding and valuable as other forms of scholarly endeavour.

For the past forty years, I have been working on a translation of the *Wen xuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature), the famous anthology compiled by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), Crown Prince of the Liang 梁 dynasty. The *Wen xuan* is the oldest extant collection of Chinese literature arranged by genre. A large portion of the *Wen xuan* comes from the medieval period of Chinese literature, and in this paper I wish to say something about my experience as a translator of the *Wen xuan* and how one might apply what I have learned to translate works of medieval Chinese literature. My focus is on rather mundane and practical matters: what problems I have encountered in translating medieval Chinese literature and what solutions I have devised for solving them.

Although there is no unanimous agreement on the exact dates of the medieval period, for the purposes of this paper, I will designate the medieval period as the period from the end of the Han dynasty around 200 to the end of the Tang, around 900. It was during this period that nearly all of the major forms of classical Chinese literature emerged. I would roughly classify them into four distinct types.

First, there is *shi* 詩 (lyric poetry), written primarily in lines of four, five, and seven syllables. Lyric poetry came to dominate the Chinese literary tradition the way the epic and drama dominated Western literature. The most famous writers of Chinese lyric poetry lived in the medieval period.

The second type of literature is the *fu* 賦, a form that is variously called rhyme-prose, prose poem, exposition, or rhapsody in English. *Fu* are usually long poems written in difficult language in lines of unequal length. Although the *fu* is conventionally identified with the Han dynasty, it continued to be an important literary form throughout the medieval period. Anyone who wishes to study or translate medieval Chinese literature must deal with the *fu*.

The third important literary form is *pian wen* 駢文 (parallel prose). Although a general definition of parallel prose is difficult to formulate, its main features include metrical and verbal parallelism, frequent allusion, and ornate language. The “golden age” of parallel prose is the medieval period. *Pian wen* compositions can be found in the collections of nearly every medieval Chinese writer. In the medieval period, the parallel style predominated in such genres as the letter (*shu* 書), preface (*xu* 序), inscription (*ming* 銘), dirge (*lei* 誄), and epitaph (*beiwén* 碑文).

The fourth literary form that appears in medieval literature is *guwen* 古文 (ancient style prose). *Guwen* is a simpler, less ornate non-parallel form of prose writing. During the medieval period it was used for prose narrative, and beginning in the Tang, for a wide variety of prose writing including narrative.

I could also add a fifth literary form, namely literature in the vernacular language. Although much less has survived from the popular tradition, we do have a small number of texts of popular songs and popular stories. These anonymous works are interesting, for one can find in them some traces of the early Chinese spoken language, including dialect expressions.

The translator of medieval Chinese literature invariably must become familiar with all of these forms. This is a daunting task, because within some of these forms there are numerous sub-forms that have their own conventions and styles. For example, the parallel prose forms include various prose types such as petitions to the throne (*biao* 表, *zou* 奏, *zhang* 章), prefaces to literary collections, eulogies (*song* 頌), encomia (*zan* 贊), imperial edicts (*zhao* 詔), expository essays (*lun* 論), even examination essays (*cewen* 策文) and war proclamations (*xi* 檄). In order to learn how to translate these prose types, I have had to spend considerable time studying their histories in order to understand their conventions and styles. For example, the petitions and court documents use various formulae and bureaucratic terms that were required in state writings. Most of the poetic forms, especially the *fu*, also employ many unusual words, technical terms, and difficult expressions. Thus, I would say the first requirement of a translator of medieval Chinese literature is a solid grounding in Chinese philology.

My own approach to translation in fact is highly philological. What this means is that in order to understand what the text says, I first must gain as accurate an understanding of the literal meaning as I can. In his famous article, "Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English," Vladimir Nabokov (1899–1977) issued his controversial manifesto concerning the issue of readability versus accuracy. Nabokov begins his article by complaining about reviews that praise the readability of so-called free translations, which he denounces in the following fulmination:

"Readable," indeed! A schoolboy's boner is less of a mockery in regard to the ancient masterpiece than its commercial interpretation or poetization. "Rhyme" rhymes with "crime," when Homer or *Hamlet* are rhymed. The term "free translation" smacks of knavery and tyranny. It is when the translator sets out to render the "spirit"—not the textual sense—that he begins to traduce his author. The clumsiest literal translation is a thousand times more useful than the prettiest paraphrase.⁵

Elsewhere in his article, Nabokov says: "The person who desires to turn a literary masterpiece into another language, has only one duty to perform, and this is to reproduce with absolute exactitude the whole text, and nothing but the text."⁶

⁵ Nabokov, "Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English," *Partisan Review* 22 (1955), p. 496.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 504.

I would qualify Nabokov's statement somewhat by saying that although I think that absolute accuracy is a laudable ideal, it cannot always be attained. Nevertheless, I agree that the translator of Chinese literature must obtain a proper understanding of the literal sense of the Chinese. And I believe that concern with accuracy does not necessarily mean a loss of readability. It is almost a commonplace in writings about translation that the best translators of Chinese are poets who do not know the language. According to this theory, such translators capture the spirit and sense of the Chinese better than those who are intimately familiar with the language. Thus, George Steiner in his celebrated book on translation, *After Babel*, has claimed that "on sinological grounds alone" a translation by the poet Ezra Pound (1885–1972), who did not know Chinese, was closer to the Chinese original than a translation by the famous translator Arthur Waley (1889–1966).⁷ Let us look at translations by Pound and Waley of the same poem. This is "Nineteen Old Poems" #2. The first thing you see is a word-for-word trot. Next is Pound's translation followed by Waley.

1	青青	河	畔	草
	green-green	river	side	grass
2	鬱鬱	園	中	柳
	thick-thick	garden	in	willows
3	盈盈	樓	上	女
	lovely-lovely	tower	on	lady
4	皎皎	當		窗牖
	bright-bright	facing		window
5	娥娥	紅	粉	妝
	pretty-pretty	red	powder	makeup
6	纖纖	出	素	手
	slender-slender	puts out	white	hand
7	昔 為	倡	家	女
	Once was	singing	house	girl
8	今 為	蕩子		婦
	Now is	wanderer's		wife
9	蕩子	行	不	歸
	Wanderer	travels	not	return
10	空 床	難	獨	守
	Empty bed	hard	alone	to keep

First is Pound's translation:

- 1 Blue, blue is the grass about the river
- 2 And the willows have overfilled the close garden.
- 3 And within, the mistress, in the midmost of her youth,

⁷ George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language & Translation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 377.

- 4 White, white of face, hesitates, passing the door.
 5
 6 Slender, she puts forth a slender hand:
 7 And she was a courtesan in the old days,
 8 And she has married a sot,
 9 Who now goes drunkenly out
 10 And leaves her too much alone.⁸

Waley's version reads:

- 1 Green, green,
 The grass by the river-bank.
 2 Thick, thick,
 The willow trees in the garden.
 3 Sad, sad,
 The lady in the tower.
 4 White, white,
 Sitting at the casement window.
 5 Fair, fair,
 Her red-powdered face.
 6 Small, small,
 She puts out her pale hand.
 7 Once she was a dancing-house girl,
 8 Now she is a wandering man's wife.
 9 The wandering man went, but did not return.
 10 It is hard alone to keep an empty bed.⁹

I will not compare Pound and Waley point by point. Some of the differences are obvious. In line 1, Pound renders the colour as “blue” rather than “green.” This is a tricky word in Chinese—it can mean either green or blue, or greenish blue depending on the context. When describing grass, it is green. Even Kentucky bluegrass is green, not blue. Notice also that Waley is more precise about the location of the grass—he has it correctly on the riverbank, just not “about the river” as Pound gives it. In line 2, I am not sure how Pound arrived at his translation of “overfilled the close garden.” The reduplicative *yuyu* 鬱鬱 means “thick and dense” 華勝茂 and describes the lush growth of the willows. In line 3, neither Pound’s “in the midmost of her youth” nor Waley’s “sad, sad” accurately conveys the sense of the reduplicative *yingying* 盈盈, which describes the woman’s “lovely bearing” 儀態美好的樣子. In line 4, the lady does not “pass the door” as in Pound, but “faces the window.” Waley is more accurate. Pound does not translate line 5, which describes the lady’s makeup—perhaps he thought he conveyed it by the title he supplied,

⁸ Ezra Pound, *Cathay*; reprinted in Pound, *Poems and Translations* (New York: Library of America, 2003), pp. 249–50.

⁹ Arthur Waley, *Chinese Poems* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946), p. 57.

“The Beautiful Toilet.” Pound does the most damage to the sense of the original in his translation of the last four lines. He makes the lady a *changji* 娼妓 (prostitute). The word he translates as “courtesan,” *chang* 倡, acquires that meaning only in the Tang dynasty.¹⁰ In the Han period, when this poem was written, the word means entertainer 歌舞藝人. There is even less justification for Pound’s translation of *dangzi* 蕩子 as “sot.” A *dangzi* is a wanderer or vagabond 辭家遠出、羈旅忘反的男子.¹¹ The Chinese original of line 9 says nothing about drunkenness as Pound has it. Waley’s “The wandering man went, but did not return” is exactly what the Chinese says. Waley also more accurately translates the concluding line.

¹⁰ One of the first occurrences of *changjia* in the sense of prostitute might be in the Tang story “Huo Xiaoyu zhuan” 霍小玉傳 attributed to Jiang Fang 蔣防 (fl. ninth century). At one point Huo Xiaoyu, who is a prostitute, identifies herself as a *changjia*: 妾本倡家，自知非匹 “I am nothing but a courtesan, and I know I am not a proper match for you.” Robert van Gulik (1910–1967) says that *changjia* in the “Nineteen Old Poems” poem is “brothel.” According to van Gulik, the poem “depicts the sorrow of a girl from a brothel who was taken as a concubine by a wealthy loafer, and then deserted.” See R. H. van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China: A Preliminary Survey of Chinese Sex and Society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.*, with a new introduction and bibliography by Paul R. Goldin (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 66. However, it is unlikely that *changjia* means brothel in the period when this poem was written. Wang Yunlu 王雲路 in her glossary on Six Dynasty poetic vocabulary explains *changjia*, *changren* 倡人, and *changqie* 倡妾 as referring to a woman who lives alone because her husband is away 因丈夫在外而獨居的女子. See Wang Yunlu, *Liuchao shige yuci yanjiu* 六朝詩歌語詞研究 (Harbin 哈爾濱: Heilongjiang jiaoyu chubanshe 黑龍江教育出版社, 1999), pp. 128–29. Professor Wang does not emphasize the entertainer role of the *changjia*. Ma Maoyuan 馬茂元 (1918–1989) explains it as *geji* 歌妓 “female singer.” See Ma Maoyuan, *Gushi shiji shou tansuo* 古詩十九首探索 (1957; reprint, Hong Kong: Bailing chubanshe 百靈出版社, 1972), p. 137. Yada Hiroshi 矢田博士 has done a detailed study of the status of *changjia* in Han times and concludes that it designates a female entertainer who performed for the imperial court or a noble household. See Yada, “‘Xi wei changjia nü, jin wei dangzi fu’ kao: Jian lun Handai ‘changjia’ de shiji shehui shenghuo zhuangkuang” 「昔為倡家女，今為蕩子婦」考——兼論漢代「倡家」的實際社會生活狀況, *Hechi shizhuan xuebao* 河池師專學報 (Shehui kexue ban 社會科學版), 1998, no. 3, pp. 24–29.

¹¹ *Dangzi* is not necessarily a derogatory term. Wang Yunlu (*Liuchao shige yuci yanjiu*, p. 147) explains it as an appellation used by a wife for her husband who is travelling alone away from home 妻子對孤身在外的丈夫的稱呼. Anne Birrell makes the *dangzi* a playboy: “Now I am a playboy’s wife.” See Birrell, *New Songs from a Jade Terrace: An Anthology of Early Chinese Love Poetry* (1982; reprint, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 39. This probably is reading too much into the word. Burton Watson uses a more neutral term, “wanderer,” which is similar to Waley’s “wandering man.” See Watson, *Chinese Lyricism: Shih Poetry from the Second to the Twelfth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 23. Jean-Pierre Diény renders *dangzi* not as a noun but a verbal phrase: “son époux court le monde.” See Diény, *Les Dix-neuf Poèmes anciens*, *Bulletin de la Maison franco-japonaise*, nouv. sér., t. 7, no. 4 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 11.

Not all poet translators of Chinese poetry subscribe to the view that approximate translations or re-creations are somehow better than those that stay closer to the original text. Vikram Seth, the celebrated poet and author of *A Suitable Boy*, published a small volume of translations of three Tang dynasty poets, Wang Wei 王維, Li Bo 李白, and Du Fu 杜甫. In his preface he says the following about his approach to translation:

There is a school of translation that believes that one can safely ignore many of the actual words of a poem once one has drunk deeply of its spirit. An approximate rendering invigorated by a sense of poetic inspiration becomes the aim. The idea is that if the final product reads well as a poem, all is well: a good poem exists where none existed before. I should mention that the poems in this book are not intended as transcreations or free translations in this sense, attempts to use the originals as trampolines from which to bounce off on to poems of my own. The famous translations of Ezra Pound, compounded as they are of ignorance of Chinese and valiant self-indulgence, have remained before me as a warning of what to shun. I have preferred mentors who . . . admit the primacy of the original and attempt fidelity to it. Like them, I have tried not to compromise the meaning of the actual words of the poems.¹²

As a way of showing that a more literal version may be superior to a free rendering, I would like to compare Seth's version of a Li Bo poem, "Watching the Waterfall at Mount Lu," with the freer version of John Turner (1909–1971), a Sinologist who is an advocate of the free rendering method of translation.

Gazing at the Waterfall on Mount Lu 望廬山瀑布

Li Bo

1	日	照	香爐	生	紫	煙
	sun	shines on	Incense Burner	produces	purple	haze
2	遙	看	瀑布	掛	前	川
	far off	see	waterfall	hangs	in front	waterway
3	飛	流	直下	三	千	尺
	flying	flow	straight goes down	three	thousand	feet
4	疑	是	銀河	落	九	天
	Suspect	that	Silver River	falls	nine	heavens

First, is Seth's translation:

In sunshine, Censer Peak breathes purple mist.
A jutting stream, the cataract hangs in spray
Far off, then plunges down three thousand feet—
As if the sky had dropped the Milky Way.¹³

¹² Vikram Seth, *Three Chinese Poets: Translations of Poems by Wang Wei, Li Bai, and Du Fu* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), pp. xxiii–v.

¹³ Ibid., p. 21.

Now, Turner's:

Where crowns a purple haze
 Ashimmer in sunlight rays
 The hill called Incense-Burner Peak, from far
 To see, hung o'er the torrent's wall,
 That waterfall
 Vault sheer three thousand feet, you'd say
 The Milky Way
 Was tumbling from the high heavens, star on star.¹⁴

Both Seth and Turner employ rhyme. Although I do not use rhyme in my own translations, I do not object to rhyme if it is used judiciously. The problem is that rhymed translations of Chinese often deteriorate into doggerel verse. Although the following example is extreme, it is not too unlike many of the rhymed translations of Chinese poetry that I have seen. This is a translation of lines from a poem in the *Shi jing* 詩經:

Like a lonely fox he goes
 On the bridge over there.
 My heart sad and drear grows:
 He has no underwear.¹⁵

If we look at Seth's translation, we see that his rhyming of the even-numbered lines corresponds more closely to the rhyming of the original than Turner, who has far too many rhymes for my taste: haze, rays; wall, waterfall; say, Way; far, and star. Turner also transforms four lines of Chinese into eight lines of English. In addition, he adds many words that are not in the original: "crowns," "ashimmer," "torrent's wall," "vault," "you'd say," "star on star." I much prefer the spareness and clarity of Seth to Turner's wordy and convoluted version, which actually is much harder to follow than Seth's. For example, in the first line Seth more accurately, and dare we say more poetically, conveys the meaning of the Chinese, which says that the peak named Incense Burner, like a real censer, puffs out a purple haze. Turner's "Where crowns a purple haze" fails to convey this meaning. A highly successful scholarly translation done by Paul Kroll will show what can be done when a translator pays careful attention to the language:

Sunlight illumines the Incense Burner, quickening a purple haze;
 Far off I see the Sheet of Spray—a vertical waterway before me.
 Its flying flow descends straight down three thousand feet;
 I fancy *that* is the Silver Ho, dropped down from the Nine Heavens!¹⁶

¹⁴ John Turner, *A Golden Treasury of Chinese Poetry* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1976), p. 119.

¹⁵ Xu Yuanzhong, *An Unexpurgated Translation of Book of Songs* (Beijing: Panda Books, 1994), p. 83, #63.

¹⁶ Paul W. Kroll, "Lexical Landscapes and Textual Mountains in the High T'ang," *T'oung Pao* 84 (1998), p. 70.

I believe translators from Chinese into English should not create Orientalized versions of Chinese poems, but English versions that preserve as much as possible the rhetoric and diction of the Chinese original. In assessing translations of Japanese literature, Roy Andrew Miller faults some translators for their lack of what he calls their “lexical and linguistic courage.” Miller goes on to say: “They are unwilling, if not downright ashamed, ever to have any text, or anyone in any text, say anything that might not have been said or written by a modern American university professor of modest literacy, and concomitantly modest literary gifts. Different ways of saying novel things, surprising figures, astonishing metaphors, unexpected expressions and tropes—all these they rigorously excise from their texts. Such things might startle the reader, or put him off. Without such excisions, the texts would no longer sound as if Englishmen and Americans were talking, they might even possibly begin to sound rather like the originals; and that of course will not do.”¹⁷

I would submit that accuracy in matters of language is a basic requirement of a translation. In another of his articles about translation, Nabokov argues that many translators of Russian literature are particularly lacking in knowledge of plants.¹⁸ I would say the same about translators of medieval Chinese literature. Take, for example, the following line from a famous poem by the Tang poet Wang Wei, which G. W. Robinson translates as follows: “Fast under the pines pick the dew’s new sunflowers” 松下清齋折露葵.¹⁹ Anyone who knows anything about plants should be alerted that something is wrong here. The sunflower of course is a New World plant that has been known in China for only the past four hundred years.²⁰ The plant in question is not a sunflower, nor does it have anything to do with dew. The word translated here as “dew” is Chinese *lu* 露. Although *lu* does mean dew, it is actually part of the formal name of the plant, which is *lu kui* 露葵. *Lu kui* is a bisyllabic name for the Chinese mallow (*Malva verticillata*), and thus *lu* should not be translated.²¹ During the medieval period, many parts of the mallow, including the

¹⁷ Roy Andrew Miller, *Nihongo: In defence of Japanese* (London: Athlone Press, 1986), p. 219.

¹⁸ Vladimir Nabokov, “The Servile Path,” in Reuben A. Brower, ed., *On Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 103–6.

¹⁹ G. W. Robinson, *Poems of Wang Wei* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 51.

²⁰ See Lin Zhengqiu 林正秋, ed., *Zhongguo yinshi dacidian* 中國飲食大辭典 (Hangzhou 杭州: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe 浙江大學出版社, 1991), p. 224, s.v. *xiangri kui* 向日葵. The earliest literary mention of *xiangri kui* is in the *Hua jing* 花鏡 of Chen Haozi 陳淏子 (fl. 1688). Another name for it was *Xifan kui* 西番葵 (mallow of the Western barbarians). See Yi Qinheng 依欽恆, ed. and comm., *Hua jing* (Beijing: Nongye chubanshe 農業出版社, 1962), *juan* 6, p. 336.

²¹ Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518–1593) gives *lukui* as the ancient name for the plant. He then cites the *Erya yi* 爾雅翼 of Luo Yuan 羅願 (1136–1184) that gives a folk etymology for *lu kui*: “The ancients when picking mallow always waited for the dew to dissolve, and thus it was called *lu kui*” 古人采葵必待露解，故曰露葵。See Chen Guiting 陳貴廷, ed., *Bencao gangmu tongshi* 本草綱目通釋 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe 學苑出版社, 1992), p. 850. However, the original text of the *Erya yi* reads somewhat differently: 古者葵稱露葵，……今摘葵必待露解。語曰：「觸露不搗葵，日中不剪韭。」“In antiquity *kui* was called *lukui*. . . . In the present when picking mallow one must wait for the dew to dissolve. There is a saying that goes ‘When there is dew one does not pick mallow, and in the full sun one does not cut leeks.’” See Luo Yuan, *Erya yi*, *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 ed., *juan* 4, p. 11a.

young shoots, stems, and leaves all served as vegetables. Mallow is no less poetic than sunflower, and any translator, whether philologist or not, should avoid transplanting anachronisms such as sunflower to the medieval Chinese garden.

Although one strives for accuracy, there are still many things that a translator cannot convey in his translation. Thus, annotations are absolutely essential, especially for works of medieval Chinese literature. Like Nabokov, I am an advocate of extensive annotations. Nabokov puts this matter eloquently: “I want translations with copious footnotes, footnotes reaching up like skyscrapers to the top of this or that page so as to leave only the gleam of one textual line between commentary and eternity.”²² The scholar translator especially has an obligation to supply his translation with annotations. Such annotations are really a form of commentary that explains matters of language, grammar, technical terminology, variant readings, allusions, clarifications of meaning, unusual pronunciations, and provides discussions of rare words. These notes may often far exceed the length of the translated portion.

One of the reasons scholars at the beginning of the twenty-first century find medieval Chinese literature so difficult to read and translate is that there is a vast linguistic and cultural gulf that separates us from medieval Chinese literature. Burton Raffel’s comments about the cultural and linguistic gulf that separates the translator from medieval European poetry could equally apply to the Chinese case: “medieval texts result from authorial intentions very different from those of our own time; medieval languages have very different linguistic features from modern ones; the context of life has changed enormously from those times to this one; and medieval literary traditions are today either dead, or poorly understood, or both.”²³ Even learned Chinese scholars of medieval Chinese literature have almost as much difficulty understanding the medieval text as his non-Chinese counterpart. For example, Professor Lu Zongda 陸宗達 (1905–1988) has said the following about the problem of translating the *Wen xuan* into modern Chinese: “To annotate [the *Wen xuan*] is not easy. To translate it [into modern Chinese] probably is even more difficult. The thought and subtleties of writers from a thousand years ago are not easily grasped, and their unique qualities are especially hard to express” 注不容易，譯恐怕更難，千餘年前的文學作者的思緒，細微之處不易捕捉，獨特之處尤難表述。²⁴

I might note that translators of contemporary works from languages very close to their own do not always have a perfect understanding of the language from which they are translating. For example, in his French translation of Edgar Allen Poe’s (1809–1849) “The Gold Bug,” Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) misunderstood the African-American dialect word “gose” in the phrase “as white as a gose” as “goose” rather than “ghost.”²⁵ If the

²² Nabokov, “Problems of Translation,” p. 512.

²³ Burton Raffel, “Translating Medieval European Poetry,” in John Biguenet and Rainer Schulte, eds., *The Craft of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 28.

²⁴ Chen Hongtian 陳宏天, Zhao Fuhai 趙福海, and Chen Fuxing 陳復興, eds., *Zhaoming Wenxuan yizhu* 昭明文選譯注 (Changchun 長春: Jilin wenshi chubanshe 吉林文史出版社, 1987), vol. 1, p. 4.

²⁵ See Stephen Peithman, ed., *The Annotated Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Avenel Books, 1981), p. 267. The French version done by Baudelaire still reads “pâle comme une oie.” See Charles Baudelaire, *Histoires extraordinaires par Edgar Poe* (Paris: Louis Conard, 1932), p. 22.