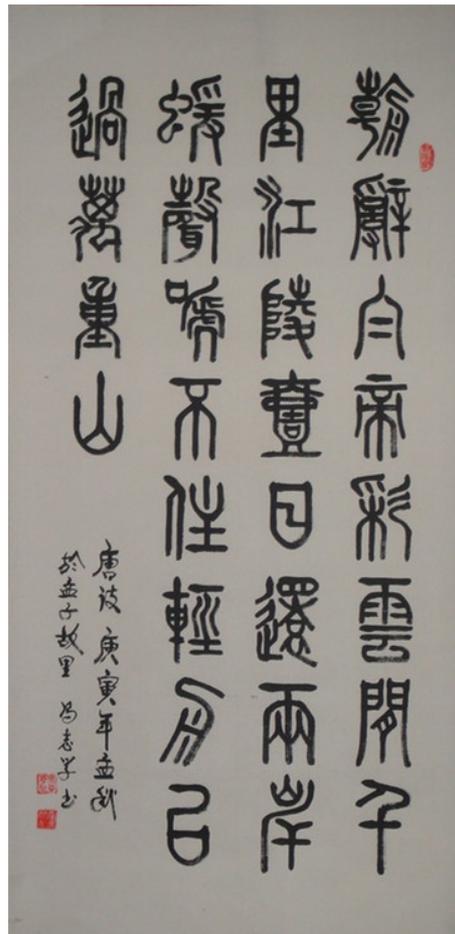


Readings From Between the Lines: A Functionalist Approach to the Translation of Classical Chinese Poetry

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Abstract

Can poetry be transmitted through translation? If so, how, and to what effect?

In this thesis, I propose that the translation of poetry is best accomplished by a structured group of translation typologies that can be read alongside the source-language poem. When a poem is read in this manner, the reader has access to more of the layers of meaning present in the source-language poem than can be transmitted by one translation alone. My claim is based on a broad definition of translation, where translation is not simply the transference of a text from language A to language B, but rather the transmission of aspects and layers of meaning from a source text by means of a target language.

Poetry is a neglected area in established translation theory, and theoretical discussions of translation tend to be text-oriented rather than reader-oriented. This thesis contributes a theoretical platform for the discussion of poetry translation from a reader-oriented perspective.

I have chosen the translation into English of Classical Chinese poetry from the Tang Dynasty as my case. Classical Chinese provides a wealth of challenges for the translator, including a language structure vastly different from that of English, and a rich history of literary form, historical references, and imagery that stretches back over thousands of years.

Preface

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to my advisor Halvor Eifring for his support and encouragement, both of my studies in general of this thesis in particular, and for his generosity with his time during the many enlightening and highly enjoyable advising sessions. I would also like to thank my good friends, teachers, and fellow students Pang Cuiming and Unn Målfrid Høgseth Rolandsen: Cuiming for discussing the Chinese sources with me and patiently answering my many questions, Unn Målfrid for discussing with me and challenging my arguments in my final stages of writing, and both for their friendship and support. I am also very grateful to Stephen Owen for generously providing translations for four of the poems used as examples.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband Terje and son Simon for being such good sports about the fact that they have seen so little of me during my studies.

Any inaccuracies or oversights in this thesis are solely my own.

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I Can Poetry be Translated?

1.1 Introduction

Traditional translation theory provides little or no help for the translator of poetry. Look for the word “poetry” in the index of a book on translation theory, and either you will not find it at all, or the entry to which you are directed will simply include poetry as a passing mention. Likewise, scholarly, non-theoretical books on poetry and translation generally do not discuss translation theory. In his book *Performing Without A Stage: The Art of Literary Translation*, devoted to the translation of fiction and poetry, Robert Wechsler discusses how translation is taught at the university level without mentioning courses in translation theory. He describes translation workshops that start out with “some readings in the history and theory of translation” but that go on to discussions and criticism of translations as the method used with no mention whatsoever of translation theory being employed as part of the learning process, a basis for discussing translations, or as a tool for translation itself.¹ What is it about poetry that has caused both theorists and scholar/translators to ignore it in their discussions?

Wu Juntao offers the following: “It is said that poetry can never be adequately rendered in another language. Be that as it may, various versions are allowable, and even necessary. The poetry of a great poet invites different translators just as beautiful scenery invites different painters to paint”.² Various translated versions of a poem are indeed allowable and necessary, if the text is to be transmitted at all. But at what price, and to what effect? When various artists transmit a single landscape, its elements are obvious to the viewer in all versions. The recipient can prefer one version over another, or discover a new way of looking at an element through the artist’s eyes, but the basic aspects of the landscape – the sky, water, foliage, etc. – will all be present and recognisable, despite the artists’ various interpretations. In contrast, the various aspects of a single poem cannot all be conveyed in a single translation; something is bound to be missing in any given target-text (translated) version. Language structure and sound, the cultural context of a text, and associations evoked by specific words, references, sounds, or literary forms vary so much from one language and cultural context to the next that no single translation of a poem can possibly convey everything contained within to target-text readers. As Wechsler puts it: “[...] translation

¹ Wechsler 1998: 172-78

² Wu 1981: 4, Chinese text page 5: 據說詩歌決不能妥貼地譯成另一種文字。正因如此，各種譯本應是允許的，甚至必需的。一位大詩人的作品可以讓不同的譯者翻譯，正像美景可以讓不同的畫家臨摹一樣。

problems are magnified and concentrated in poetry; in most prose, one can go whole paragraphs, even pages, without any serious issues to discuss [...]”.¹ It would seem then that poetry is simply too difficult – has too many problems or challenges, is too varied in its means of expression – to be encompassed by theory. I argue however that translation theory can indeed be used to construct a theoretical platform for the transmission of poetry, but perhaps not in the way one is accustomed to think about translation.

In this thesis, I will demonstrate how various translations of a poem can work together to give the reader access to what can be referred to as the ‘whole’ poem; that is, its linguistic, rhythmic, aural, and associative elements.² The transmission of a poem in this manner challenges the usual definition of translation as the act of transmitting a single text from one language to another, and invites us to view it in a broader sense: the transmission of the various elements and meanings in a text from one language to another. This expanded view of translation requires a new form in which to present translation, and to this end I will identify three complementary translation typologies – structural, scholarly, and poetic – that can be used as a guideline when a translation is created or chosen to be included in a set of translations. I believe that such a set of translations – readings from between the lines, as it were – not only gives the reader the best possible point of departure from which to see the layers of meaning in the source-language poem, but also provides him with a tool through which he can better understand and evaluate the choices a particular translator has made, and therefore become a more critical reader of translations.

I have chosen Classical Chinese as my case for two reasons. First, the language itself poses interesting problems for the translator working with English. Unlike English, Chinese has remained remarkably unchanged for thousands of years, and can be read in its original form today. The modern reader of Chinese will at times find himself consulting commentaries or a dictionary of Classical Chinese for complicated or obscure texts, but the language is recognisable, and in many cases texts can be read without the help of reference works. This gives the reader a direct connection with the words as the poet wrote them, a connection that non-specialist readers of English poetry lack in their own language. Second, centuries-old Chinese verse forms and specific techniques used therein to create and transmit imagery and evoke associations based in the literary and cultural history – as well as the images and associations themselves – are still part of the Chinese reading experience today. The reader fortunate enough to understand Chinese has a unique possibility to reach back through a

¹ Wechsler 1998: 179

² Stephen Owen discusses ‘the whole poem’ in Owen 1985: 73-77

period of over two thousand years. In this study, I will demonstrate a way in which this experience can be transmitted to an English-speaking readership.

1.2 Method

In my work with this thesis, I first consulted reading guides for Classical Chinese poetry in order to better acquaint myself with the poetry's formal and associative aspects, and to orient myself concerning general issues the translator might face. I then turned to commentary on and scholarly work about specific poems, and looked for published translations of these poems that could illustrate choices translators make and the resulting effects. It quickly became clear that while a source-language poem in and of itself might be very interesting and worthy of discussion, a study of its translation is dependent on the availability of both published scholarly work on and translations of that poem. Further, these translations must differ from each other in regard to how aspects or layers of meaning are transmitted. These factors played a deciding role in how I selected the poems used for illustrative purposes.

The lack of theoretical work in regard to the translation of poetry and the reading of translated poetry led me to construct a theoretical platform where I draw on elements from established translation theory, reception theory, and the work of poet-scholars who discuss poetry translation. To do this, I first consulted general survey texts to gain an overview of some of the most prevalent schools of thought in each theoretical discipline, and on the basis of this, sought out more specific theoretical works. Parallel to this, I read works on the translation of poetry written by scholars, poets, and translators. Finally, I chose those elements I felt could be combined to create my platform.

1.3 Discussion

In order to define my translation typologies and demonstrate how they transmit the various aspects of a poem, I have chosen to structure my discussion by seeking answers to the following questions:

- Who are the readers, and how do they read?
- Why is the text being translated?
- How will the target text be used?
- What is the intended effect, and how can that effect be achieved?

In Chapter II, I will begin by drawing on elements from reception theory to identify the reader and describe the process of reading a translation. I will then discuss translation theory from a functionalist perspective, focusing on the intended use – function – of a target text rather than on the source text or on a set of universal translation rules, to identify why a poem is translated and how the translation is meant to be used. This will allow me to identify elements that can contribute to a theoretical base for the creation or selection of complementary translations. Function is a key element in my argument; a translation intended as a navigational tool for the language-learner reader who wishes to learn the characters of the original text must for example necessarily be different from a translation that attempts to mirror the rhyme or rhythm of the source text. If the intended function is to inform the target-text readers of cultural aspects of the source-text culture that are displayed in the poem, the translator must take that into account. Consider the following two couplets from “Moonlit Night” (月夜), written in 756 by Du Fu:¹

今天鄜州月	to-day • Fu-zhou • moon
閨中只獨看	‘womens’ apartments’ • in • only • alone • watch
遙憐小兒女	distant • pity • small • son • daughter
未解憶長安	not yet • understand • remember • Chang-an

The literal word-for-word analysis given above can function as a language-learning tool, or as a target-language map of the source text that shows the reader the relative placement of key words. As it stands above, it cannot show double meanings or images associated with the words, and can by no stretch of the imagination function as what most readers think of as a poem in translation: a text meant to give the reader a literary experience in a target language. The following translation is quite different:

Tonight
in this same moonlight

my wife is alone at her window
in Fuzhou

I can hardly bear
to think of my children

too young to understand

¹ *Quan Tangshi* scroll 224 全唐詩卷二百二十四 (indicated hereafter by *QTS* and scroll number). <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=149528&if=en>, accessed 29.10.2011. The literal translation is based on Hawkes 1987 (1967): 31.

why I can't come to them¹

Here the translator takes some liberties, but both the number of words used and the visual effect of the layout echo the compactness of Classical Chinese quite successfully. This version does not however show the reader that the last characters of the second and fourth lines of the original rhyme with each other. The transmission of rhyme is one function of yet another translation:

In Fuzhou, far away, my wife is watching
The moon alone tonight, and my thoughts fill
With sadness for my children, who can't think
Of me here in Changan; they're too young still.²

The enjambement introduced into this version comes at the expense of the transmission of the rhythm of the original. When read together, however, the cumulative effect of these translations is the transmission of more aspects of the source text than any one version provides on its own.

Some elements are not addressed in any of the three translations above. How 閨中, “womens’ apartment-in”, comes to mean ‘wife’ is a cultural element and is well worth explaining to a target-text reader, perhaps in commentary or a footnote, as is the fact that the city of Chang’an is used in the poem both as word play (長安 means ‘long peace’) and to indicate Du Fu himself, aspects to which we will return in Chapter III.³ The context in which the poem was written – the author was trapped in the capital city during a time of unrest – is also relevant background information.⁴ Finally, the translator must be aware that the poet has chosen to break one of the rules of composition that govern poetry of this type, a phenomenon to which I will return in Chapter III.

Even in this relatively simple excerpt, it quickly becomes apparent that any one translation alone can convey only some of what the poem has to offer. Identifying the function a translation is meant – or can be used – to fill is an important step in the process of translation of a poem under the broader definition suggested above.

In Chapter III, I will examine challenges the translator faces at the level of the word and text in order to illustrate the relationship between the choices, omissions, and interpretations a

¹ Young 2010: 69

² Seth 1992: 37

³ 閨中, literally “womens’ apartment-in”, is a synonym for wife. Traditionally, a wife was the ‘person inside’. Hawkes 1967: 31

⁴ Liang 1984: 7

translator makes and the resulting effects. Finally, in Chapter IV, I will discuss in detail four poems and several translations of each, in order to show how more than one translation of a poem can work together to make all layers and meanings of a poem available to a target-text reader.

To begin with, however, I will present the poets I have chosen to use as my case, and the time and culture in which they lived.

1.4 The Tang Dynasty, poetry, and the poets

1.4.1 A short historical overview

The Tang Dynasty (618-907) is considered the golden age of Chinese culture. It came on the heels of the Sui Dynasty (581-618), during which China had been reunified after almost four hundred years of division. The political situation between 618 and 712 was characterised by frequent change, with periods of rebellion, reconstruction, and even occasional periods of relative peace. From 712, the emperor Xuanzong began a prosperous reign marked by efficient government that was to last until 755 and be the most peaceful and prosperous period in the Tang. Xuanzong expanded the school and health-care systems, increased agricultural productivity, and maintained law and order. He was in addition a skilled musician, poet, and calligrapher, and established an academy at his court that included – among other artists and academics – poets.¹ It was during the beginnings of this period that the two poets whose work is examined in this thesis, Li Bai and Du Fu, were born.

1.4.2 Poetry in the Tang Dynasty

The arts and learning were central in the lives of a small segment of imperial society during the Tang Dynasty.² Poetic forms were by this time catalogued and a system for their composition had come into place, mostly to meet the needs of the imperial examinations, (*keju*, 科舉), which were used to find qualified men for government posts.³ Stephen Owen points out that poetry can seem like an odd choice of yardstick when choosing civil servants:

[...] qualification for public service should reasonably demand some test of administrative competence, intelligence, or experience. If skill in poetic composition to a set topic qualified a person to serve, then there must have been something in that ability which [*sic*] answered the government's needs more perfectly than competence, intelligence, or experience. If the poem in no way proved the candidate's capacity to

¹ Benn 2002: 1-9; Ebrey 1996: 121

² Owen 1985: 27

³ Cheng 1977 trans. Riggs & Seaton 1982: 44

serve the people, then perhaps it proved something in the other direction—concerning the candidate’s adherence and loyalty to the central government.¹

While only sons of aristocratic families were initially allowed to participate in the examinations, the system was gradually expanded to include talented young men from unconnected families.² Stephen Owen goes so far as to suggest that poetry in this context was first and foremost “[...] a symbolic act of loyalty to the central government”, that is, a way to ensure that the examinees who might otherwise not have the inborn inclination for loyalty to the government that goes hand-in-hand with belonging to the aristocracy “[...] possessed or could adopt the point of view of the central government and could conceive of the world in its authorized terms”.³ Regardless of the motivation for including poetry in the examination system, the fact that it was included in the most prestigious examination level – the *jinshi* (進士), or ‘presented scholar’ – may well be the main reason poetry became such an important part of Chinese life and language, and remains so even today. Educated men were expected to be able to write poems; the catalogues of the two poets introduced below include many such poems, with such titles as “At an Evening Picnic, with Young Bucks and Beauties on Chang-Pa Canal, It Rained”, “On Meeting Li Kuei-Nien, South of the River” (Du Fu), “At Ching-men Ferry, A Farewell”, “Written on a Wall at Summit-Top Temple” (Li Bai). A poet might for example paint lines of poetry onto the wall of his host’s home to commemorate the visit, to demonstrate his connection with his host, or to ensure the transmission of his poem.⁴ The importance of poetry in the life of Tang Chinese can be illustrated by the fact that in 882, when a poem was written and posted on the wall of a government building ridiculing the leader of the rebel regime, Huang Chao, who himself wrote poetry and failed the civil service examination. This so infuriated Huang that he ordered that everyone capable of writing poetry was to be killed. Three thousand people died as a result.⁵

A successful examination did not however guarantee a government position, and the system was corrupt.⁶ Examiners could be influenced, and the temptation to do so was great; on average only 20-30 men passed the imperial examination each year.

¹ Owen 1985: 28

² Ebrey 1996: 112; Owen 1985: 28

³ Owen 1985: 27-28

⁴ Benn 2002: 79; Nugent 2010: 212

⁵ Ebrey 1996: 129

⁶ Benn 2002: 257-261

1.5 The poets: Li Bai and Du Fu

Li Bai (李白, 701-762, also known in the West as Li Po or Li Bo) and Du Fu (杜甫, 712-770, also known as Tu Fu) are generally considered to be the two greatest Chinese poets of all time. Together with Wang Wei (王維, 699-759), they were the most influential poets active in the High Tang, a period that corresponds approximately with the reign of Xuanzong. Of the two, less is known about Li Bai, and due to his tendency for exaggeration much of the information that comes from the man himself must be taken with a grain of salt.¹ He was born in an area outside of present-day China into a family that claimed to be descended from the imperial Li family, rulers of a kingdom in fifth-century Northwest China, though it is possible that they actually were Turkish or Iranian.² What is certain is that by the time he was five, Li Bai's family had settled in Changming, in Sichuan in Southwestern China. He posed as a Daoist, openly scornful of Confucian thought. Both his life and his poetry demonstrate his version of the concept of *wuwei*, 'do nothing', a philosophy of acting with selfless spontaneity that was very influential among intellectuals at the time. He was a wanderer by choice rather than necessity and was known for his wild drinking, spontaneity, and an irreverent attitude toward authority. He "[...] drinks heavily; he does as he pleases and shows a cheerful disregard for custom and authority; and he is an immortal, different from ordinary men and privileged to act differently. No other T'ang poet, including Tu Fu, devoted so much of his energy to describing and projecting his identity, signaling to the reader his uniqueness both as a poet and as a personality."³ He was reputed to be able to compose poetry at an amazing pace while drunk, an attribute Du Fu immortalized in the first line of the sixth poem in his "Eight Drinking Immortals" (酒中八仙):⁴

李白斗酒 詩百篇

Li • Bai • dipper • wine • poem • hundred • sheet

*A hundred poems per gallon of wine—
that's Li Bo*⁵

¹ Unless otherwise noted, information on the life of Li Bai is taken from Cooper 1973: 18-36; Minford 2000: 722; Hinton 1996: xi-xxv

² Owen 1981: 111-12

³ *Ibid.*, 109

⁴ *QTS* scroll 216 <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=146841&if=gb&remap=gb>, accessed 03.11.2011

⁵ Owen 1981: 109

In or around the year 742 he received an imperial summons to the capital and was given a post at the Hanlin academy established by Xuanzong. Here, he was close to the emperor, surrounded by other scholars in disciplines that included literature, divination, and medicine. He had in effect secured an attractive post without the aid of solid family connections or the imperial examination.¹ Here he remained until he fell into disfavour in 744. He was therefore no longer in the capital in 755 when the An Lushan rebellion broke out. This rebellion was devastating; at its end in 763, of the original population of 53 million people, 36 million were either killed or rendered homeless. During the last eight years of this life, Li Bai was imprisoned, banished, pardoned, and ill. His wandering during these years was more that of a sick refugee than that of a free-spirited soul. The legend of his death claims that he died while drunk, that he fell from a boat while attempting to grasp the moon's reflection.

Little autobiographical information can be found in his poems, which in turn makes them difficult to date exactly. Approximately 1000 poems attributed to Li Bai exist today. Despite his decline in his last years, he was recognised in his own time as a genius. In his poetry as in his life, he stepped outside the bounds of the expected, surprising his readers by stretching genre conventions.

In contrast to Li Bai, the copious information available to us about Du Fu comes to a great extent from his poems.² A chronological reading of the approximately 1,400 – 1,500 poems he has left us gives a fairly clear map of his life journey.³ He was born into a family of officials – his grandfather had been a court poet – and unlike Li Bai who never took the imperial examination, he attempted to follow the career path usual for young men in his position.⁴ His first attempt to pass the examination was probably sometime between 735 and 736, likely after having first passed the qualifying examination.⁵ He failed again a decade later, for the second and last time, in 747, but was not alone; no one passed. Success in the *jinshi* exam system was dependent not only on the candidate's performance, but on his background, connections, and politics; the exam failures of Tang-era poets was in a number of cases documented in their poetry.⁶ Later, Du Fu attempted to acquire a post via connections, and presented his poetry directly to the emperor in 751. He was offered an unattractive post as police commissioner of Hexi, where he would spend some of his time

¹ Ibid., 116

² Unless otherwise noted, information on Du Fu's life is taken from Young 2010; Cooper 1973: 37-44; and especially Chou 1995: 2-11

³ Young 2010 gives a chronological presentation of his poetry with historical commentary.

⁴ Owen 1981: 186

⁵ Hsieh 1994: 2

⁶ Ibid., 3

kowtowing to his superiors and the rest supervising beatings. He turned this post down, and when he did finally win a low-ranking post that was acceptable to him (though almost devoid of any real duties), the An Lushan rebellion prevented him from assuming it.¹ He ‘celebrated’ the appointment with an ironic occasional poem, “I Finally Get A Post” (官定后戏赠).

The rebellion did more than influence Du Fu’s career as a bureaucrat; it changed his life as a poet. Up to this point he had written fewer than 150 poems; the rebellion changed the course of his life and gave him material for his writing. He initially did well. Imprisoned in the capital, he managed to escape and joined the exiled emperor, who awarded him the position of Commissioner of the Right (*youshiyi*, 右拾遺). From this vantage point he could see and record history. His use of historical events in his poetry earned him the name the poet-historian (*shishi*, 詩史).²

From this point on, however, his fortunes changed. Unsited for life at court, he was exiled to a lesser position in 758. Within a year, he likely moved with family away from the fighting in the Central Plains. He never returned to the capital, but remained in Sichuan for a fairly restful five years. The last four years of his life were spent moving gradually – together with his family – down the Yangtze river, slowly becoming sicker and more desperate. Little is known about what became of his family; a grandson was the last of his family to appear in recorded history, when he requested a grave inscription for his grandfather in 813.

Despite the tragic end to his life, and difficult times along the way, much of his poetry recounts happy times. He wrote not only of horrific wartime events, but also of his many travels and of the interesting and everyday things he encountered underway. His poetry is therefore important not only because of its outstanding literary quality, but because of the historical information it gives us about life in the Tang Dynasty. Eva Shan Chou points out that:

“[...] it is important to remember that in this life, the common places of the life of a member of the T’ang official class are preserved, and the questions that puzzle us about Tu Fu’s life are not unique to him. Why he failed to secure a post, why he failed the examinations, how he made ends meet at particular periods, what was his place in the social and official world of his day – the answers are aspects of the social history of the T’ang dynasty and not, as is often assumed, matters peculiar to Tu Fu.”³

As for the literary quality of his work, Stephen Owen states that Du Fu was “[...] the poet who used colloquial and informal expressions with greater freedom than any of this

¹ Young 2010: 62

² Owen 1981: 185

³ Chou 1995: 11

contemporaries; he was the poet who experimented most boldly with densely artificial poetic diction; he was the most learned poet in recondite allusion and a sense of the historicity of language". He "assimilated all that preceded him and, in doing so, changed his sources irrevocably [...] The impact of Tu Fu's poetic oeuvre was not felt until several decades after his death, but once his preeminence was established, he became the towering figure of Chinese poetry whom no later poet could entirely ignore."¹

Du Fu and Li Bai met for the first time in 744, and then once more in 745. By all accounts they got along well despite their fundamental differences in philosophy, traveling together and writing occasional poems about their meetings. It had been suggested however that the friendship was somewhat one-sided, based mostly on a common admiration for Li Bai (!).² Each man's work and life path complement those of the other: Li Bai with his focus on personal and poetic identity, Du Fu with his poetic documentation of both historical events and life in the Tang Dynasty; Li Bai, with his interest in the other-worldly, created worlds, while Du Fu transmitted worlds; Li Bai testing the rules of composition, Du Fu, excelling within them with formal near-perfection; and Li Bai with his questionable, perhaps fabricated family background, and Du Fu with his place within a family status firmly anchored in the system. The fact that they both excelled in the poetic forms of their time and that their work is still read in China today has attracted the attention of translators for hundreds of years. Illustrative poetic material from the Tang Dynasty abounds: over 48,900 poems by 2,200 Tang poets survive today.³ The place of Li Bai and Du Fu in literary history makes their poetry a natural choice for the purposes of my study, and the examples used in the following chapters are drawn from their work.

¹ Owen 1981: 183-84

² Ibid., 188

³ Ebrey 1996: 120

II Translation and reception: moving the reader, or moving the text?

Translation has taken place for thousands of years; translation theory as its own, specific discipline has however existed for only a very few decades. Since the relatively recent advent of translation theory as a discipline in the late mid-twentieth century, several schools of thought have emerged: equivalence-based, functionalist, discourse and analysis-based, descriptive, interpretive, philosophical, just to name some, each with up to several theories which to some extent both contradict and overlap each other. Almost none address poetry in any manner other than a passing mention, though some aspects of several can be applied to verse in some way. There are many discussions of the translation of poetry by scholars, poets, and poet-translators, but none falls within the boundaries of established theories, and none attempts to propose anything as structured as a theory.¹ Few argue with, build on, or even refer to each other, and as a result, a systematic research perspective between them is lacking. In order to view the translation of poetry from a theoretical perspective, one must therefore decide which aspects of existing translation theory are applicable, consider the work of scholars, poets, and poet-translators, and construct a new theoretical platform. With this thesis, I hope to contribute to such a platform.

Poetry is not the only issue that has been neglected by theorists. Leo-Tak-Hung Chan points out that “[f]ar greater attention has been paid in translation theory to how the translator translates than to how a translation is read, and the relationship of the reader to translated fiction thus remains an unexplored area.”² The same type of attention has thus far been lacking in regard to the reader of translated verse. ‘The reader’ is in itself a problematic term. Who are the readers, and what do they need? To what extent do readers of translated verse form a homogenous group? How great a distance separates them from the source language and its culture, and what does this mean for translation? And most importantly, what tools must be put at the readers’ disposal if they are to be made capable of understanding the ‘whole’ poem?

In this chapter I go through existing translation theories and begin a discussion of their relevance for Chinese poetry. Exemplification in this chapter is brief; detailed examples are provided in Chapter III, where I go through those specific features of Chinese poetry that are

¹ See for example Stewart ed. 2004. *The Poem Behind the Poem: Translating Asian Poetry*. Copper Canyon Press, Port Townsend; Raffel 1971. *The Forked Tongue*. Mouton, The Hague; Raffel 1988. *The Art of Translating Poetry*. The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park; Barnstone 1993. *The Poetics of Translation*. Yale University Press, New Haven; Ormsby 2001. *Facsimilies of Time: Essays on Poetry and Translation*. The Porcupine’s Quill, Ontario; Wechsler 1998.

² Chan 2010: 21

not accounted for in existing theory. I will begin by defining the reader in the context of this study, and discuss how texts are received by readers and the impact this has on translation strategies. I will then give an historical overview of views on translation up to the mid-twentieth century, which will provide a foundation for a discussion of some of the major directions in translation theory and how aspects of them can be applied to the translation of poetry, and especially for the identification of translation typologies that function together in a structured relationship.

2.1 The reader and how he reads

2.1.1 Defining the reader

For the purposes of this study, I will draw on the work of Andrew Chesterman and Anthony Pym to define the reader of translated poetry. Chesterman states that there are two types of readers: addressees, those for whom a translation is intended or implied, as imagined by the translator or the person who commissions the translation, and receivers.¹ According to Anthony Pym, receivers are divided into three groups, two of which are interesting in this context: participative receivers (those to whom the text is explicitly addressed, Chesterman's 'addressees'), and observational receivers (those who read and understand the text, even though it is not specifically written for them).² I consider readers of translated Classical Chinese verse to be both addressees/participative receivers and observational receivers: those for whom the translation is intended – readers who seek out a translation due to an interest in the poetry or source-text language and culture – and those who are perhaps not particularly motivated to learn about Chinese poetry in particular, but happen along for whatever reason and read the text, and who then ideally will discover something interesting in the process. A group made up of these types of readers will be varied, spanning from those who are mostly interested in the meaning of the Chinese characters and use poetry as their point of departure, to those who simply want to read a good poem and are uninterested in how it came to be. This group can also include the “accidental” reader, who comes upon the material coincidentally. Somewhere within this group we would no doubt find readers interested to varying degrees in the source culture and poetic forms of the source language. The reader discussed in this paper is therefore the English speaker who either wishes to be enlightened about as many aspects of a Classical Chinese poem as possible, or who perhaps is unaware of the complexity of the

¹ Chesterman also uses the term 'recipients'.

² The third category is 'excluded receivers' (those who for whatever reason simply do not understand/do not receive the message of the text). Chesterman & Wagner 2002: 55

source texts and would appreciate being shown the “missing” aspects of a poem in the target language.

2.1.2 Reception and translation

Wolfgang Iser describes a literary text as a living organism that exists in a feedback system with the reader. The text consists of signals that are interpreted by the reader, who “insert[s] his own ideas into the process of communication”.¹ This process is self-correcting as the reader progresses through the text and takes in more information. The same idea can be found in the transactional theory of reception as developed by John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley, in which a text is an unfinished series of events until it is encountered by a reader. A poem, like any type of text, can thus be called an active process that occurs as a result of the relationship between a reader and a text.² The reader of a text “must actively draw upon past experience and call forth the ‘meaning’ from the coded symbols”.³ What exactly the reader brings to the process depends on that reader's own knowledge, background, and motivation for reading a given text. What he takes with him after the experience is a combination of what he has brought with him and how he reacts to and understands what was provided for him on the page; in the case of translation, what is provided for him on the page is dependent on and limited to the information provided by the translator. Further, the reader’s willingness to read a particular text “[...] will be exceeded if the text makes things too clear or, on the other hand, too obscure: boredom and overstrain represent the two poles of tolerance, and in either case the reader is likely to opt out of the game.”⁴ This is an important point in relation to over-explication in the process of translating from Classical Chinese to English, which will be discussed in Chapter III.

The speaker-listener (author-reader) relationship as defined in information theory illustrates this active process between text and reader, and can be adapted to demonstrate the difference in information processing when the text is a source text, and when it is a target text.⁵ When source-text readers read a text, the process between actors and events is as follows:

author→ *encoding*→ *message*→ *decoding*→ *reader*

¹ Iser 1978: 66-67

² Rosenblatt 1978: 14-16

³ *Ibid.*, 22

⁴ Iser 1991: 108

⁵ Rosenblatt 1978: 19, in reference to C. E. Shannon and W. Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1949

A source text has an author who puts his thoughts into writing (encoding), resulting in a text (message) that is then read (decoded) by a reader. This illustrates Rosenblatt's claim that reading is a process in which "each component of the reading process functions by virtue of the presence of the others".¹ When the text being read is a translated text, the chain of actors and events becomes longer (the additional process enclosed in brackets):

ST author → *encoding* → *message*¹ [→ *decoding* → *translator* → *recoding* → *message*²] → *decoding* → *TL reader*

The source-language author encodes his thoughts in a text (the source-language message), which is decoded (read) by the translator who then recodes (translates) it into a target-language text. This text is then decoded by a target-language reader.

From two actors, one message, and two events, we now have three actors, two messages, and four events. This demonstrates the scope of a translator's influence on the reading experience, and the degree to which the process can be complicated in the case of a translated text. But what goes on during the reading itself, and how should awareness of this affect the translation of poetry?

Chan points out that interpretation is an integral part of the reading process. Internal parameters within a text, established to a great degree by the translator in translated texts, exist side by side with external, socio-cultural parameters. He points out that "[in] determining the significance of each element, the reader relates it not just to others in the text [...], but also to extra-textual systems, which include literary, generic and semiotic systems belonging to individual cultures." This placing of elements by the reader – what Chan calls activating intertextuality – is a key reading strategy, and will often result in differing attitudes toward a translated text from one reader to another. The reader with no knowledge of the source language, literary history, and cultural context is completely dependent on the elements the translator has chosen to include and omit. This does not mean that the reader of a translated text is a naive reader; he will interact with the target text and derive an experience from it. The point is that given no other choice, he may well believe that the meaning he finds in the translation is the same as that in the original text. "How something is said becomes irrelevant to what is said; the linguistic medium is dissociated from the meaning expressed."² Other readers may choose to regard the text as an original in the source language or to treat it

¹ Rosenblatt 1978: 14

² Chan 2010: 65

as a text in its own right while keeping in mind that it might not convey a message identical to that of its source text. These readers read with what Chan calls “double vision”; they allow their knowledge of both the source and target contexts to inform their interpretations.¹

Chan’s double vision can be facilitated by “stereoscopic reading”, a strategy advocated by Marilyn Rose, who in turn borrowed the term from translator-educator Joanne Englebert who coined it in 1989. Rose defines stereoscopic reading as a method whereby one or more translations are read alongside the source text.² The reader uses the translator as a proxy reader, and is therefore forced to read critically and articulate his own reading. This way of reading can supply information that exists between the two languages (hence “stereo”). Rose believes that certain meanings can only be discovered in the space between a source text and its many translations, because “texts and translations loosely enclose an interliminal space of meaning, allusion and sound”.³ She states:

If we do not juxtapose a work and the translations it elicits, we risk missing many a gift inside the borders. Each phrase, each sentence, each paragraph has a boundary that is more a threshold than a barrier. Those are the boundaries of the original, the text as first composed and those of its counterparts in translation. Each boundary can be crossed inasmuch as a threshold provides an entry.⁴

Stereoscopic reading requires that more than one translation be present and available to the reader, alongside the source-language text. This is of the utmost importance if a source-language poem is to be truly understood in a target language. I argue that if these translations have no structured relationship to each other, some of the benefit of stereoscopic reading is lost. It is therefore necessary not only to present a poem in the source language together with more than one translation, but that the translations must complement each other. Their cumulative effect must be to give the reader access to as much of the meaning of the source text – the meaning found in Rose’s “interliminal space” – as possible.

2.1.3 A yardstick for complementary translations: shifting the focus from text to reader

Providing the reader with complementary translations as described above is one strategy for shifting the balance in favour of readers in regard to translation. A set of such translations addresses the particular needs of readers who are confronted with verse translated from a distant culture and where the source and target languages are vastly different. These

¹ Chan 2010: 66

² Rose 1997: 90

³ Ibid., 73

⁴ Ibid., 7

translation typologies must however be defined in some way. A statement by Stephen Owen can serve as a reference point:

The distance that separates a modern English reader from an eighth-century Chinese poem can be crossed in only two ways—moving the reader or moving the poem. Either resettlement must be resolute. We may learn and assimilate a new poetics; or we may remake the Chinese poem to answer the established literary values of English readers. Do not worry that the resolute migration of either party will result in full assimilation; the true danger lies in making what *is* vital poetry in one language into what is *not* poetry in another—a peculiar project that has little attraction either for English readers or for the patient Chinese poems.¹

I agree that the resettlement must (or at least will in most cases will likely) be resolute within a single translation. I propose however that when a poem is transmitted from source to target language by means of a collection of complementary translation typologies, the movement of reader to text or text to reader will be by degrees, and the path may zigzag along the way. I argue that rather than only attempting to make what is poetry in one language into something that is poetry in another, the ‘translation’ of a poem in the broader sense that I have suggested has the potential to show the reader of a target language *why* the source-language text is poetry. Remaking the poem to match the literary values of target-language readers is but one part of this process. The concept of moving the reader and/or moving the poem can therefore be a very interesting and useful premise by which to discuss translation theory in light of the needs and functions of readers and translations, and is the point of departure in the following discussion.

2.2 Translation – a historical overview

2.2.1 Translation prior to the twentieth century

Discussions of the dilemmas a translator faces in the Western world reach back at least to the time of Cicero (106-43 BC), who said:

If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or wording, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator. (*De optimo genere oratorum* v.14)²

The word-for-word translation Cicero describes was a literal transfer of each word from Greek to Latin, meant to be read alongside the original as a navigational aid, not as an independent text.³ As such, it clearly was created with a specific type of receiver and

¹ Owen 1985: 121

² Nord 1997: 4

³ Munday 2008: 20

stereoscopic reading in mind. Cicero was also clear about the necessity of departing from a strictly literal translation in 46 BC:

And I did not translate them as an interpreter, but as an orator, keeping the same ideas and forms, or as one might say, the ‘figures’ of thought, but in language which conforms to our usage. And in so doing, I did not hold it necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language.¹

From translation as an aid to a reader working with source and target texts simultaneously, we have moved to a translation that conveys the “ideas and forms” of a source text, but that operates as an independent text in the target language. The intended reader of this translation is not necessarily aware of or interested in the source; the purpose of this translation strategy seems to be the transfer of information as a literary experience, in a form the receiver will recognise. I argue that if both types of translation were offered along with the source text, the benefits to the reader would be even greater.

Hieronymus (St. Jerome), possibly the most famous translator of all time, echoed Cicero’s attitude in the fourth century in his “Letter to Pammachius” when he was criticised for being too literal in his translation:

Now I not only admit but freely announce that in translating from the Greek – except of course in the case of the Holy Scripture, where even the syntax is a mystery – I render not word-for-word but sense-for-sense.²

Jerome had chosen to correct earlier Latin versions of the Bible and to return to the Hebrew when he created the Latin Bible translation commissioned by the Pope in the late fourth century. These decisions were derided by those who felt that because the Bible contained the word of God, it was untranslatable.³ This dichotomy of free versus literal translation in the translation of the Bible continued for hundreds of years after Jerome (and in fact existed long before him with the Septuagint, the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek during the approximate period 250-175 BC)⁴, and centered on the translations themselves, not the needs of those who would read them. The concern was to preserve the “correct” meaning of the Bible. In the first half of the sixteenth century, Martin Luther’s choice to translate the Bible into a widely-used German dialect was at least in part based on his wish to make the text accessible to the people:

¹ Munday 2008: 19, translated by H. M. Hubbell

² Ibid., 26

³ Ibid., 20

⁴ Barnstone 1993: 165

You must ask the mother at home, the children in the street, the ordinary man in the market and look at their mouths, how they speak, and translate that way; then they'll understand and see that you're speaking to them in German.¹

Luther's choices were of course heavily influenced by the political struggles of the Reformation, but regardless of his motivation we see a clear focus on the receivers of translated text – the readers.

Near the end of the seventeenth century, the concept of fidelity – originally associated with a “correct” word-for-word approach – began to be identified with the transmission of the meaning of a text. In 1690 the British poet, dramatist, critic, and translator John Dryden defined three categories of translation which were to have a considerable influence on subsequent theory and practice: metaphrase, a word-by-word and line-by-line approach; paraphrase, where the source-text author's sense is the basis for translation, and imitation, where “the translator (if he now has not lost that name) assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hint from the original, to run division on the groundwork, as he pleases.”² In metaphrase we recognise Cicero's word-for-word translation, useful for readers who wish to navigate the original. Paraphrase echoes Cicero's ‘translation as orator’ approach, and imitation appears to be a separate text entirely with a tenuous link to the original; it challenges the very definition of translation. These three categories can serve as a general guideline for translation typologies as discussed above. Dryden himself felt however that paraphrase – sense-for-sense translation – was the most correct method. In regard to translating Virgil, he stated: “I have endeavoured to make Virgil speak such English as he would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present age”.³ This degree of domestication of the text (putting it into linguistic and cultural terms familiar to the receivers) is in effect resolutely moving the text to the reader. David Hinton uses this strategy in his 1988 translation of the poetry of Du Fu. In his introduction he explains his “translation principles”, where he states “[m]y overall intent has been to create reciprocal configurations in English. And rather than resolving the uncertainties of the originals, I have tried to recreate Tu Fu's poems as new systems of uncertainty, *as the poems he might have written had he*

¹ Munday 2008: 24. The original text from Störig 1963: 21, quoted in Munday: “Man muß die Mutter im Hause, die Kinder auf der Gassen, den gemeinen Mann auf dem Markt drum fragen, und denselbigen auf das Maul sehen, wie sie reden und darnach dolmetschen; da verstehen sie es denn und merken, daß man Deutsch mit ihnen redet”.

² Lefevere 1992: 102

³ Munday 2008: 26

been writing in today's English".¹ This type of translation can be excellent as an isolated literary experience, or serve as one of a group of translations to be read together, but on its own it does not contribute to the development of Chan's 'double vision'.

One hundred years after Dryden, in 1790, Alexander Fraser Tytler expressed the following view in his *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, where he described a good translation to be:

That in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs as it is by those who speak the language of the original work.²

Where Dryden wanted his author to speak the English of the target text receivers, Tytler goes one step further when he describes the effect the text is to have on the receivers. He went on to postulate "laws of translation" based on his definition: "that the translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work; that the style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original; that the translation should have all the ease of original composition".³ That a target text should have the style and character of the source text but still present itself as an original composition would seem to be a contradiction of terms, and Tytler does not describe in any further detail the effect the translation is to have. It is to be "as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt" by the target text reader as it was by the source text reader, but is it to have the same effect, or a new effect? Is the target text reader to be moved to the source text in order to understand and thereby experience the merit of the original work, a method that implies a great degree of foreignisation, or is the merit of the original to be domesticated and thereby moved to the target text reader?

In 1777 however, just 13 years before Tytler, the French theoretician Charles Batteux lay down quite strict – but ultimately somewhat confusing – rules for translation in his *De la construction oratoire* ("On Constructing Texts"). He claimed that "[t]he translator is master of nothing, he must bend with infinite suppleness to all the variations he finds in his author". In his first principle for translation the following points can be found:

You must preserve all conjunctions. They are like joints that keep the parts together. Their position and meaning should not be changed [...] All adverbs must be placed next to the verb, in front of it or behind it according to the demands of harmony or energy. [...] Brilliant thoughts should be rendered by the approximately the same number of words to make sure their brilliance is preserved in the translation.

¹ Hinton 1988: xv (emphasis mine)

² Munday 2008: 27

³ Lefevere 1992: 128

Otherwise you will either brighten their splendor or darken it, and you are not allowed to do either. [...]

He continues in a more moderate vein, advising that figures of speech and proverbs can be replaced by appropriate substitutes in the target language, and in his second principle he does a complete about-face:

Finally, we must totally abandon the style of the text we translate when meaning demands that we do so for the sake of clarity, when feeling demands it for the sake of vividness, or when harmony demands it for the sake of pleasure. This becomes a second principle, which is the reverse of the first one.¹

Confusion reigns. The linguistic structure of the source text is not simply a deciding factor, but a dictate to be followed; the translator is to discern which thoughts in the source text are “brilliant” and transfer them by using approximately the same number of words in the target language. On the other hand, all this can be ignored “when feeling demands it for the sake of vividness”. The reader is certainly not the focus in the first case, and it is not easy to see exactly whose “feelings” decide when the style of the source text is to be abandoned, or whose interests are served in the resulting target text. All of the ideas presented in this section can however be seen as strategies for transmitting *aspects* of a source text; the only thing missing is a structured relationship between them.

As we will see in the next section, these pre-twentieth-century views are no less contradictory than those that have come after the advent of translation as an academic discipline. In addition, much of the discussion continues to focus on whether the reader is to be moved to the text or the text to the reader, and in what way and to what degree the movement is to take place.

A complete overview of translation theory is beyond the scope of this paper. In the following section I will therefore discuss the work of selected theoreticians who are important representatives of their schools of thought. My emphasis will be on their views toward equivalence and communicative function in the translation of poetry: to what extent do the theories propose that the reader be moved to the text, or the text to the reader, and what functions are the translations meant to accomplish?

2.2.2 Translation in the first half of the twentieth century

From the beginning to the middle of the twentieth century, translation was for the most part considered a tool for language learning. The improved status of linguistics as a branch of the humanities during the 1950s and 60s gave rise to a definition of translation with strong

¹ Lefevere 1992: 119-120

linguistic roots, where translation was defined as “[...] the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language (TL)”, and as consisting in “[...] reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language meaning.”¹ Structural linguists defined equivalence as the substitution of text elements in the source language for equivalent text elements in the target language, with no concern for any notional or auditory associations the words may hold in context. The colour red in the title *Dream of the Red Chamber* (紅樓夢) – the great Chinese novel by Cao Xueqin (1715-1763) – refers to “[...] wealthy young girls’ rooms and figuratively these girls themselves”.² In English, the same metaphors and allusions do not exist for the colour red. The associations inherent in the words of a language can be multilayered; this is especially true of verse, where layers of meaning can be used to achieve an effect. If ‘red’ is being used metaphorically in a source text and the same metaphor does not occur in exactly the same way in the target language, the nuance is lost. The translator David Hawkes chose for example to translate this use of ‘red’ with ‘green’, because he felt that the associations the English-speaking reader have with green were the nearest equivalent.³ This type of translation might function perfectly well in a brochure or instruction booklet, but a different view of equivalence is necessary when approaching a literary text or verse. As will be discussed in Chapter III, Classical Chinese is a compact language that opens for a purposeful ambiguity that poets of the Tang Dynasty used to great advantage. A translation based on structural linguists’ definition of equivalence alone can neither completely convey the effect the author intended nor result in a poetic text in the target language. It can however be useful for the reader who wishes to be able to navigate the source text as part of his stereoscopic reading experience.

It is interesting to note that the conflict between word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation brought up by Hieronymus and others in the first centuries, and further expounded on and discussed up through the nineteenth century, resulted in a strict linguistically-based attitude toward translation in the first half of the twentieth century. As translation gained ground as a scientific field from the late 1960s and 70s onward, however, the concept of equivalence once again expanded to include factors other than the purely linguistic, such as text type/genre and social function.⁴

¹ Catford 1965: 20 quoted in Nord 1997: 7

² Han 1996: 125

³ Ibid.

⁴ Venuti 2004: 147

2.3 Translation theory

Translation theory became regarded as a subject worthy of research in the mid to late twentieth century, during which time a shift occurred from a word-to-word process with the source text as point of departure, to a sense-for-sense process that focused on the target text and its intended functions. The overview that follows is not meant to be exhaustive; the views put forth by the theorists discussed below are however representative of the major directions within translation theory, and have been chosen due to their usefulness in defining translation typologies.

2.3.1 Eugene A. Nida: formal and dynamic equivalence

In the mid 1970s Eugene A. Nida differentiated between formal and dynamic equivalence. The former was concerned with the structure of the source-language text, and has much in common with Charles Batteux; the latter considered the cultural context of the target-language reader. The organising principle of formal equivalence is the structure of the source text. The goal is to give the reader a close reading of the source language, and the use of footnotes is encouraged where necessary.¹ In regard to dynamic equivalence, Nida spoke of a “closest natural equivalent” and emphasised the purpose of the translation, taking into account both translator and reader:

When the question of the superiority of one translation over another is raised, the answer should be looked for in the answer to another question, ‘Best for whom?’ The relative adequacy of different translations of the same text can only be determined in terms of the extent to which each translation successfully fulfills the purpose for which it was intended. In other words, the relative validity of each translation is seen in the degree to which the receptors are able to respond to its message (in terms of both form and content) in comparison with (1) what the original author evidently intended would be the response of the original audience and (2) how that audience did, in fact, respond. The responses can, of course, never be identical, for interlingual communication always implies some differences in cultural setting, with accompanying diversities in value systems, conceptual presuppositions, and historical antecedents.²

I argue that when translating a Classical Chinese poem for a modern English-speaking readership, the answer to “Best for whom?” has only one real answer – the reader (though an argument, albeit a weaker one, could be made for the long-since dead poet). Nida’s response-based theory states that the adequacy of translations of the same text depends on their level of success relative to their purposes, and defines validity as the effect on a target-language

¹ Munday 2008: 42

² Nida 1976: 64f, quoted in Nord 1997: 5

reader or group of readers in relation to how the original readership received the original text in relation to the author's intended effect. Nida's yardstick for a valid translation is therefore an equivalent response – which he has defined in terms of sameness – in two readerships. In order to be good, a translation must have the same effect on its reader as the source-language text had on its reader.¹ This naturally is dependent on the translator being able to determine the effect the source text had on its readers, a task that is not necessarily possible to accomplish. The “best for whom” question is an excellent one, but in Nida's case it becomes rhetorical because he has specified the effect translation is to have on the reader. If this criterion is applied to English translations of Classical Chinese poetry, the idea of what constitutes a good translation is divorced from function. Is the function of a particular translation to allow the reader to understand the Chinese characters? In that case, it might be suggested that a crib, a translation based on Nida's formal equivalence, is a good translation. Is the function to demonstrate something of Chinese verse structure in the Tang Dynasty? An annotated translation by a structural linguist might be the best solution. Is the function to allow the reader to glimpse how the Tang reader saw the poem? A Tytlerian translation would likely work. Does he simply want to read good poetry in his mother tongue? A translation done by an experimentalist poet such as Ezra Pound, where the new version is based on the source text but where the poet has allowed himself a larger degree of freedom, might best suit. Consider the following translations of the last couplet of Li Bai's “Taking Leave of a Friend” (送友人):²

揮手自茲去	wave • hand from • this/now • go
蕭蕭班馬鳴	xiao-xiao* leave • horse • neigh

* 蕭蕭 is an onomatopoeia for the sound of a horse's neighing

We wave hands, you go from here.
Neigh, neigh, goes the horse at parting.

Who bow over their clasped hands at a distance.
our horses neigh to each other
as we are departing.

To wave a last adieu we sought,
Voiced for us by each whinnying steed!

¹ House in in Steiner & Yallop eds. 2001: 127

² Sources for these translations are given in Chapter IV, where the poem is discussed in detail.

The first version gives a literal character-by-character description of the source text with annotation. The second (Wai-Lim Yip) gives an idiomatic but straightforward account, and the third (Ezra Pound) gives a poetic interpretation. Although it is not apparent from this short excerpt, the fourth (Herbert Giles) echoes the rhyme of the Chinese poem. If one views these translations – each of which displays at least some element of the original effect – from the standpoint of functions designed to fulfill the reader’s wishes and needs, each must be said to be adequate in its corresponding context. According to Nida, however, the validity of each will vary greatly, depending on how much of the original effect has been transmitted to the target-language reader. (This view is echoed as late as 1991 by Jelle Stegeman, who believes that equivalence is obtained when no significant difference can be observed in the way source-language readers react to a source text and target-language readers react to a translation of the text.)¹ While readers might be perfectly happy with their respective adequate translations, these are, according to Nida, not good translations. In Nida we see a theory so strictly defined as to be at cross-purposes. An adequate translation for a given reader’s needs is not necessarily a valid translation, and as Juliane House points out, a criterion that cannot be measured – such as the response of an eighth-century source-text reader – is of no use in translation evaluation.²

2.3.2 Peter Newmark: *semantic and communicative translation*

In the 1980s, Peter Newmark defined semantic translation, which attempts “to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original”, and communicative translation, which “attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original”.³ A successful semantic translation accurately reproduces the significance of a source text, while a successful communicative translation accurately communicates the message of a source text. Semantic translation is similar to Nida’s formal equivalence, and communicative translation to dynamic equivalence, but with some important differences. Semantic translation takes into account the target-text reader’s context; it differs from literal translation in that it interprets and even explains. It needs to be redone in each successive generation, in order to suit the needs of the new reader. Communicative translation domesticates the target text by transferring foreign elements into the target-language culture, but unlike Nida, Newmark feels it is unreasonable to expect to be able to recreate the effect

¹ Hermans 1999: 63

² House 2001: 129 in Steiner & Yallop eds. 2001

³ Newmark 1981: 39, quoted in Munday 2008: 44

the source text had on its readers. Interestingly, Newmark states that in both categories, literal translation is to be preferred when it is possible.¹

2.3.3 Werner Koller: equivalence typologies

By the late 1970s, Werner Koller defined five types of equivalence: denotative, a linguistic approach with no consideration of style; connotative, where elements of style such as register and dialect are taken into account; text-normative, based on norms of usage; pragmatic, where the target readers needs and purpose for translation are considered; and formal-esthetic, where artistic means and forms are considered (such as in poetry).²

In regard to the use of annotation, Koller questions whether or not a target-language version that relies on additional comments to convey important aspects of a source-language text can indeed be called a translation, and whether or not “translatability [is] really achieved by means of a text in which significant semantic and aesthetic properties of the source text are only elucidated in footnotes”. He continues:

It is obvious that the combination of translation and commentary do result in a kind of translatability. However, the question that arises is at what price? Isn't the price indeed – the translation? For it would seem to me that this process decisively impairs the text's aesthetic immediacy. Admittedly, evidence for the translatability – translatability in a very special sense – of this difficult text has been given, yet the operation of translation seems somehow to have missed its mark. In the next instance, however, we have to withdraw this rather critical and polemical conclusion; the philological exertions deserve our admiration, and may serve as a station en route to a translation.³

Koller's idea that a combination of translation and commentary can serve as a station en route to a translation is interesting in regard to the use of complementary translation typologies, and even in regard to the very definition of translation. When Koller refers to an annotated translation as a station en route, he is not describing a finished product, but rather a step in the process of creating what will ultimately be an aesthetic text. I suggest however that if 'translation' is more broadly defined as a means to convey the layers of meaning of a poem in a target language, then one can begin to consider how various types of translations can work together to create a complete reading experience.

2.3.4 Reiss and Vermeer: Skopos theory; Toury and descriptive translation studies

Reiss and Vermeer advocate a purpose (*skopos*)-oriented theory of translation, a general theory they believe can be applied to all types of texts. They postulate that it is how well the

¹ Munday 2008: 44-45

² Venuti 2004: 147

³ Koller 2004: 61-63

translation fits the function it is to fill in the target-language environment that determines its quality. The process of translation in their theory is governed by the following hierarchical rules:

- A translation is determined by its intended purpose;
- A translation is an offering of information in a target culture and language concerning an offer of information in a source culture and language;
- A translation does not initiate an offer of information in a clearly reversible way;
- A translation must be coherent with the source text.

Reiss and Vermeer define coherence in the context of their rules as a target text that is interpretable as coherent in the target-text readers' context, and where there is coherence between the source-text information received by the translator, the translator's interpretation of this information, and the encoded message the translator makes available to the target-text reader. They do not in other words demand equivalence, but simply a degree of recognisability between the source and the target texts. This allows for various target-language versions of a source text that differ according to the purposes they are meant to fulfill. The idea that the information offered in a given target-language version does not need to be clearly reversible complements this view, because it allows for the creation of a target text that transmits some but not all layers of a poem. A similar concept can be found in scholar-poet Burton Raffel's discussion of the translator's responsibility, which he defines as choices made between and among competing claims in order to "reproduce in the new language the peculiar force and strength, the inner meanings as well as the merely outer ones, of what the original writer created solely and exclusively for and in a different language and a different culture".¹ *Skopos* theory can be used to define a responsible translation in a given context because it "allows the possibility of the same text being translated in different ways according to the purpose of the [target text] and the commission which is given to the translator".² It is therefore especially interesting for the identification of translation typologies meant to fill various functions

2.3.5 Juliane House: overt versus covert translation

Juliane House defines equivalence with her theory of overt and covert translations. A covert translation enjoys the status of an original source text in the target culture; its function is "to reproduce in the target text the function the original has in its frame and discourse world".³ An overt translation on the other hand is not meant to be a second original, but is clearly a

¹ Raffell 1988: 157, 165

² Munday 2008: 79-80, with reference to Reiss and Vermeer 1984

³ House in Steiner & Yallop eds. 2001: 140

translation. When creating an overt translation, the translator's work is visible, i.e. it is clearly marked as a translation and the reader experiences it as such. It is his job to "create an equivalent speech event", to "give target-culture members access to the original text and its cultural impact on source culture members" and to put "target culture members in a position to observe and/or judge this text 'from outside'."¹

House's covert translation can be compared to Nida's dynamic equivalence: both are defined by the relative sameness of the source and target texts readers' responses, but in slightly different ways. Where Nida measures validity by the extent to which both sets of readers have the same experience, House takes a functionalist approach, and stipulates that "a source text and its covert translation have equivalent *purposes*, they are based on contemporary equivalent needs of a comparable audience in the source and target language *communities*."² She disagrees with Nida's use of a response-based criterion to determine whether or not a translation is good, stating that:

Assuming that it is true that a "good" translation should elicit an equivalent response to its original, we must immediately ask whether it is at all possible to measure an "equivalent response", [...] If these phenomena cannot be measured, it is useless to postulate them as criteria for translation evaluation.³

This is especially true of ancient languages in distant cultural contexts. Contemporary and historical commentary on Tang-dynasty poetry give much information on how texts were interpreted, but cannot tell us with certainty how these texts were received by readers other than the commentators themselves. House also disagrees with Reiss and Vermeer's focus on function alone. She points out that "translation is by its very nature characterised by a double-bind relationship, i.e., any translation is simultaneously bound to its source text and to the presuppositions and the conditions governing its reception in the new target linguistic and cultural environment".⁴ This view is congruent with the observations of Rosenblatt and of Dewey, discussed above in section 2.1.2, that the experience of reading depends not only on the text but also on what the reader brings to the text.

Seen from House's point of view, overt translations of a poem include all renditions that are designed to help the reader navigate a poem that is clearly foreign: the reader is moved to the text. Covert translations of the same poem attempt to bring the text to the reader

¹ House in Steiner & Yallop eds. 2001: 141

² Ibid., 140-41 (italics mine)

³ Ibid., 129

⁴ Ibid., 131

in his own context. In this way, the concepts of overt and covert are useful in defining the function a translation typology is meant to perform.

2.3.6 Evaluating translation: James S. Holmes' pure and applied translation studies

Thus far I have described how each of the presented theories can be used to define translation typologies, and how function is the deciding factor when a specific typology is described. Prescriptive typologies are useful when a poem is to be translated in a manner that opens for stereoscopic reading; that is, when the translations do not yet exist, and more than one translation is meant to function together in a complementary manner alongside a source text. A published translation can however also serve in this context, and some form of structured evaluation is therefore necessary in order to define where a pre-existing translation fits in a system of typologies.

In 1988, James S. Holmes published ground-breaking work where he divided translation studies into two general approaches: 'applied', concerned with training translators and translation tools or aids and with the criticism of translation, and 'pure', which was further split into theoretical and descriptive branches.¹ It is especially the product and function-oriented subcategories of the descriptive branch that are interesting in regard to the criticism of translation.

Product-oriented translation examines existing translations, and can range from a description or analysis of a single target-language version of a source text, to a comparative study of a group of target-language versions of the same source text. A function-oriented analysis describes what a translation is meant to achieve in its target-language readers. Consideration is paid to the socio-cultural context. Holmes termed this approach "a study of contexts rather than texts",² but a function-oriented analysis can also be used in conjunction with product-oriented study. Function-oriented analysis can therefore be used to describe the function a pre-existing translation can fill in a group of typologies, and product-oriented analysis can be used either to examine how successful a single translation is given its assumed function, or how a group of translations of a single source text compare in regard to their relative functions. Both of these techniques will be used in the discussion of translations in Chapter IV.

¹ The description of Holmes' definition of translation studies is taken from Munday 2008: Chapter One.

² Munday 2008: 11

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have addressed the first two of the four questions raised in Chapter I: Who are the readers and how do they read, and why is the text being translated? I have also begun to discuss how target texts are to be used.

I have now defined the intended reader of translated Classical Chinese verse as one who is interested in understanding as much of the source text as possible, regardless of whether this motivation is present to begin with or is developed during the act of reading. The act of receiving a translated text involves a series of actors, messages, and events, and is dependent not only on the knowledge and experience the reader brings to the process of reading but also on those aspects of the poem the translator has chosen to make available on the page. Readers must be provided with a tool that enables them to develop and read with ‘double vision’, that is, to read with an awareness of the source-text context. To allow for this type of reading, poetry must therefore be translated in a broader sense, in such a way that the target text(s) inform(s) the reader of as many aspects as possible of the source text. The goal must be that “ [...] the reader who cannot savor the original, begins to feel something of the power and loveliness of the original poem”.¹ Technical aspects of the poem’s original context can be transmitted by annotation, and indeed annotation can be one element in one or more typologies. Annotation alone however is not enough; were translation reduced to mere notation, there would be no opportunity for the reader to feel something of the power and loveliness (the effect) of the source text. If this goal is to be attained, I propose that the reader must have access to translations of a poem based on complementary typologies that transmit both technical information and literary experience, and that these must be presented together with the source text.

Translation theorists do not discuss poetry, but translation theory, along with elements of reception theory, does provide tools that can be used to construct a new theoretical platform. *Skopos* theory postulates that the same text can be translated in different ways according to the purpose for which the target text will be used. I suggest that this can be expanded upon: the same poem can be translated in different ways according to which aspects of the poem each translation is meant to transmit, and further that these translations should be designed or chosen in such a way that they have a structured relationship to each other. One can imagine Dryden’s three strategies or Tytler’s three laws, Nida’s formal and dynamic equivalence, Newmark’s semantic and communicative translation, Koller’s five equivalence

¹ Raffel 1971: 108

typologies, House's covert and overt translations, or Batteux's first and second principles applied to a translation of the same poem. Only then will the reader engage in stereoscopic reading and develop double vision. With the reader and this process of reading in mind, translation theory can be useful in defining each typology according to the function the translation is meant to fulfill.

The lack of a structured theoretical discussion of the translation of poetry is problematic when target-language versions of poems are viewed from a reader-oriented perspective because a discussion of the relative functions of translations requires a system for the evaluation of target texts in relation to their source text. The fact that translation problems are magnified and concentrated in poetry may be why a structured theoretical discussion is lacking, but it is also the reason such a discussion is necessary. In the absence of an established theory of poetry translation, a new platform must be constructed. In the next chapter, I will attempt to do so by examining some of the most important problems and challenges the translator faces when transmitting Classical Chinese poetry to English, and use examples of these to identify theoretically-based translation typologies and their functions.

III Linguistic challenges and typologies of translation

No two languages use words in exactly the same way; challenges at the level of the word or character/morpheme are therefore the first issue translators face. It is often not possible to find a word in a target language that is the exact equivalent of that used in a source language to describe an object or a concept. Words are not classified in the same way in each language, nor do they necessarily behave in the same way; the polysemy of a given word in a source language will likely have no perfect equivalent in a target language; and the ambiguity, layers of meaning, or implicit information that can exist in a single word in a source-text language (such as can be found in word-play, allusion, and metonymy) may need several words – or even an explanation – in a target language. Even differences in how languages are written can influence translators.

The second issue facing translators exists at the level of the line and text. No two languages have the same prosody; rhythm and metre naturally vary, a fact that is especially noticeable when comparing languages as structurally different as Classical Chinese and English. Imagery and other elements that are bound to the source-language culture must also be transmitted in some way to readers situated in a different linguistic and cultural context. Furthermore, no two languages have the same literary history. The allusions and formal requirements of Tang-dynasty poetry, which make use of specific aspects of Classical Chinese, present their own set of challenges.

Finally, the fact that the Chinese writing system varies so dramatically from that of English has caused the Chinese language to be regarded as exotic and mysterious in the West, especially by those who have not studied the language. This has influenced some translators.

In this chapter I will illustrate these issues with examples, discuss why they are important in regard to translation, and propose how they can be dealt with in complementary translation typologies.

3.1 Challenges at the level of the word

3.1.1 Word class and lexical ambiguity

As simple as it may seem at first glance, a word-for-word translation is not necessarily a clear-cut assignment for a translator. Even when a translation of this type is meant to be nothing more than an aid to help the target-language reader navigate a source text, choices have to be made. Kirsten Malmkjær points out that “words in different languages do not generally correspond one to one; languages differ in the conceptual distinctions they choose

functioning as a marker of aspect, a conjunction, or a verb, and the handling of each in a target text will be quite different. When creating an interlinear translation, one must choose the correct meaning in the context. Not all cases are as clear-cut, however. The English word ‘moon’ for example can function as either a noun or a verb, as in ‘he sits under the moon’ and ‘he was mooning around all day’. It cannot function as an attribute. The Chinese 月 can function as a noun, ‘moon’, and is a noun functioning as an attribute when combined with another noun, such as in 月夜, where ‘moon’ + ‘night’ becomes ‘moonlit night’. (The same situation occurs in English, as for example in ‘company director’.) When the goal is to create an interlinear translation, the translator must choose between ‘moon • night’, ‘moonlit • night’, and ‘moon • at • night’/‘night moon’. In addition, according to many sinologists, words classified as adjectives in English are verbs of quality or state in Chinese.¹ In the following lines from Du Fu’s “A Fine Lady” (佳人),² ‘clear’ and ‘muddy’ are adjectives in English; in Chinese, they are verbs:

在山泉水清	in • mountain • spring-water • be-clear
出山泉水濁	out • mountain • spring-water • be-muddy

In the mountain the waters of the stream are clear, but once they have left the mountain they are muddy.

The first step is to decide whether a literal translation ought to be word-for-word or word-for-character, and in the case of word-for-character, how word class is to be treated. Consider the first two couplets from the same poem, followed by a word-for-character translation:

絕代有佳人	surpass • generation • is • be-beautiful • person
幽居在空谷	remote • reside • exist • be-deep/empty • valley
自云良家子	self • say • be-good • family • child
零落依草木	wither-and-fall • fall • X • grass-tree

In these four lines, there are cases where words or morphemes (represented by one character each) have one meaning as individual units and other meanings when combined into a compound or fixed expression. The first two characters 絕 and 代 mean ‘surpass’ and ‘generation(s)’ respectively. Together they mean ‘peerless’. 佳 means ‘fine’ or ‘beautiful’ and 人 is ‘person’ or ‘people’, but together they are an archaic term for a unique woman, a woman

¹ See for example Michael A. Fuller, *An Introduction to Literary Chinese* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 20; Archie Barnes et al, *Du’s Handbook of Classical Chinese Grammar* (Durham: Alcuin Academics, 2009), 4; Pulleyblank 1995: 12

² *QTS* scroll 2 18 <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=147381&if=en>, accessed 03.11.2011

of beauty and breeding. Individually, 草 and 木 mean ‘grass’ and ‘tree(s)’, but together they mean vegetation. A word-for-word translation would therefore look slightly different:

peerless • is • beautiful-woman
secluded • exist • deep/empty-valley
self • say • good-family-child
wither • fall • [here a choice must be made, at the expense of others] • grass-tree

In order to decide between the two possibilities it is necessary to determine the function of such a translation, and important to remember that it is one of a set of complementary translations which, when read side by side, give the reader as complete an experience as possible of the original poem. I propose that a translation typology based on interlinear translation must provide both word-for-word information and supplemental word-for-character information. In regard to word-to-word information, I suggest that stative or quality verbs be treated as adjectives, rather than a strict adherence to Nida’s requirements of formal equivalence; nothing is to be gained by translating 佳 as ‘be-beautiful’. Further, the layout of the translation should allow the information to be clear, with a simple and consistent nomenclature. The first three lines could be set up thus:

surpass + generation [peerless] • is • beautiful + person [beautiful woman]
remote + reside [secluded] • exist • deep/empty/vast • valley
self • say • good + family + child [child of good family]
wither-and-fall + fall [wither and fall] • fall back on/go to live with/reside in/follow/accord
with/rely on • grass + tree [vegetation]

In this way, information is given down to the level of each character, word-for-character information is preserved, and the difference between them is clear. The boundary between two characters is marked with either • or +, the former used to separate definitions of single characters acting alone, and the latter to indicate that the two (or even more) juxtaposed characters act as a compound or fixed expression. Where the meaning of a character compound is not immediately apparent, the meaning can be enclosed in brackets.

Often, a word or character will have more than one relevant meaning in context. The Du Fu excerpt quoted above has two examples of this. 空 can mean either/both ‘empty’, ‘vast’, and/or ‘deep’. 依, marked above by ‘X’, can mean ‘fall back on’ or ‘go to live with’, to

‘reside in’, to ‘follow’ or ‘accord with’, or to ‘rely on’.¹ All are possible interpretations in this poem, and their coexistence is part of the poetic effect. Multiple meanings relevant in context can be separated by a slash, as has been done in the second and fourth lines. This type of situation is easily handled in this typology, where the goal is to convey meaning at the level of the character and word, but is not possible in other types of translation. In what might be called a ‘literary’ translation, where the translator has attempted to create some type of poetic effect in the target language, only one meaning can be chosen:

Surely
The most lovely of her day
Now relegated to this back valley,
Memories of happier days buried
With her amidst wild greenery;²

Another version offers a different solution:

There is a surpassing beauty
Who lives in a solitary valley.
She says she comes from a good family,
And now declines into the wild country.³

And yet a third version, where choices are to some extent influenced by rhyme:

There is a lady, matchless in her beauty.
An empty valley’s where she dwells, obscure.
Her family, she says, was once a good one.
She lives with grass and trees now, spent and poor.⁴

A prose translation has yet other solutions:

There is a fine lady of matchless beauty who lives obscurely in a lonely valley. She says she is the daughter of a good family, driven by misfortunes into the wilds.⁵

Our beautiful woman is relegated to a back valley, lives in a solitary valley, lives obscurely in a lonely valley, dwells in an empty valley; she is buried amidst, declines into, and is driven by misfortunes into the wilderness, or simply lives with grass and trees. All are reasonable – although not the only possible – choices in this context. The Chinese text allows for and encourages an active reader, and for more than one translation; the translators working with

¹ Analysis taken from Hawkes 1967: 82-83 and Lu 2006: 110-11

² Alley in Feng: 1977 75 (“The Lovely Lady”)

³ Wu 1981: 92 (The Surpassing Beauty)

⁴ Seth 1992: 45

⁵ Hawkes 1967: 85

English as the target language are often forced to explicate one reading. As Archie Barnes puts it:

[...] English has the resources for much greater precision in specifying relationships than the language of Chinese verse has, but this can be a disadvantage: where English spoils the reader by over-specification, Chinese verse-language requires the exercise of imagination and empathy, a halfway step toward the poet, which can hardly be a bad thing.¹

Another example of multiple meanings in a single character can be found in the first couplet of Li Bai's poem "Thoughts at Night" (靜夜思):²

床前看月光	bed • before • bright • moon • ray of light
疑是地上霜	suspect/compare/imitate/uncertain • is • ground • on • frost

The character 疑 usually carries the meaning 'to suspect'. It can however also mean 'to be similar to', 'to compare'/'to draw an analogy', 'to doubt', 'to fear, or 'be uncertain'.³ One commentator glosses it as 'the moonlight is similar to autumn frost'

(夜月似秋霜).⁴ In each of the translations quoted below, however, the explication of one meaning, required in English, marks a move from ambiguity to specificity, and removes the opportunity for the reader to enjoy the coexistence of more than one reading:

Athwart the bed I watch the moonbeams cast a trail So bright, so cold, so frail, That for a space it gleams Like hoar-frost [...] ⁵	Before my bed there is bright moonlight So that it seems like frost on the ground: ⁶
--	--

Seeing moonlight here at my bed, and thinking it's frost on the ground, ⁷	The moon light is on the floor luminous I thought it was frost, it was so white
---	--

In front of my bed there is bright moonlight.
I think there must be hoar frost on the ground;

¹ Barnes 2007: 36

² QTS scroll 165. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=137062&if=en>, accessed 01.11.2011

³ Definitions taken from *Gu hanyu da cidian* 古汉语大词典 2006: 377-78 and *Hanyu da zidian*, reduced format version 汉语大字典, 缩印本 1992: 1149. 疑忌; 似, 好像; 通 拟, 比拟; 不相信; 疑心; 恐懼; 不分明; 难于确定;

⁴ Wang 1977: 346

⁵ This and the following translation: Dørumsgaard 1970: 6-9

⁶ Cooper 1973: 108-09

⁷ This and the following translation: Weinberger 2003: 93

In some translations, the moonlight is compared to frost; in one, the moonlight gives cause to believe there is frost on the ground outside. In yet another, the speaker believes the moonlight on the floor is actually frost. A literal translation typology that notes various possible definitions is useful because it gives the reader a very literal point of departure from which to interpret other types of translations. Such a typology would not create a poetic or literary effect, but this is not its function; rather, it can fill in the lost layers of meaning that are invariably caused by explication, and it gives the reader the possibility to view the translated interpretations against the backdrop of the original.

3.1.2 *Optional precision and techniques of omission*

Chinese is a non-inflecting language; nouns and verbs do not vary to indicate tense, voice, number, person etc. This results in an economy of expression that Archie Barnes calls “optional precision”.¹ The Chinese characters 有人 can mean ‘there are people’/‘there is a person’/‘there is someone’, ‘there were people’/‘there was a person’/‘there was someone’, and in certain contexts ‘there will be people’/‘there will be a person’/‘there will be someone’. English is an inflected language; the marking of number, tense and sometimes person is often obligatory. ‘There are people’ is explicit by virtue of the plural form of the noun ‘person’ and the present tense of the verb ‘to be’. In addition, translators often have a tendency to explicate, even in cases where the target language does not require it. This phenomenon can perhaps to some extent be explained by the ‘explication hypothesis’, which:

[...] claims that translators universally tend to make things explicit, more explicit than they were in the source text. You can see this in the way translators tend to dislike ambiguities and unclear structures, the way they use pronouns and connectors, the way they tend to add explanations to obscure or culture-bound terms, the way things that were implicit in the original often become more explicit in the translations, and so on.²

The translator of Classical Chinese poetry into English is thereby challenged on two fronts: the target language will at times require an explication that is at odds with a source-language structure that allows for implicit or multiple meanings and ambiguity in the source text, and the act of translation itself can cause over-explication.

In his *L'écriture poétique chinoise (Chinese Poetic Writing)* (1977), François Cheng describes what he has chosen to call passive techniques (*procédés passifs*) in Chinese poetic writing. These techniques, all of which exist to a certain extent in Classical Chinese in general, were exploited by poets of the Tang Dynasty to achieve purposeful ambiguity. They include

¹ Barnes 2007: 42; Barnes et al 2009: 3

² Chesterman and Wagner 2002: 30

the ellipsis of personal pronouns, the ellipsis of prepositions (which I have termed the ellipsis of coverbs of place and locative indicators in the discussion below), the ellipsis of complements of time (which I have termed the ellipsis of temporal expressions), the ellipsis of words of comparison and verbs (I address the ellipsis of words of comparison in my discussion), and the use of empty words in place of verbs (which I have termed the omission of verbs).¹

The ellipsis of personal pronouns and of coverbs of place / locative complements

An entire Classical Chinese poem can be devoid of any explicit indication of who is speaking, performing, or on the receiving end of an action. The omission of subject pronouns is a feature of the language in general, and one that poets made conscious use of. Li Bai's "" (贈內)² is an example of relatively uncomplicated use of this type of omission:

三百六十日	three • hundred • six • ten • day
日日醉如泥	day • day • drunk • like • mud
雖為李白婦	although • are • Li • Bai • married woman
何異太常妻	how • different • ceremonial-minister • wife

Subject pronouns are not necessary because the reader understands them to be there:

*Three hundred sixty days,
Every day [I'm] as drunk as mud.
Although [you] are Li Bai's woman,
How are [you] different from an official's wife?*

Had the poet not been Li Bai himself, one could also infer 'he' and 'she' in place of 'I' and 'you'. In this poem, there is little question about who is speaking, and there are really no other choices for interpretation than those added in the translation. In some cases, however, this type of omission is more complicated, because it allows for a purposeful use of multiple interpretations. Consider the first line of the first couplet in Du Fu's poem "Facing Snow" (對雪):³

戰哭多新鬼	battle • weep • many • new-ghost
愁吟獨老翁	grieve • chant • lone • old-man

Neither the structure of the lines nor the words themselves indicate who exactly is weeping (the poet, the ghosts, people in general?), or for whom or what. In addition, it is not made

¹ Cheng 1977 trans. Seaton 1982: 24-42

² QTS scroll 184. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=140398&if=en>, accessed 01.11.2011

³ Ibid., scroll 224. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=149525&if=en>, accessed 28.10.2011

clear which battle or battles are, were, or should be wept for, and the relationship between weeping and battles is not clear.¹ This brings us to the second of Cheng's passive techniques, which he terms the ellipsis of prepositions and which I have chosen to call the ellipsis of coverbs of place and locative complements.² Coverbs of place such as 於, 'to be in, at', or 'to, from, than', or 乎, (a variant of 於), or locative complements introduced by coverbs of place (as in 立於沼上, 'stand above the pond') are often not present. In such situations, the coverb is equivalent to an English preposition. Various translations of the couplet quoted above demonstrate this point. In the first example given below, we are told that the ghosts are crying *in* the battlefield:

There're e'en more new ghosts crying in battle-field,
I, a lonely old man, sigh, with sorrows filled.³

In another translation, the ghosts are specifically mourning their lost battles. This translation says nothing however about *where* the ghosts are crying:

The ghosts of the newly dead
lament for their lost battles
and I, an aging codger,
mumble my litany of woes⁴

Yet another translator has chosen to use the infinitive – a form that can be made explicit in English but not in Chinese – to tell us something about the number of ghosts, and the fact that they are mourning war. This is a contrast to the example directly above, where the ghosts are specifically mourning *battles they themselves have fought*:

Enough new ghosts now to mourn any war,
And a lone old grief-sung man.⁵

One translator has chosen to retain the ambiguity of the original in the first line:

Tumult, weeping, many new ghosts.
Heartbroken, aging, alone, I sing
To myself.⁶

The first three versions explicate 'by whom' and 'for whom or what' information that is deliberately ambiguous in the source text. Because structural requirements of the target language require it, these translators have chosen a particular interpretation and made it

¹ Owen 1985: 36

² This terminology and the examples given for them are taken from Pulleyblank 1995: 53-54

³ Wu 1981: 54

⁴ Young 2010: 71

⁵ Hinton 1989: 26

⁶ Rexroth 1965: 6

explicit at the expense of the other possibilities. The result is individual translations, all of which are based on valid choices, but where each lacks the ambiguity that exist in the source text, and therefore precludes readings other than the one that has been explicated in each case. Only one translator has resisted the urge to explicate, and the result allows the target-text reader to draw his own conclusions among the various possibilities.

The following couplet from Du Fu's "Thoughts of a Night on Board" (旅夜書懷)¹ is an example of how the absence of locative indicators opens for various interpretations:²

星垂平野闊	star • droop • flat • open country • vast
月涌大江流	moon • rise • great • river • flow

Night, plains open away beneath foundering stars.
A moon emerges and, the river vast, flows.³

Stars blossom
Over the vast desert of
Waters. Moonlight flows on the
Surging river.⁴

And the stars hang
above the broad plain
But moon's afloat
in this Great River.⁵

In the first translation, the plains open *beneath* stars and the emerging moon and flowing river exist as separate entities, *side by side*. In the second, stars blossom *over* a desert of waters while moonlight flows *on* the river. In the third, stars hang *above* the plain but (as opposed to simply "and" in the others) the moon is afloat *in* the river. The target language requires that translators explicate location, and as a result the translators have made choices to the exclusion of others. Where the source-text reader's experience allowed for more than one interpretation to exist simultaneously, the target-text reader is not only served the translator's choice, but is in fact unaware that any other reading is possible.

A similar ambiguity can occur in relation to verbs. Cheng points out that in the absence of formal marking, verbs are at once both transitive and intransitive. This type of ellipsis sets the verbs free; there is no one obvious choice of subject. This is certainly true in

¹ QTS scroll 229. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=150970&if=gb>, accessed 28.10.2011

² Example and analysis: Cheng 1977 trans. Seaton 1982: 32-33, 162

³ Hinton 1988: 105

⁴ Rexroth in Weinberger 2003: 115

⁵ Cooper 1973: 237

many cases, and an example can be found in the first couplet of Du Fu's "Winter's Depths" (冬深):¹

花叶随天意	flower • leaf • follow • heaven • will
江溪共石根	river • brook • share • stone • root

Two poets have interpreted the couplet thus:

Heaven's design blossoms and leafs out,
Stone roots bind rivers and streams:²

Flower in the leaves, only as heaven pleases:
From Yangtze to brook, the same roots of stone.³

Stephen Owen describes the possibilities for interpretation thus:

Does the first line mean that spring will come only at Heaven's will? Or that the poet will live to see spring only at Heaven's will? Or, as Ch'ou Chao-ao suggests, the "flowers and leaves" are the shapes of clouds whose mutating forms follow Heaven's will? Do the Yangtze [江, river] and the creeks that flow into it share common sources in the stone of the mountains? Or do the river and streams share roots of stone with the plants that will bear "flowers and leaves" in springtime? Or do the waters share roots of stone with the flower-and-leaf cloud formations (clouds would be the most conventional association of "roots of stone", the origin of the clouds in the mountains)? Or do they share roots of stone with the poet, who like the river has come down from the mountains of the West – the poet who so often compares himself to a drifting cloud? Or is it "on Yangtze and creek" that one of the possible elements shares "roots of stone" with another possible element.⁴

Again we see how explication excludes all interpretations other than the one chosen by the translator.

The ellipsis of temporal expressions

The fact that Chinese is an isolating language implies among other things that the words do not change form to indicate when an action has, does, or will occur. The temporal aspect of an action is shown by the use of time expressions (today, last year, earlier) or characters that in the context have a grammaticalised function (these characters often have other meanings as well; one example is given in section 3.2, below). Examples of this can be found in Li Bai's "Setting out Early from White God City" (早發白帝城):⁵

¹ QTS scroll 230 <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=151599&if=gb>, accessed 28.10.2011

² Hinton 1988: 108

³ Graham in Minford & Lau 2000: 810

⁴ Owen 1981: 221

⁵ QTS scroll 181 <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=139621&if=en>, accessed 28.10.2011

朝辭白帝彩雲間

morning • leave • Bai-di • color + cloud [colourful clouds] •
among

千里江陵一日還

one thousand • li • Jiang-ling • one • day • arrive

兩岸猿聲啼不盡

two • shore • ape • sound/voice • cry • not • cease

輕舟已過萬重山

light • boat • already • pass • ten thousand + range + mountain
[endless mountain range]

I left Baidi early in the morning
amid rosy clouds.
A journey of one thousand li,
we made it to Jiangling in one day.
While the gibbons on both shores
were howling without pause,
our skiff had left
endless mountains behind.¹

朝, morning, and 已, already, are the only two indications of when events happen. 朝 alone would not give enough concrete information; the poet could be leaving the next morning, leaving that very morning, or have left on a previous morning. Consequently, the second line could be telling us that it takes one day to arrive at Jiangling, it will take one day to arrive, or it took one day to arrive. The third line might warn us of howling gibbons on the shore, tell us that gibbons will be howling on the shore when we pass, or let us know gibbons howled unceasingly on the shore as we passed. The use of the adverbial 已 makes it clear that at the very least we are now underway: we have ‘already’ passed the endless mountain range. There is however another alternative to the one quoted in the above translation. It might be worded as follows:²

I left Baidu in the morning amid rosy clouds.
Jiangling is one thousand *li* away; I will arrive in one day.
The gibbons on both shores howl unceasingly,
but I have already passed the endless mountain range.

Temporal indicators such as the ones shown above are used much less often in Classical Chinese poetry than they are in English in general; the time an action takes place is often left up to the reader to discern from context. In Du Fu’s poem “Facing Snow”, the first line of which is quoted above in section 3.1.1, temporal aspects are left entirely up to the reader’s interpretation:

戰哭多新鬼
愁吟獨老翁

battle • weep • many • new-ghost
grieve • chant • lone • old-man

¹ Chang 2007: 340

² Author’s own translation

亂雲低薄暮	chaotic • cloud • droop • cold/weak + dusk [twilight]
急雪舞回風	hurry • snow • dance • return + wind [whirlwind]
瓢棄尊無綠	ladle • discard • wine vessel • without • green
爐存火似紅	stove • exist • fire • like • red
數州消息斷	many • county • information • cut off
愁坐正書空	worry • sit • just • write • empty/air/void

As stated above, the omission of personal pronouns and locative indicators make it difficult to know exactly what is being done to what or whom (or more accurately: these omissions open for multiple interpretations). A lack of any temporal indicators at all makes it impossible to know *when* anything is taking place. The poet “[...] simply orders the patterns of his experience and responds to it, leaving to the reader the greater part of the process of association”.¹ In other words, it is up to the reader to respond to the various possible readings. In the following translations, particular readings are explicated at the expense of others:

There're e'en more new ghosts crying in the battle-field,
 I, a lonely old man, sigh, with sorrows filled.
 The tumbling clouds lay down the e'ening pall,
 The scurry snow-flakes dancing with the squall.
 No wine in the cup, the gourd dipper I shove,
 A seeming fire-glow in the empty stove.
 New from several counties the war prevents,
 I sit, fingering out in the air my plaints.²

--

Enough new ghosts now to mourn any war,
 and a lone old grief-sung man. Clouds at
 Twilight's ragged edge foundering, wind
 Buffets a dance of headlong snow. A ladle

Lies beside this jar drained of emerald
 Wine. The stove's flame-red mirage lingers.
 News comes from nowhere. I sit here,
 Spirit-wounded, tracing words onto air.³

In these two translations, the poem is interpreted partially as being in an undefined temporal state (neither the mourning/crying ghosts nor the grieving old man are given any firm place in time, but rather seem to be in some sort of general state of being), and partially happening as we read (the snowflakes seem to be dancing/being buffeted by the wind in a twilight that takes place now, and we are given to believe that the narrator is sitting now). Both are valid

¹ Owen 1985: 34

² Wu 1981: 54

³ Hinton 1988: 26

readings, but unless the reader has access to both, he will not be aware that more than one reading is possible. If he in addition has access to a structural translation with a literal analysis of the characters, he will understand *why* more than one reading is possible.

The ellipsis of words of comparison

Both metaphor (a substitution of one thing for another: ‘he was a lion in battle’) and simile (one thing being said to be like another: ‘he fought like a lion in battle’) are familiar to readers of Western poetry. Simile requires some indication of comparison, as can be seen in the following lines from Du Fu’s “A Fine Lady” (佳人), quoted above:

新人美如玉 new • person [newlywed] • beautiful • like • jade

The bride is beautiful like jade.

Here, the verb 如, ‘to be like’, signals the simile. The verb 隨 serves the same function later in the same poem:

萬事隨轉燭 ten-thousand • things • follow • turn • lamp

Myriad affairs follow turning lamp (fortune is as fickle as a lamp flame).

In some cases, however, conjunctive words and/or the copula are missing, allowing for a reciprocal relationship between two elements.¹ One example can be found in the following couplet from Li Bai’s “Seeing Off A Friend” (送友人),² which describes a parting scene:

浮雲游子意 float • cloud • traveler • intention/desire
落日故人情 set + sun • old-friend • sentiment

*Floating cloud wanderer’s mood
Setting sun heart of one left behind³*

In these two lines in the source text there are no words of comparison. The first line can be read ‘the mood [Cheng’s translation] of the traveler is like a floating cloud’ or ‘the floating cloud has the mood of a traveler’. This reciprocal relationship is strengthened by the parallelism in the lines, an element to which we will return later in this chapter. As Cheng’s translation attests, it is not possible to recreate in English the seamless reciprocity present in the source text in any sort of way that makes sense to a target-language reader. In addition,

¹ Cheng 1977 trans. Seaton 1982: 36-37

² QTS scroll 177. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=138855&if=en>, accessed 28.10.2011

³ Translation and following analysis: Cheng 1977 trans. Seaton 1982: 36-37, original text in Cheng 1977: 43: Nuage flottant humeur du vagabond, Soleil couchant cœur du délaissé.

this type of ellipsis demonstrates that the distinction in English between metaphor and simile, which is based on the presence or absence of such words, does not always exist in Classical Chinese poetry.

The omission of verbs

Cheng discusses cases in which verbs are replaced with what he terms “empty” words. In order to avoid confusion with the Chinese term 虛詞 (*xuci*), ‘empty words’, I have chosen to call this technique the omission of verbs, because although the inclusion of a verb would disturb the poetic metre, the fact of the matter is that linguistically, the verb is missing.¹ The words that Cheng terms ‘empty words’, adverbs or interrogative pronouns for example, fill the function of the missing verbs. The intended effect is once again to create ambiguity. The following two couplets, from Du Fu’s “Written When Sailing the River and Reaching Old City Inn, and Not Reckoning My Ineptness, Respectfully Presented to the Various Gentlemen of the Jiangling Headquarters” (行次古城店泛江作，不揆鄙拙，奉呈江陵幕府諸公)² and “News of my Younger Brother, poem II” (舍弟消息)³ respectively, demonstrate this:⁴

老年常道路	old • year • <i>often</i> • way • path
遲日復山川	late • day • <i>again</i> • mountain • river

*In my aging years ever on the road,
days getting longer, mountains and rivers again.*⁵

生理何顏面	life • principle/pattern • <i>what</i> • color + face [prestige
憂端且歲時	grief • extreme • <i>in addition</i> • year + time [time of year]

*I have no pride in the way I live, sources of care continue for years.*⁶

Cheng argues that in the first couplet, 常, ‘often’, and 復, ‘again’, take on a verb-like function in the absence of verbs. The same is the case for 何, ‘what’ and 且, ‘in addition’, in the second couplet. The fact that the verb – which in syntactic theory is considered the core of the sentence – can be omitted from a line of poetry in Chinese creates a challenge the translator must deal with in some way in the target text. In the first case, the translator has used a locative indicator (“on”) to describe the poet being in motion on the road, and says that the

¹ For an explanation of *xuci* see Norman 1988: 88

² QTS roll 232. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=152124&if=en>, accessed 28.10.2011. The version of the poem in Cheng uses 仍 instead of 常, but his translation correlates to 常.

³ QTS roll 225. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=149740&if=en>, accessed 28.10.2011

⁴ These two examples taken from Cheng 1977 trans. Seaton 1982: 38-39. Cheng uses 仍 instead of 常.

⁵ Trans. Steven Owen, email to the author 15.10.2011

⁶ Ibid., email to the author 21.09.2011

days are getting longer. In the second, the poet has no pride, and sources continue. The first verb is implied, and the three remaining are explicated. I suspect that this technique of omission was used purposefully by the poet not only due to the formal requirement of five characters per line, but also because by omitting the verb, the atmosphere becomes one of a state of being rather than an action. The translations are successful because they both manage to convey this atmosphere.

3.1.3 Word play and metonymy

Word play and metonymy can be employed at the level of the text, but simple use of these two techniques can also be discussed at the level of the character. In a couplet from Du Fu's "Moonlit Night" (月夜), quoted in Chapter I, an example of each can be found in a single two-character compound:¹

遙憐小兒女	distant • pity • small • son • daughter
未解憶長安	not yet • understand • remember • Chang-an

The most obvious meaning of 長安 is the city of Changan. Du Fu was trapped in the capital, longing for his small children. He wonders if they even remember the capital. In addition, the characters mean 'long + peace', a long period without political unrest. His children are so small that he fears they only know the state of rebellion and have no memory of anything else. Finally, 長安 is a metonymic expression for Du Fu himself; he fears he has been away from them for so long that their memory of their father grows dim.² This information can be easily incorporated into a translation typology that gives information on the level of word:

未解憶長安	not yet • understand • remember • Chang-an ¹
-------	---

¹ Changan: long + peace. Also: a metonymic reference to Du Fu himself.

By using annotation, it is possible to make a distinction between the alternate meanings inherent in a word – indicated by a '/' between meanings – and words used purposefully in word play or metonymy. Again we see that information that must be made explicit in a literary translation can be conveyed in a simple, structured manner in a translation of this type.

3.2 Challenges at the level of the line and text

The more important the words and their order in the original, the more closely the original should be translated. Since the genre where words and their order are most

¹ The literal translation is based on Hawkes 1967: 31.

² Ibid., 31

important is poetry, you would expect the translation of poetry to be the closest form of translation. Far from it. This is not possible since the language of poetry includes so many additional important factors – the kind of poem, poetic form, metre, connotations, rhythm, sound, including rhyme, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, word-play – which are missing or not so important in other types of writing.¹

It is in these “additional important factors” Peter Newmark lists in the above quote that the complete message and the music of a poem reside. We have already seen a glimpse of this in the discussion of optional precision, which allows the poet to make use of inherent linguistic aspects of the language as creative literary tools. In this section, I will first address parallelism, imagery, and metre. I will then introduce the formal requirements of the poems discussed in Chapter IV.

3.2.1 Parallelism

Parallelism is one of the most pervasive aesthetic features of Classical Chinese, and is a compositional technique that is integral to the verse forms examined in this paper. It is not restricted to Chinese; parallelism in the Western tradition has its roots in the Greek and Latin classics, and it can be found in other language families to a lesser or greater degree. As mentioned above, ancient Greek biblical poetry demonstrates parallelism; the same is true of many passages in the Hebrew bible.² The difference between parallelism in the Chinese tradition and other traditions is that “[...] in other traditions you read the words and recognize a parallel construction in them; often in Chinese you first assume that the couplet is parallel, and the assumption instructs you how to construe the words”.³ Parallelism is discussed in early Chinese theoretical works such as Liu Xie’s (劉勰) fifth-century work on literary aesthetics, *Wenxin diaolong* (文心雕龍), where an entire chapter is devoted to its categorisation.⁴ Stephen Owen describes it thus:

In strict parallelism, every word and phrase in one line of a couplet must be matched in the same position of the second line by a corresponding word in the same semantic category. In addition, the two lines must be parallel in a broader and looser matching of ‘sense’ (*yi* 意).⁵

In Classical Chinese poetry, parallelism not only creates structure within a couplet and couplets, but also generates meaning beyond the level of the single word or line. It can be found in two forms: formal (structure), and semantic (meaning). Combined with tonal

¹ Newmark 1998: 126

² Plaks 1988: 43-44

³ Owen 1985: 87

⁴ Liu Chapter 35 at <http://www.guoxue.com/jibu/wenlun/wenxin/wenxingml.htm>, accessed 09.11.2010

⁵ Owen 1985: 90

patterns and other phonetic patterns such as alliteration, reduplication, rhyme, etc., parallelism in Classical Chinese poetry becomes “more a natural mode of utterance than a poetic intensification, [making] it the starting point rather than the objective of rhetorical manipulation [...] parallel constructions in classical [*sic*] Chinese often start with sets of paired terms that may be purely conventional, but then move toward a point at which subtle differentiation of parallel relations becomes the real aesthetic function at work”.¹ Again, we can turn to Li Bai’s “Thoughts at Night” as an example, continuing with the last two lines of the poem:

床前看月光	bed • before • bright • moon • ray of light
疑是地上霜	compare/imitate • is • ground • on • frost
舉頭望明月	lift • head • look • bright • moon
低頭思故鄉	lower • head • think • native-village

In the first line of the second couplet, the head is lifted to gaze at the moon; in the second line, it is lowered in thought. Andrew Plaks points out that this is far from all:

“[...] the initial impression of simple equivalence is quickly turned to a distinction between outward gaze and inner reflection, a distinction carried through to the two objects of vision: the bright moon and the old hometown. Although grammatical parallelism is strictly observed, this does not remove the tension between the illusion of suffused presence in the one image, and the sense of irretrievable loss in the other.”²

A couplet in which contrast is both structural and semantic, and in which the words that contrast with each other belong to the same category of things in nature (or are two items or concepts often mentioned together, such as wine and poetry) was considered to be especially skillfully rendered. The following couplet (the second in the poem) from Du Fu’s “Thoughts While Traveling at Night” (旅夜書懷)³ is such an example; the poet juxtaposes stars and moon, field and river, in strict formal parallelism:⁴

星垂平野闊	star • droop • open-field • wide
月湧大江流	moon • rush • great-river • flow

*The stars drooping, the wild plain (is) vast;
The moon rushing, the great river flows*

He does the same in the following couplet from “Facing the Rain in a River Pavilion, My

¹ Plaks 1988: 47

² Ibid., 54

³ QTS scroll 229 <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=150970&if=en>, accessed 03.11.2011

⁴ Liu 1962: 148-49

Thoughts Turn to Attendant Censor Pei (2) in the Army Camp” (江閣對雨有懷行營裴二端公):¹

野流行地日
江入度山雲

plains • flow • move • earth • sun
river • enter • cross • mountain • cloud

*In the wilds flows the sunlight crossing the land,
the river is entered by clouds crossing the mountains.*²

The importance of these contrasts has no real equivalent in the tradition of English-language poetry, and is therefore a challenge for the translator. Versification handbooks included lists of categories of items or concepts that could be used in antithetical couplets, and the practice has been continued up to the present day. In his book *A Study of the Metrical Rules of Chinese Poetry* (汉语诗律学), Chinese linguist Wang Li (王力, 1900-1986) lists 11 categories, each of which is further divided into two or more groups that correspond to the opposite but complementary natural forces *yin* or *yang*. The first category is for example divided into astronomy (*yang*) and seasons (*yin*), the eighth into opposite directions of the compass, color opposites (*yang*), and the ten celestial stems and branches (an ancient cyclical numeral system, *yin*), etc.³ Parallelism was not simply a poetic device, but “the formal linguistic manifestation of the structure of the natural world”.⁴

3.2.2 Imagery

Imagery in various forms is found in all types of poetry. It is often difficult to translate because it is not simply a matter of words, but of associations the words provoke in the source-language culture. Part of the difficulty is that the images themselves can differ from one language and culture to another. A rose as a symbol for love and a dove as a symbol for peace are examples that are familiar to most native speakers of English, but many of the images common in the Chinese context will not be recognised by target-text readers. The aforementioned spinning maid and cowherd who symbolise separation is one example. The bat is another; it is a symbol of blessing due to the fact that it is a homonymic with the word for blessing.⁵ Mandarin ducks are used in Du Fu’s “A Fair Lady” (佳人), mentioned in section 3.1, as a symbol of conjugal fidelity, and as a means to create contrast between “...the constancy and affection of Nature’s humbler creatures with the neglect and callousness that

¹ QTS scroll 233. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=152377&if=en>, accessed 28.10.2011

² Trans. Owen, email to the author 15.10.2011

³ Wang 2005: 160-171

⁴ Owen 1985: 86

⁵ Liu 1962: 125-26

[the lady] has been shown by Man”.¹ Nature and man are also juxtaposed in the couplet that describes clear mountain spring water and muddy spring water quoted above in section 3.1.1, which is also suggestive of the ruined reputation of a woman who leaves her husband. Liu describes this as an image that “[...] involves a juxtaposition or a comparison of two objects, or a substitution of one object for another, or a translation of one kind of experience into another”.²

An image, a quotation, or a set expression can also allude to something connected to common knowledge or a belief in the source-text culture (such as the five elements or the concept of *yin* and *yang* in Chinese), or have a specific association, such as to a literary work, a person, or an historical event. These types of allusion are found in the literary traditions of both Chinese and English, but are not directly transferable from one to the other. Spots on bamboo allude to tears in a Chinese poem; source-text readers will recognise what this means due to their long-term immersion in the cultural context, whereas the allusion must be explained to those who read the poem in translation.³ Similarly, an educated Chinese reader, whether from the eighth or twenty-first century, will recognise allusions to the Confucian Classics in a Classical Chinese poem, but the same is most likely not true of a target-text reader. Liu points out that “[i]n an age such as the present one, when no common body of knowledge can be taken for granted among all readers, allusions tend to appear obscure, like private symbols”.⁴ This is especially relevant for a target text audience reading across more than one thousand years.

A simple example can be found in Du Fu’s “The Guest” (客至),⁵ where the poet writes that his only visitors are the seagulls that fly by daily:

舍南舍北皆春水
但見群鷗日日來

house • south • house • north • all • springtime • water
only • see • flock-gulls • day-day • come

*South of our home, and north, nothing but spring
Water everywhere, and gulls arriving day after day*

The surface reading is that the poet is emphasising how alone he is, with seagulls as his only guests, and this is a valid interpretation. It is however important that the target text reader to

¹ Hawkes 1967: 84

² Liu 1962: 102

³ The legend of tears and spotted bamboo can be found on page 9 of: Alfreda Murck. 2002. *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent*. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series, Vol. 50. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center.

⁴ Liu 1962: 132

⁵ QTS roll 226. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=150104&if=en>, accessed 29.10.2011

be made aware of the fact that to be a friend of seagulls in ancient China was to be innocent, simple, and in tune with nature.¹ A more complex example can be found in one of Li Bai's three "Qingping Tunes" (清平調詞):²

雲想衣裳花相容	Clouds make me think of her blouse and skirt,
春風拂檻露華濃	flowers of her face;
若非群玉山頭見	The spring breeze brushes by the railing, the dews
會向瑤台下逢	on blossoms are deep.
	If not to be seen on the top of the Qunyu Mountain,
	She may be encountered on the Yao Terrace under
	the moon.

Michelle Yeh describes the metaphoric language in this poem thus:

It is obvious that line 1 employs two metaphors to describe the beauty and grace of Lady Yang. Floating clouds are compared to the undulations of her soft, trailing skirt; flowers are compared to her face. The two images are connected by the spring breeze in line 2, which moves from the sky down to the railing beside which the peonies are in bloom. The line evokes the image of flowers gently swaying in the breeze, their beauty thus made even more scintillating.³

She goes on to point out the juxtaposition between heaven and earth, the fact that wind and dew –which descend from the sky – are used in the Chinese context to describe favour from the emperor, and finally that dew can have an erotic connotation ('rain and dew' is a metaphor for sexual intercourse).⁴

From the second example we can see that it is not only the images themselves that differ between Chinese and English, but also the types of imagery used and how they are defined. For example, opinions among scholars on what constitutes metaphor in Chinese poetry differ. Kao and Mei have defined what they call an alternative typology of metaphor where metaphor and allusion are a matter of equivalence: words are set up against each other, due to their similarity or their dissimilarity, and equivalence is the "tension" that can be found in between. These words have a "metaphoric relation" when they are juxtaposed, and "[n]ew meanings or new dimensions of meanings are generated when two words enter into the relation of equivalence". They give as one example the couplet discussed in section 3.1.2:

浮雲游子意	float • cloud • traveler • intention/desire
落日故人情	set + sun • old-friend • sentiment

¹ Hawkes 1967: 110; English translation Hinton 1989 (1988): 59

² *QTS* scroll 164. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=136927&if=en>, accessed 30.10.2011.

³ Yeh 1987: 237

⁴ *Ibid.*, 238

Floating cloud wanderer's mood
Setting sun heart of one left behind

They state the following concerning equivalence in this couplet:

It is immediately clear that “floating cloud” and “setting sun” operate at two levels of meaning, literal and metaphoric. Literally they are part of the physical setting, and as metaphors, they describe the emotion involved. It is equally clear that in each line the two juxtaposed nouns interact by virtue of their semantic similarity; the wanderer’s ways are rootless and carefree like the floating cloud, and the friend’s departure and the sun’s setting evoke the same sense of loss. The metaphors are thus constituted by similarity, one of the two relations subsumed under the principle of equivalence. In other words, the principle of equivalence generates new meanings by constituting metaphors.¹

Kao and Mei point out that New Style poetry (a type of poetry found in the Tang Dynasty, discussed later in this chapter) is replete with such relations, and that they “play a role far greater than their counterpart[s] in English poetry”. In fact, Kao and Mei claim that this principle of equivalence “[...] not only unifies words locally but also serves as the global principle of organization for the entire poem”.² In other words: not only is metaphoric language prevalent in Classical Chinese poetry, but it also has a greater importance than metaphor has in English verse and creates an organizational premise for the poem itself. If so, the translator must not only consider the words and their associations, but also their relative effects in the source and target contexts.

This broad view of metaphor can be contrasted with the view of Pauline Yu, who argues that metaphor as it is understood in the West does not exist in Chinese poetry. She claims that analogies in the Chinese context are not created, but already exist. They are “[...] *discovered* by the poet, not manufactured. Because he is *affirming* correlations, and creating or asserting them, he is not ‘teaching’ us something new in the way his Western counterpart is presumed to be doing. Images in Tang and pre-Tang poetry are generally isolated shots, or variations of the same shot, rather than the essentially discursive extended comparisons of Western literature, because the poets were not working with the models of a metaphysical realm or a creation from nothing”.³ Yu invokes the views of yet other scholars, such as Max Black who claims that “[...] it would often be more illuminating ‘to say that the metaphor creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing’”,⁴ and Wai-Lim Yip who argues that “[...] objects in a Chinese poem do not refer to something

¹ Kao & Mei 1978: 289

² Ibid., 285-87

³ Yu 1981: 224

⁴ Black 1962 in Yu 1981: 213, note 26

other than themselves because the poet does not ‘force the perspective of the ego upon the Phenomenon’”.¹ The Chinese techniques *bi* 比 (comparison) and *xing* 興 (evoke) are at the root of this discussion. Both involve comparison: *bi* involves an obvious, explicit comparison of two things, while *xing* involves a subtler image or situation that evokes associations in the reader’s mind.² These terms and the way of reading and writing poetry that they represent are firmly anchored in Chinese literary history due to their use in the interpretation of the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing*, 詩境).³ Du Fu’s “Moonlit Night” (月夜)⁴ can serve as an example:

香霧雲鬟濕	fragrant • mist • cloud-hair • wet
清輝玉臂寒	clear • light • jade-arms • cold

Here, a woman’s hair is clearly juxtaposed and compared with mist-scented clouds and her arms with cold jade. In addition, clouds and jade are “stock epithets for women’s hair and arms”.⁵ This imagery, reinforced by the couplet’s parallelism, results in the evocation of a particular response in the reader – a response that is based on a cultural context not familiar to a target-text reader. Michelle Yeh goes so far as to suggest that metaphor is not simply a rhetorical device, but also something that “[...] contributes to our understanding of the world by bringing fresh insights or revealing new relations involving two or more categories”.⁶ If so, the list that includes differing images themselves and differing types and definitions of imagery expands to include the different ways of seeing the world that exist in the source and target-language cultures.

Imagery, techniques for transmitting it, and the effect it creates in the reader that differ between two languages and cultures create a much more challenging situation for the translator. The same problem arises in the translation of fiction, but poetry’s dependence on language nuance in a compact and highly-regulated package make it a much more acute challenge when translating verse. Annotation is not enough: first, it exists outside of the literary, poetic reading experience, and second, while it is possible to annotate the fact that clouds and jade are stock images in Chinese for a woman’s hair and arms, it is however not possible to annotate the response – or to borrow from Yeh, the worldview – their use is meant to evoke in the reader. The translator must take a step back from discussions of terminology, and keep his focus on reader response. What a technique is called in a language context is less

¹ Yip 1976 in Yu 1981: 209

² Cai 2008: 43

³ Owen 1992: 257. The *Book of Songs* is a collection of 305 poems with content dating from app. 1000 to 600 BC. Idema & Haft 1997: 8-9

⁴ *QTS* scroll 224. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=149528&if=en>, accessed 29.10.2011

⁵ Hawkes 1967: 32

⁶ Yeh 1987: 244

important than the effect it produces on the reader, and how that effect can best be recreated or approximated in a target language context.

3.2.3 *Sound: rhythm and phonology*

Poetry is not only words or characters written on a page, but more importantly sound. Verse is meant to be experienced with the reader's ear, whether it is recited aloud or heard in the recipient's mind when reading silently. It is known that Tang poetry was written to be declaimed.¹ The auditory effect of a poem is an integral part of its whole. Verse forms in various languages have their own distinctive rhythms; the translator must consider not only how to convey the text in another language, but also the rhythmic aspect of its presentation. In the classical Tamil poetry *Venpa*, the grammar itself is defined by a set of metric rules.² In ancient Greek biblical poetry, rhythm is created and regulated by parallelism – a rhetorical structure in which successive lines reflect each other in grammatical structure, sound structure, notional content, or all three.³ (Parallelism is an important element of Classical Chinese poetry, and is discussed in more detail below.) In Western poetry, metre is the system used to describe the rhythm of a poem. Metre takes into account the number, duration, and relative stress of syllables. Since post-Medieval times, English verse has been measured according to accentual-syllabic metre, formal patterns of stressed and unstressed beats. In accentual-syllabic verse the basic unit is the line, defined as a single sequence of characters read from left to right. A line is comprised of metrical feet, given combinations of syllables (accented, unaccented, and combinations thereof). Each foot generally includes one syllable with a stress and one or two without a stress. One theory is that these patterns have emerged organically, based on the sounds of the language in everyday speech. John Lennard argues that English speakers have a tendency to speak in iambs and anapæsts (feet with one unstressed + one stressed syllable and two unstressed + one stressed syllable, respectively) and that this is why iambic metres are popular in English-language poetry.⁴

James J. Y. Liu claims that tonal modulation in Chinese plays a similar role to variation of stress in English verse.⁵ Even if one ascribes to this view, it is of little use to the translator, because tonal variation in Chinese is not connected to a pattern of natural speech in

¹ See Nugent 2010: Chapter 3 for a discussion of the oral aspects of Tang poetry

² For a detailed explanation, see Raman et. al. 2003, "Context Free Grammar for Natural Language Constructs – an Implementation for *Venpa* Class of Tamil Poetry. Available online at <http://www.infitt.net/pdf/TIM2003124132.pdf>, accessed 21.09.2011.

³ Mills et. al., eds. 2001: 697

⁴ Lennard 2005: 5-6

⁵ Liu 1962: 22

a given context (words do not vary tonally in different situations) or to the relative importance of a given word in a specific context in the same way stress functions in a sentence in English. In addition, Classical Chinese is for all intents and purposes monosyllabic. Occasionally one sees a two-syllable/two-character word (a sign of things to come in modern Chinese, and already present to an extent in Classical Chinese), but even in these cases, each character is a word to which an independent meaning can be assigned. Rhythm was not established by combinations of stressed and unstressed syllables as we interpret stress in English, but rather – at least in some verse forms – by the number of characters in a line and their relative placement in a strictly regulated structure. Lines in *jintishi* (近體詩), discussed in the next section, have a semantic rhythm. They are divided into units of disyllabic and trisyllabic segments, separated by a caesura. Units of three characters are further divided into units of 1 + 2 or 2 + 1 characters, with a slighter pause between.¹ This is possible because of the monosyllabic nature of Chinese. English words on the other hand vary in regard to the number of syllables they contain, and the rhythm of a line is measured by the combination of metrical feet contained therein. Consider the first two couplets of Shakespeare's Sonnet 147:

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease,
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.

In these lines we find words of one, two, and three syllables, organised in iambs, a dactyl (one stressed + two unstressed syllables), and an anapaest. Powerful poetry can be found in English using words of one syllable only, but this is not a usual situation, and is often used for effect. In the last couplet of the same sonnet, the poet pounds out a condemnation with one-syllable words:

For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.²

As pointed out above, Classical Chinese in its written form is very much alive today. The Chinese reader will feel comfortable reading a text from the Tang Dynasty, but the sounds he hears in his head while reading the poem are not the sounds Li Bai heard; they are those of modern spoken Chinese (and will in fact vary somewhat, depending on the dialect of

¹ Cai 2008: 164

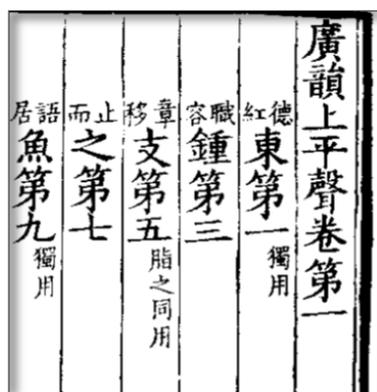
² This example taken from Grossman 2010: 97-98

the reader). In its spoken form, Early Middle Chinese, it is in effect a dead language; not only it is no longer spoken, but there is (naturally) no recording from the time it was spoken.

The phonology of Middle Chinese has abundant written documentation in two main sources: rhyme dictionaries or books (*yunshu*, 韻書), and rhyme tables (*yuntu*, 韻圖). The most influential rhyme dictionary is the *Qieyun* (切韻), a rhyme dictionary completed in 601, the writing of which was overseen by Lu Fayan (陸法言), and its expanded versions, the most important of which is the Song-era *Guangyun* (廣韻), compiled by Chen Pengnian (陳彭年) and Qiu Yong (丘雍) in 1007-1008. These employ a method to indicate pronunciation called *fanqie* 反切, where two characters are used to show how a third is pronounced.

The *Qieyun* gives us another important bit of information about the sound of Middle Chinese: the fact that the spoken language had four tone categories. These were *ping* 平, *shang* 上, *qu* 去, and *ru* 入. Karlgren described these respectively as “level and non-abrupt”, “rising and non-abrupt”, (probably) “falling and non-abrupt”, and “abrupt” (ending in a stop, that is, -p, -t, or -k). Each of these four categories had some characters with voiced (*yang*, 陽) initials, and some with voiceless (*yin*, 陰) initials. A *yinping* character for example had a level tone and a voiceless initial. In modern Mandarin these tonal distinctions between voiced and unvoiced initials are lost, but during the Tang Dynasty the voiced/unvoiced distinction was still present. At this point, the use of tonal variation in poetry had come to the point where the four tone categories of the *Qieyun* had each split into two groups: *ping* 平, also called ‘level’, and *ze* 仄, also called ‘oblique’. As we shall see below, this distinction is important in the tonal schemes of Tang-era poetry.

In the illustration below,¹ we see a section of a page from a modern reprint of a Song-dynasty edition *Guangyun*. It shows five characters, the first of which is 東, pronounced



‘dong’ in the modern northern standard (‘təwŋ’ in reconstructed MC). The two characters directly above 東 indicate the pronunciation by giving the initial (德, ‘de’, or ‘tək’) and the final (紅 ‘hong’, or ‘ɣəwŋ’). It is uncertain to what extent the *Qieyun* actually represents the way Chinese was spoken, and there is a disagreement about the dialect(s) on which it was based. In his preface, Lu Fayan stated that it was “for use in writing literature and in vocalizing literary texts”.¹ It is not possible to know if all

¹ Illustration from page 1 of the *Songben guangyun* 宋本廣韻 1982. Beijing: Beijing shi xinhua shudian 北京市中国书店 (PDF version)

but the information it gives can be used as an aid in the reconstruction of Early Middle Chinese.¹ The illustration on the previous page shows a section of the first of 43 charts in the *Yunjing*.² The four characters in the first column on the far-left indicate the tones. Placement in a given row within each tone group is based on phonetic groups called divisions (等), the exact nature of which is unclear.³

The written sources are not perfect. Mistakes were bound to have occurred and been reinforced in copies and new editions. William H. Baxter points out that the initials he transcribes as dzy- and zy- were mistakenly reversed in the rhyme tables; he believes this occurred because the two had merged in most dialects by the Late Middle Chinese period. Some sounds were no doubt present in certain dialects and not others, and all dialects are not equally represented. Despite discussion and disagreement surrounding rhyme books and tables, they are numerous and detailed enough to allow opportunity for comparison and confirmation. They preserve phonological aspects of the language no longer present in modern dialects, and some of the information missing in contemporary written sources can be supplemented with the help of modern dialects, sinoxenetic forms, loanwords in Chinese, and the pronunciation of Chinese characters used to write other languages.⁴

Although we cannot be certain how Early Middle Chinese sounded when it was spoken, the information available to us and the many interpretations of it do give the translator a reasonably good way to not only be able to read Tang poetry, but to hear it as well, and thus to be able to consider both visual and auditory aspects when recreating a poem in a target language. Various reconstructions exist, including those of Bernard Karlgren from (1954, modified by F. K. Li in 1971), and those of William H. Baxter (1992), Baxter and Sagart (2000), and Edwin Pulleyblank (1991). Reconstructed pronunciation is used in this study only to indicate the tones and types of rhyme in the source texts; whether one system is more correct than another is therefore not an issue in this context. Due to my familiarity with it, I have chosen Pulleyblank's system, and the Early Middle Chinese pronunciations given are from his 1991 *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin*.

As we will see below, the highly regulated patterns that govern the Chinese poems presented in this paper stand in stark contrast to the variations in stress patterns in English verse.

¹ Ibid., 41

² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rime_table, accessed 02.09.2010

³ Baxter 1992: 42

⁴ Baxter 1992: 32-33

3.2.4 Formal structures

The poems presented in this paper are either *jintishi* (近體詩), so-called ‘new-style poetry’, or *gutishi* (古體詩), old-style poetry. The term *jinti* (new style) was introduced to indicate the highly regulated *shi* (poetry) form, and to differentiate it from *gutishi*, poetry with a lesser degree of regulation that gives a feeling of being unregulated.¹ *Gutishi* should not be confused with the general term *gushi* (古詩), ancient poetry. *Gutishi* was used by poets who wished to write a poem in a form from an earlier era. These poems exhibit a greater degree of flexibility in prosodic and poetic devices than do those written in *jintishi*, but the degree of “ancientness” of these poems varied from poet to poet. The *jintishi* form can be traced back as far as the Six Dynasties (222-589 AD), and was fully developed and established during the Tang Dynasty. *Jintishi* can be further divided into *lüshi* (律詩), or regulated verse, and *jueju* (絕句), or regulated quatrains. The *lüshi* examined in this paper have eight lines (extended *lüshi*, called *pailü* – 排律 – can have as many as 300 lines). *Jueju* have four lines. In both forms, we find poems of either five or seven characters per line.²

Jintishi are characterised by three interwoven structural components: alternating parallel couplets, a four-stage progression, and a complex, interlocked sets of rules that regulate rhyme, syntax, structure, and the placement of tones in relationship to each other. The rules ensure maximum tonal contrast within a line and between the lines of a couplet. There must also be a partial equivalence between adjacent couplets: the tones of the first two characters of a couplet’s closing line must correspond with those of the first two characters of the following couplet’s opening line. There must also be an alternation of nonparallel and parallel couplets; a *lüshi* generally begins with a nonparallel couplet (although this couplet can be parallel), followed by two parallel couplets, then end with a nonparallel couplet. These two middle couplets are also regulated syntactically: they must also be parallel thematically and in regard to parts of speech.³ A complete discussion of the complexities of these rules is beyond the scope of this paper, but the chart on the next page illustrates the basic pattern and variations.⁴ The circle within a circle indicates that a character can be either a *ping* or *ze* tone. Where the choice is not optional, ‘p’ and ‘z’ are used. The black and white circles indicate that the tones must be opposite of each other. ‘Pr’ indicates a rhyming *ping* tone (though as

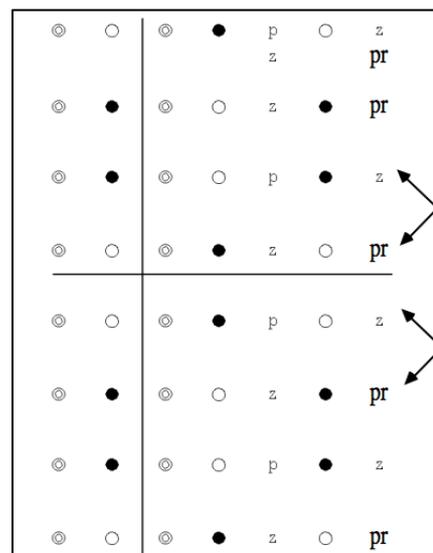
¹ The term *shi* 詩 can be confusing. In addition to being a specific genre, it is also the word used most often used for poetry in general.

² Descriptions of *lüshi*, *jueju*, and their tonal patterns are taken from Chang 2007: 2 and 14-20, and Cai 2008: Chapters 8-10. The description of *gutishi* is taken from Ibid., 226.

³ Cai 2008: 164-65

⁴ A more detailed description of the rules of tonal patterning and possible variations thereof can be found in Cai 2008: 169-172.

we will see, *ze* rhyme occurs in some variations of this tone scheme). Arrows indicate parallelism (this requirement applies only to poems of at least eight lines). There must be syntactic and semantic parallelism in all couplets except the first and last. Characters to the left of the vertical line are present only in heptasyllabic poems, and those below the horizontal line are not present in *jueju*. The relationship of the tone of the last character in a line to that of the character that is third-from-last is less important than the tonal relationship between the second, fourth, and sixth tones (counting from the last tone, right to left).¹



The four-stage progression, which applies to lines in *jueju* and couplets in *lüshi*, is made up of *qi* (起, to begin or arise), *cheng* (承, to continue, elaborate), *zhuan* (轉, turnaround), and *he* (合, conclude, close).² (This pattern is not completely unfamiliar to Western readers who are acquainted with classical music, because it has a parallel in the exposition – development – recapitulation of the sonata allegro form.)

In addition to these three components, the structure of a Classical Chinese poem is often determined by the relationship between natural scenes (*jing*, 景) and emotion (*qing*, 情). Lines or elements depicting natural scenes and human emotion “[...] are usually quite balanced in length and intended to enhance each other as analogues or correlatives”.³

The literary forms of Chinese and English poetry are not the same, and each elicits expectations in their readers that one cannot expect readers unfamiliar with the forms to have, especially when the poem is moved from its linguistic and cultural contexts. Zong-qi Cai points out that the genre expectation created by formal aspects of Chinese poetry “[...] makes possible not only an intensified experience of the sound, but also a dynamic creation (re-creation) of the sense of poetry”.⁴ Stephen Owen points out that “[j]ust as a text is written in a certain language, so it is also written *for* certain presuppositions about what literature is and how a literary text is to be read.”⁵ A literal transposition of literary form is therefore not

¹ Unpublished handout from course Kinas litteraturhistorie at the University of Oslo, spring 2007, instructor Halvor Eifring

² Cai 2008: 165

³ Ibid., 8

⁴ Ibid., 7

⁵ Owen 1985: 56

possible. English for example lacks the added dimension of structured, elegant juxtaposition of formally categorised items or concepts that parallelism creates. We gaze at the same moon Li Bai saw, and every imaginable receiver of a target text in any cultural context can identify with a yearning for home. The way in which we structure our thoughts and the associations we have with the manner they are expressed can however be quite different from the eighth-century source-text reader, and it is the translator's job to sort this out. He must decide whether or not to attempt to approximate certain formal aspects of the source text at the expense of others in his translation, and take into consideration the effect these will have on the target-text reader. When we consider the challenges the translator of Classical Chinese poetry faces, it becomes clearer that whether to move the reader or the text is not necessarily as resolute as Owen suggests. It becomes more complicated when we begin to consider when, how, why, and to what effect.

3.3 The Chinese writing system

Much attention has been paid in the West to the writing system of Chinese. One reason for this fascination is the fact that the written language has existed in its modern form for so long (since the fourth century AD, in fact)¹ that the modern reader of Chinese can easily recognise and in many cases read texts written two thousand years in the past. A reader today will for example encounter only familiar words, written as he is accustomed to seeing them, in the poem by Li Bai from the eighth century quoted above. Not all Chinese texts of that period will be as immediately accessible as this poem; a dictionary of Classical Chinese will need to be consulted in cases where the meaning of characters has changed or evolved, and the sentence structure of Classical Chinese is much more compact than that of its modern counterpart, to the point where the meaning of a sentence can be obscure. But the fact remains that the various forms of written Chinese from approximately the beginning of the Common Era and onward are recognisable and reasonably negotiable for the educated Chinese reader of today.

This contributes to the mystique that surrounds Chinese characters in the mind of a non-Chinese-reading target-text reader because the same is not true of English. As shown below, a modern reader of English cannot read the Old English poem *Beowulf* – written sometime between the eighth and eleventh centuries – without translation or glosses of some sort:

¹ Norman 1998: 69-70

Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum,
þeoycýninga, þrymgefrunon,
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.

Lo, praise of the prowess of people-kings
of spear-armed Danes, in days long sped,
we have heard, and what honor the athelings won! ¹

The English-speaking reader must rely on a translation, and will in fact not even recognise all the letters of the alphabet when reading verse in an early version of his own language. The early Chinese poet can however speak much more directly to his modern reader.

When does the visual element of written Chinese express something that contributes to the experience of the poem, and when is it nothing more than a method that just happens to exist to write the language? It can be tempting to ascribe characters an underlying meaning, implicit or explicit, that does not exist. In Ernest Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, he states the following about the Chinese sentence 人見馬, 'man sees horse':

[...] Chinese notation is something much more than arbitrary symbols. It is based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature. In the algebraic figure and in the spoken word there is no natural connection between thing and sign: all depends upon sheer convention. But the Chinese method follows natural suggestion. First stands the man on his two legs. Second, his eye moves through space: a bold figure represented by running legs under an eye, a modified picture of an eye, a modified picture of running legs, but unforgettable once you have seen it. Third stands the horse on his four legs. The thought-picture is not only called up by these signs as well as by words, but far more vividly and concretely. Legs belong to all three characters: they are *alive*. The group holds something of the quality of a continuous moving picture.²

Fenollosa's view has had some influence, though not among sinologists. It is true that the character 人 depicts legs, and that 見 is comprised of 目 (eye) and 儿, which was originally 人. It can however be called into question whether or not the Chinese reader considers this a "bold" character, or simply the word 'to see'. The character 馬 looked much more like a horse in its earlier forms (see illustration below), but perhaps can still be said to resemble a horse in some abstract way. It is however not necessarily the case that a poet would choose to use these particular characters because of a common element, or that a reader would understand this particular sentence to have an element of being "alive" because of the choice of characters.

¹ Both versions taken from www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~beowulf/main.html, accessed 12.09.2010.

² Fenollosa, ed. Pound 1936: 8-9

The Chinese language does have a pictorial element that has evolved throughout the written language's history, and a brief historical overview is therefore in order. The first known characters include pictographs which depicted objects (such as 口 for 'mouth'). When

				
山	日	月	水	馬
mountain	day (sun)	moon	water	horse

viewed side-by-side, it is not difficult to see the relationship between characters from the thirteenth century BC and their modern counterparts, as this table shows.¹ Concepts such

as 'above' (上) or 'below' (下) were denoted by simple visual representations, and had no relationship to how the words were pronounced.² Abstract concepts are difficult to represent graphically, and in such cases the character of a homophone or near homophone was often utilised. The verb 'to come' – 來 – is one example. In this case, the character for the homophone 'wheat' was chosen to represent the verb.

A very few characters seem to be completely arbitrary signs (the character for the number seven – 七 – is one example), and still other characters were created by combining two graphs: one that bore a phonetic element with one that brought with it a semantic element (such as the character for 'wolf', 狼, which consists of the character for 'dog', 犭 / 犬, and the character 良, which means 'good', used as a phonetic indicator) or two semantic elements which, when combined, produced a third (such as another character for 'good', 好, which consists of the graphs for female 女 and child 子).³ This combining of graphs could obviously lead to confusion. The character 勿 for example originally meant 'creature' or 'thing', and was borrowed for the homophone that meant 'do not'. In order to differentiate these two in the written language, the graph for 'ox' (牛) was added to the first of these as a semantic determinative, and 物 was the result.⁴ These semantic determinatives are often somewhat confusedly called radicals today, and are the means by which characters are arranged in most Chinese dictionaries.

When considering the characters used by a poet, the danger is in looking for an underlying, visually-transmitted meaning where none is intended. This is clearly demonstrated by one translator, who takes the pictorial translation of characters to an extreme in what he calls "radical translation"; that is, a sort of translation (if it indeed can be called

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_character_classification, accessed 020711

² Norman 1998: 58-59

³ Adapted from Norman 1998: 59-60; Boltz 1994: 62-68

⁴ Boltz 1994: 67

that) based on the radical of a character. In his system, the following line from Du Fu's "Spring Scene" (春望):

恨別鳥驚心 hate • separate || bird • surprise + heart [startle]

...is given the following translation, where the italicised words refer to the individual elements of the characters, and the words in bold are meant to show the meaning of the individual character:

heart-hate bone-blade-separation bird horse-startle heart

Hating separation, hearts of birds startle¹

To translate on this level is to provide the target-text reader with historical information about the orthography of the language that, while possibly interesting to a student of the language, results in a translation typology that only serves to get in the way of the ultimate goal of text transmission. For the target-language reader with no knowledge of Chinese, this is simply too much information and irrelevant to boot, and adds noise to the equation.

The use of particular characters for a visual effect can however in some cases give an extra dimension to devices used in poetry. One example can be found in the sixth couplet of Li Bai's "Drinking Alone Beneath the Moon" (月下獨酌):²

醒時同交歡 sober • time • together • exchange • joy
醉後各分散 drunk • after • each • separate • disperse

*When still sober we enjoy ourselves together;
When rapt with wine we bid each other good-bye.*³

The two lines in this couplet show semantic and syntactic parallelism, which is reinforced by the visual element shared by the first characters in each line: the radical 酉. The closest one can come to this in an alphabetic language is alliteration, also called head or initial rhyme in poetry, which does not give the same visual effect as do identical graphs (and in this case, the graph represents a vessel to contain wine and is therefore a visual emphasis of the poem's theme). Whether or not Li Bai chose these characters to achieve this effect – and I suspect he did, because the use of these characters in parallelism coupled with the relevance to the poem's theme in the work of such a skilled poet would seem to go beyond coincidence – the

¹ Huang 1997: 21-24

² QTS scroll 182 <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=139787&if=en>, accessed 05.11.2011

³ Liu 1962: 25

effect on the reader is nonetheless present. Information of this sort can be noted via annotation in a structural translation. If the translator wishes to attempt to mimic this effect in the target text itself, he must however be fairly certain that the poet intended it.

3.3.1 Punctuation

Translators' use of punctuation and layout will be discussed in specific examples in Chapter IV, but a brief mention is appropriate here. Punctuation is almost completely lacking in Classical Chinese poetry. Occasionally one finds markings indicating line breaks in surviving manuscripts,¹ but this is not the norm. Pellatt and Liu sum up the situation for the translator thus:

Punctuation (or its absence) is part of the structure of a poem, contributing to its rhythm and to its appearance on the page [...] Classical Chinese poems are not punctuated, so the translator must decide whether adding commas for full stops will aid the reader in comprehending and appreciating the work". [...] While not punctuated in the modern, western [*sic*] sense of the word, the linguistic structures of traditional Chinese poems guided the reader in just the same way [...] The placing of the text on the page is as much a part of the formal schema of a poem written in English as the Chinese character is of a poem written in Chinese. Spaces, like punctuation, may separate ideas, symbolise or represent spatial or temporal notions. They contribute to the sequencing of images, and the sonority for the reader – whether that reading is silent or aloud.²

As we will see in Chapter IV, translators can make creative, purposeful use of punctuation and layout to transmit aspects of the source-language poem.

3.4 Translation typologies defined

The examples given in this chapter demonstrate that Chinese poems are not lacking in specificity, but rather invite more than one reading. Where English requires that the translator choose one interpretation, all possibilities live side-by-side in the Chinese source text. As Stephen Owen points out, "English forces us to make choices here, to limit and exclude some of the possibilities left open in the Chinese text [...] the Chinese text generously admits possibilities which are lost in even the vaguest translation [...]".³ While this is understandably disconcerting for the translator, the fact remains that the terseness of Classical Chinese verse makes room for the reader's imagination.⁴ The poet sets the stage, and the (Chinese) reader becomes an active part of the process of interpretation. As James J. Y. Liu puts it:

¹ Nugent 2010: 42

² Pellatt & Liu 2010: 164

³ Owen 1985: 36

⁴ Cooper 1973: 53-54

It is of no consequence whether ‘mountain’, ‘bird’, and ‘valley’ are singular or plural [...] As Chinese does not require any indication of ‘number’, the poet need not bother about such irrelevant details and can concentrate on the main task of presenting the spirit [...] Consequently, Chinese poetry often has an impersonal and universal quality, compared with which much Western poetry appears egocentric and earth-bound. Where Wordsworth wrote ‘*I wandered lonely as a cloud*’, a Chinese poet would probably have written simply ‘Wander as cloud’. The former records a personal experience, the latter presents a state of being with universal applications.¹

It is time to answer the first part of the final question raised in Chapter I: what is the intended effect of the translation? I argue that under a broad definition of translation – that it is a method by which to transmit as many aspects of a source-text poem as possible – the effect of a translation must be to leave the reader with a thorough sense of the different layers and aspects of the original Chinese poem. Before demonstrating how this can be achieved through a set of complementary translations, I will define the typologies. To do so, I draw on aspects of Reiss and Vermeer’s *Skopos* theory, which allows for different translations of the same text for different purposes:

- Each translation is determined by its intended purpose, with a coherence that corresponds to its function;
- Each translation offers some aspect present in the source culture and language in a target culture and language, and it is therefore not necessary that all information presented in a translation is offered in a clearly reversible way.

Typology 1: Structural translation

Definition – A structural translation gives both semantic and prosodic information. It contains word-for-character information in such a way that the boundaries between characters are indicated, and word-for-word information is provided where applicable. In addition:

- Rhyme is indicated in color;
- Words that represent characters with tones that fall outside the formal requirements are underscored;
- Boundaries between words are indicated by “•” when no special relationship exists between the characters the words represent, by “+” when the characters act together in an expression, and by “-” when the characters comprise a place name or other unit without relevant semantic interest;

¹ Liu 1962: 40-41

- In cases where character + character is indicated, the combined meaning is enclosed in brackets “[]”;
- Multiple possible definitions are separated by “/”;
- Rhythm is indicated with a caesura indication “|” in each line;
- Supplementary information, concerning such things as word-play, metonymy, imagery, the pictorial aspect of characters where this can have bearing on the meaning or experience of reading etc., is given as annotation.

Theoretical basis – This typology is based on Nida’s formal equivalence, where the structure of the source language is the organising principle; the goal is to give the reader close access to the source text, and where scholarly footnotes are used as a supplement.

Function - A structural translation moves the reader resolutely to the text. It gives the reader structural, semantic, and prosodic information about the source text. Its main purpose is to be a point of departure for reading, understanding, and critical reading of translations created with typology 2, but it can also function alone as a crib for the reader interested in navigating the source text. It fills in the gaps that must necessarily occur in typology 2. It does not transmit the text as a poem.

Typology 2: Scholarly translation

Definition – This typology describes translations where a literary (as opposed to literal) effect is intended, but a poetic effect is either not intended or achieved. In contrast to the poetic typology described below, it is for the most part the words themselves that are the focus of a scholarly translation.

Theoretical basis – This typology is based on House’s overt translation (obviously a translation, where the intention is not to create the appearance of an original in the target language),

Function – A scholarly translation will in most cases move the reader to the text, and in some cases the text to the reader. Its function is to represent the words of the source text in an idiomatic target text. It may – and often does – result in an elegant text, but does not generally aspire to (or does not create) any additional effect above and beyond a transmission of words or formal elements. It can sometimes seem to be more of a prose summary of the poem. It gives the reader a pragmatic overview of the content of the poem.

Typology 3: Poetic translation

Definition – The term ‘poetic’ is highly subjective, and therefore problematic. How does one judge when a text is meant to give the reader a poetic experience? Steven Owen describes poetry as an “event”, as “[...] an art which may occur when we are reading or hearing language, reading and listening in a special way to language which we take to be of a special sort. This language aspires to transparency, to disappear as ‘merely words’; [...] we understand the arabesques of the word to be important for something beyond language”.¹ Based on this, I define a poetic translation as one in which the intended effect is something more than and greater than the words themselves, but keeping in mind that what the translator intends and what a given reader experiences will not necessarily be the same thing.

It should however be noted that the division between scholarly and poetic translations will in some cases be unclear, often overlap to some extent, and ultimately the definition will rest in the mind of the individual reader.

Theoretical basis – This typology is based on House’s covert translation (not obviously a translation, is meant to behave as an original text in the target language), and Nida’s dynamic equivalence tempered by Newmark’s communicative translation, the combined result of which is a translation that evokes, as much as is possible, an effect similar to that the source text had on its reader.

Function – A poetic translation moves the text resolutely to the reader. It gives the reader a poem to read; a poetic experience as opposed to a technical study or straightforward rendition of the original.

The problems I have discussed in this chapter are not addressed in traditional translation theory in relation to poetry. These typologies thus contribute to a framework for a theory of poetry translation. In the context of this paper, they provide answers to the questions of how target texts will be used, and their intended effects. How a cumulative effect can be achieved by way of translation typologies – the remaining half of the final question I raised in my introduction – can be answered by examining how translations work together as a unit. I will discuss this in the next chapter.

¹ Owen 1985: 6-7

IV Poems and translations

In this chapter I will present four poems, two each by Li Bai and Du Fu, with several translations of each. The purpose of this chapter is to put the theoretical contribution of this thesis to a practical test, by viewing published translations in light of how they can function in a set of complementary translations. I begin my discussion of each by presenting the Chinese poem with a structural translation. Early Middle Chinese and modern pronunciation, as well as tonal distribution for each poem, are indicated in the appendix. I then discuss challenges at the level of the word and text, after which I quote several translations and compare how these issues have been dealt with in each translation. I compare the translators' solutions in terms of the effects they achieve. Finally, I summarise the discussion by suggesting where the translations can be placed along a typological continuum based on the functions they can be said to fill, and how some or all can function together in a way that transmits the 'whole' poem. My method for discussion draws on product and function-oriented analysis from Holmes's descriptive translation studies, discussed in section 2.3.6.

The poems presented have been chosen because they represent three important genres of the time, *jueju*, *lüshi*, and *gutishi* and each displays interesting problems for the translator. In addition, these poems are quite famous, and have as a result inspired a fair amount of scholarly discussion. This has in turn inspired a number of translators to work with the poems, resulting in a wide variety of versions from which to choose.

4.1 Two poems by Li Bai

“The Jade Staircase Lament” (玉階怨)¹

Poem with structural translation

1	玉階生白露	jade • stair bear/cause to happen/grow/exist • white • dew
2	夜久侵羅襪	night • long enter/invade/occupy/advances gradually • silk • stocking
3	卻下水晶簾	withdraw • down water • crystal • curtain
4	玲瓏望秋月	(sound) + jade ornament [bright] gaze • autumn • moon

¹ *QTS* scroll 164. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=136900&if=en>, accessed 29.10.2011. The poem appears again in scroll 20, where the character 精 is given instead of 晶. The *Li Tai Bai quanji* does not comment on this version; due to the fact that the pronunciation of the two characters is the same, it is likely that 精 was simply a copyist's mistake. For more about the reproduction and circulation of Classical Chinese texts see Nugent 2010.

About the poem

This poem is a pentasyllabic *jueju*, but falls into a subset of the form that was likely influenced by *yuefu* poetry¹. Poems in this subset deviate from the normal tonal schemes and – as in this poem – use *ze* rhyme.² In addition, there are elements that create a sort of internal rhyme, or at least of a musicality of sound: entering-level tones at the beginning of the first and third lines that give a feeling of balance in relation to the rhyming entering-level tones, alliteration in initials and finals of the first and last words of the poem – jade [ɲuwak] and moon [ɲuat] – both entering-tone words, and the alliteration in 玲瓏 [lɛjŋ luawŋ]. There is a slight variation in the usual semantic rhythm in the third line, where the three-character unit after the caesura is divided into 2 + 1 characters, as opposed to the more common 1 + 2. Rhythm and rhyme are therefore important aspects of the source text of which the translator must be aware.

The first couplet is very nearly parallel, the 玉階 of the first line (two nouns, the first acting as an attribute) and 夜久 of the second (a noun and a stative verb, the verb acting as the attribute) being the only slight imperfection.

In addition to the auditory elements already listed – elements that can be conveyed in translation - there are also linguistic and historical elements in this poem that are not possible to convey in a conventional literary translation, and must therefore be annotated if they are to be understood by target-text readers. In this combination of translatable and nontranslatable elements we see the first evidence of the need for more than one type of translation for a poem. The first nontranslatable element occurs with the allusion found in the very first character, 玉. Jade is often used in Chinese poetry to describe a woman's beauty (we have already seen one example, jade as a description of a woman's arms, in Du Fu's "A Fine Lady"). The Confucian view of jade is summed up in the entry for the character in the *Shuowen jiezi*, where it states that the stone has five virtues: benevolence (仁), righteousness (義), wisdom (智), courage (勇), and purity (絜).³ 白露, 'white dew', alludes to the woman's tears, and also the fact that she is likely not a young woman (white dew is the name of one of

¹ 'Music bureau poetry'. Poems collected during the Han Dynasty, including popular songs on a variety of topics written in pentasyllabic lines. See Cai 2008: Chapter 4.

² Cai 2008: 220

³ This and other entries from this dictionary quoted from the Chinese Text Project's electronic version, <http://ctext.org/shuo-wen-jie-zi/zh>, accessed 08.10.11: 玉,石之美。有五德：潤澤以溫，仁之方也；觸理自外，可以知，義之方也；其聲舒揚，專以遠聞，智之方也；不撓而折，勇之方也；銳廉而不技，絜之方也。

the half-months – waxing and waning moons – in the Chinese lunar calendar). Tears are perhaps also suggested by the beads in the crystal curtain (水晶簾).¹

The compound 玲瓏 contains complex semantic information and therefore presents challenges in a structural translation. In the context of the poem, the compound gives a visual image of the clear moon. The *Shuowen jiezi* states that 玲 is the sound of jade.² In many other dictionaries, no translation is given for 玲 alone, other than that it is indicative of a sound, as in 玲玎, which means the clear and sharp sound of a jade piece being struck (玉石等相击的清脆声)³. Reduplicated (玲玲), it is a literary onomatopoeia for “the tinkling of jade”, which is interesting in the context of this poem because it echoes the jade of the title and first line. Jade also lurks in the second character, 瓏, which the *Shuowen jiezi* defines as a jade ornament worn when praying for rain (禱旱玉).⁴ Of the two characters together, one commentator in *Li Tai Bai quanji* (李太白全集) glosses this as ‘bright appearance’ (明貌).⁵ A second commentator listed in this source states that 玲瓏 is sometimes used instead of 玲瓏 (with the moon determiner, 月, rather than the jade determiner, 玉). In its entry for 玲瓏, the *Tang wudai yuyan cidian* simply cross-references to 玲瓏,⁶ but the commentator in *Li Tai Bai quanji* glosses 玲瓏 as moonlight (月光). The commentator makes it clear that this version is not the most correct, but it is interesting information in this context because we cannot be certain which version the quoted translators worked with, and because both versions give a visual reference to elements in the poem (jade or moon). Regardless, these two characters are rich with linguistic references and allusions, and constitute an example of information that will not be intuitively apparent to the target-text reader, and where it can be difficult or impossible to find target-language equivalents that cover all aspects of meaning in a single translation.

There are historical literary aspects of which the translator must be aware. This poem is in the *guiyuan* genre (閨怨), which has been translated in various ways, including Chinese poems of grievance, laments, or boudoir poems. The character 閨, which we first encountered

¹ Cooper 1973: 112. The *Shuowen jiezi* (Explaining single-compound graphs and analyzing compound characters) was completed in 100 AD by Han scholar Xu Shen (許慎). Wilkinson 2000: 63

² 玲：玉聲。从玉令聲

³ *Guhanyu dacidian* 古汉语大词典 2000: 1478

⁴ 禱旱玉。龍文。从玉从龍，龍亦聲。 There are several editions of *Shuowen jiezi*. I used an online text version that includes definitions and glosses from the following: Duan Yucai "說文解字注", "釋名 Shiming", "爾雅 Erya", "方言 Fangyan", "廣韻 Guangyun".

<http://www.shuowenjiezi.com/result4.php?id=112>, accessed 18.10.2011

⁵ *Li Tai Bai quanji* 李太白全集 1977: vol. 3, p. 294

⁶ *Tang wudai yuyan cidian* (Tang and Five Dynasties Dictionary) 唐五代语言词典 1997: 235 lists this as an alternative orthography for 玲瓏.

in a poem by Du Fu in Chapter I, is a woman's bedchamber, and carries with it an allusion to the segregation of women; 怨 is blame, reproach, complain(t), reprove. The beginnings of *Guiyuan* poetry can be traced back to the *Shijing*, and it reached its peak during the Tang Dynasty. Of the genre, Li writes:

From a “female” persona, this poetry originally serves as an expression of grievance for those ladies who have been restricted physically within the domain of Boudoir. The poems are their expression of sullen feeling about their abandonment or sex segregation. The poetry overflows with longing, lamenting and contemplating. Later on this form of poetry has been employed by male writers to express their frustration with political failure, sympathetic apprehension of common people's suffering from the wars, or their heartbreaking departures etc. The poetic tone of grievance is still salient under these poets' hands.¹

The poem is also influenced by “palace poetry”, 宮體詩, a “mildly erotic” genre that “describes the emotions and ambiance of a fair lady”,² and the “court lament” genre, *gongyuan* (宮怨), poems that were often an allegorical description of the poet (the woman) and his relationship with his sovereign or patron (the man for whom she waits).³ The title, 玉階怨, had been used by other poets prior to Li Bai,⁴ such as Xie Tiao (謝朓, 464-499). Li Bai's poem is a tribute to that of Xie Tiao:

夕殿下珠簾	evening • palace under • pearl + curtain
流螢飛復息	fire-fly fly • again/turn round • stop
長夜縫羅衣	long • night sew • silk gauze • garment
思君此何極	thought • sovereign this • how • utmost point

In the palace at dusk the blinds of pearl are unfurled,
Fireflies flit around, then come to rest.
Throughout the long night I sew thin silken garments.
When will my thoughts of you ever come to an end?⁵

There are clear similarities between the two: both are *jueju* in the *guiyuan* genre, have *ze* rhyme at the second and fourth lines ([sik] and [jik]), and begin with an entering tone ([ziajk]). Li Bai uses many of the same elements: the long night, the curtain (pearl in Xie Tiao, crystal in Li Bai), the light from nature (fireflies, the moon), silk clothing, and the woman who waits. Cai argues that the moon in Li Bai's poem can be traced to a poem in the

¹ Information about *guiyuan* poetry is taken from Li 2010: 164-166

² Owen 1977: 14

³ Rouzer 1993: 70

⁴ Bradbury 2005: 22

⁵ Translated by John Frodsham. Minford & Lau 2000:548

yuefu tradition, attributed to Ban Jieyu (班婕妤), consort to the Emperor during the Western Han Dynasty, where she writes:

Newly cut, fine white silk
Fresh and pure as frost and snow
I sew it into a “togetherness fan”
Round, round like the bright moon.

Cai goes on to say that

“[s]he had given it [the fan] to the emperor, who cast it aside when the warmth of the their relationship was replaced by the cool of autumn. Thus the “autumn moon” in Li Bai’s poem is an ironic symbol of her abandonment. The glittering of the “crystal shades”, which scatter the moonlight into a thousand stars, recalls the drops of dew on “jade stairs” in line 1 – or is it that both the crystal and the dewdrops suggest that she stares through the window with eyes filled with tears?”¹

Li Bai’s poem is therefore firmly anchored in a historical literary tradition, where allusion inherent in the words themselves and associations evoked through genre expectation would have been/is an important part of the reading experience for source-text readers, both in the eighth century and today. In a set of complementary translation typologies, a list of the relevant characters with their linguistic implications and historical literary allusions should therefore be included as annotation to a structural translation.

Translations

Marble Stairs Grievance (Cooper)²

On Marble Stairs
still grows the white dew
That has all night
soaked her silk slippers,

But she lets down
her crystal blind now
And sees through glaze
the moon of autumn.

Jade-Staircase Grievance (Hinton)³

Night long on the jade staircase, white
dew appears, soaks through gauze stockings.

She lets down crystalline blinds, gazes out
through jewel lacework at the autumn moon.

Resentment Near the Jade Stairs (Hamil)⁴

Dew whitens the jade stairs.
This late, it soaks her gauze stockings.

She lowers her crystal blind to watch
the breaking, glass-clear moon of autumn.

¹ Cai ed. 2008: 212

² Cooper 1973: 112

³ Hinton 1996: 42

⁴ <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/resentment-near-the-jade-stairs/>, accessed 07.10.11

The Jeweled Stairs' Grievance (Bradbury)¹

The jeweled stairs glow white with dew;
The long night wets a silken shoe.
Withdrawn behind her autumn blind,
She courts the moon, the clair de lune.

The Jewel Stairs' Grievance (Pound)²

The jeweled steps are already quite white with dew,
It is so late that the dew soaks my gauze stockings,
And I let down the crystal curtain
And watch the moon through the clear autumn.

Lament of the Jade Stairs (quoted in Cai)³

On jade stairs, the rising white dew
Through the long night pierces silken hose
Retreating inside, she lowers crystal shades
And stares at the glimmering autumn moon

The Sorrow of the Jade Staircase (Obata)⁴

The dew is white upon the staircase of jewels,
And wets her silken shoes. The night is far gone.
She turns within, lets fall the crystal curtain,
And gazes up at the autumn moon, shining through.

A Sigh from a Staircase of Jade⁵

Her jade-white staircase is cold with dew;
Her silk soles are wet, she lingered there so long....
Behind her closed casement, why is she still waiting,
Watching through its crystal pane the glow of the autumn moon?

Discussion

The lack of a personal pronoun in this short poem allows for readings from different perspectives. The most common in the translations given above is that of the woman waiting in her chamber, presented in the third person. From this perspective, the reader is standing outside looking in at the woman. Pound's version is told from a first-person perspective, explicated from the second line onward. Here, the reader is on the inside, looking out with the

¹ http://www.cipherjournal.com/html/bradbury_stairs.html, accessed 07.10.11

² Pound 1915: 13

³ Cai ed. 2008: 212

⁴ Obata 1935: 48

⁵ This translation is listed as #255 in *Three Hundred Tang Poems* at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/chinese/frame.htm>, accessed 08.10.11. It is also quoted in Jean Elizabeth Ward, *Li Bai: An Homage To* (lulu.com 2008: 14).

woman. A third possibility is a change of perspective. The first couplet could theoretically be the poet, feeling the dew on his or her stockings as s/he stands looking in; the second could be the woman inside, withdrawing, lowering her curtain and looking out at the moon. The versions of Hinton, Cai, and Bradbury open for this reading. Cooper has broken each of the four lines into two and used indentation to give the effect of four units. He places the woman in the poem from the second line/unit, but his use of enjambement connects the first two lines/units as if they were one, making the woman's presence felt throughout. Each of the translators has explicated a particular reading to at least a certain extent, but in the source text all possibilities exist simultaneously. As Yip puts it: "In other words, the absence of a personal pronoun allows the reader to approach reality at once objectively and subjectively, simultaneously moving back and forth between the two positions."¹

In the title and the first line, Cooper employs substitution: he eradicates jade completely from his translation, replacing it with marble. He mentions the original jade in his notes, and at first glance it seems unnecessary to annotate this rather than simply use the word in the translation itself. This substitution is however interesting, because marble is often used to describe skin in the English-language context.² In this respect, Cooper has chosen a substitution that gives an equivalent effect in the target language. Pound has also used substitution, but not in order to create equivalence; his is an interpretation. His steps are jeweled, in order to give the building a palatial feeling; he explains his choice in a note: "Jewel stairs, therefore a palace".³ Bradbury has consciously chosen to use Pound's title for formal reasons that are discussed below.

The verb associated with dew, 生, is treated in different ways. It grows on, whitens, is white upon, rises on, and appears on the stairs; the stairs glow white with or simply are quite white with dew. Of these, only Bradbury's "glow" is an interpretation with no basis in the source text. That there is dew tells the reader that the scene takes place in the evening, a fact that has been further explicated by every translator: Cooper ("That has all night soaked her slippers"), Cai (the white dew "pierces through the long night"), Hamil ("This late"), Obata ("The night is far gone"), Pound (the steps are "already quite" white with dew, and "It is so late that the dew soaks my gauze stockings"), and the translator quoted in Ward ("Her silk

¹ Yip 1993: 58. Digital edition at <http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft9w1009r8;brand=ucpress>, accessed 20.10.2011.

² A Google search for "skin like marble" produces many relevant hits, both from literature and the popular culture.

³ Pound 1915: 13

soles are wet, she lingered there so long”). The verb in this line, 侵, means to advance gradually, invade, occupy, or enter, so Cai’s “pierce” is the closest translation. The two verbs are quite active in the source text: the jade stairs bear forth white dew, the long night enters/invades/occupies/advances gradually [into] silk stockings. This is shown in Cooper’s “grows” and “soaked” (albeit with the jarring choice of two tenses) and Hamil’s “whitens” and “soaks”. Only Bradbury’s version mirrors the parallelism in the lines, but the effect is slightly lessened by his use of a less active feeling in the verbs he has chosen in his first line (his stairs “glow with dew”).

The “water-crystal curtain” of the third line (incidentally an expression still used today for a beaded curtain) has been translated as “crystal blind”, “crystal shade”, “crystalline blind(s)”, and “crystal curtain” – all sensible choices that are close to the source text. Hinton’s “jewel lacework” is an embellishment. Bradbury has chosen “autumn blind”, which ignores the beaded, crystal aspect (and consequently removes any possibility to read this as an echo of the dew and/or another allusion to tears), and rather replaces it with the hidden – at least to target-text readers – allusion to autumn in the characters for “white dew”. Dongbo’s “gossamer screen” is closer to Bradbury’s “autumn blind” than one would think at first glance. The noun ‘gossamer’ means a warm period in late autumn, or a filmy substance consisting of cobwebs, spun by spiders in autumn.¹ It is however doubtful that target-text readers would make this association, and regardless, there is no basis for an autumn or gossamer screen in the Chinese. Dongbo goes on to say, somewhat confusingly, “Carved in jade / She explores / the autumn moon”. “Carved in jade” is perhaps a reference to the woman’s beauty, or perhaps a substitution for the beads that are missing in the curtain. (It could even be a nod to the roots to jade found in the characters 玲瓏). Either way, it is a departure from the source text in that it either moves or adds an element. The version quoted in Ward changed the beaded curtain to a “crystal pane” and adds a “closed casement”, thereby moving this part of the text firmly to the reader, who will no doubt be more familiar with a windowpane of glass than a beaded curtain at a window. In the original, the woman 卻 – steps back or retreats – and “下’s” the beaded curtain. In only one of our translations (that of Bradbury) does she withdraw. In the others, she or I “lower(s)”, “let(s) down”, or “lets fall” the curtain. In Ward’s translation, it is the woman herself who is the object of the verb 下 (she is “behind” the window). Cai and Obata are the only two to translate both 卻 and 下, Cai with

¹ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* 1971: 310

“retreating” and “lowers”, Obata with “turns within” and “lets fall”. None has made an attempt to reflect the change in rhythm in this line described earlier.

In the final line, 玲瓏望秋月, we have in the first two characters what is likely a reference to the moonlight, perhaps as seen through the beads, but with the reference in the first of the characters to the sound of the beads; “look toward” in the third; and the autumn moon in the last two. Each translator has made different choices in this last line, which is not surprising given that English offers no possibility that is both literal and idiomatic. Hamil has combined the two lines of the second couplet by moving and/or interpreting elements within, with “She lowers her crystal blind to watch / the breaking, glass-clear moon of autumn”. Most of the others have remained true to the original in regard to the placement of elements within a line, varying in their interpretation of 玲瓏. Cooper’s woman sees the autumn moon “through glaze”, Cai’s stares at the glimmering autumn moon, Hamil’s version begins on the previous line with “to watch”, and continues with “the breaking, glass-clear moon of autumn”; Hinton also begins on the previous line: “gazes out / through jewel lacework at the autumn moon”; Pound’s woman watches the moon through the clear autumn, Obata’s gazes up at the autumn moon which shines through [the crystal curtain, presumably], and the woman of the translator quoted in Ward is “Watching through its crystal pane the glow of the autumn moon”. This translation also adds information not present in the source-language poem, asking why the woman is still waiting, an unnecessary explication that instructs the reader in a specific reading. Bradbury has taken what seems like a peculiar departure from the original, until one reads his own explanation:

In the interest of suggesting the form and texture of the Chinese poem, I have taken several liberties with the letter of the text. These begin with the title, which I borrowed from Pound’s version of the poem in part to mimic Li Bai’s compositional practice but also to bolster my rhyme and meter. The more literal “Jade Stairs’ Grievance” would not have allowed me to repeat the opening words of the title at the beginning of the first line without sacrificing the iambic meter. Moreover, “The Jeweled Stairs” provides a number of fortuitous internal rhymes that are not unlike those in the original. Note, for example, how the first syllable of “jeweled” chimes off the end-rhymes of the opening couplet—here too I took the liberty of making a verbal substitution to bolster the rhyme and meter (“silken shoe” for “gauze stockings”)—and resonates with the vowels in the end-rhymes of the two phrases in the closing line (moon/ *lune*). Finally, the repetition of “jeweled” helps to compensate for the loss of the word “crystal” in the third line, which I replaced with the word “autumn” (bumped up from the final line) in order to leave room for “clair de lune.” Linguistic purists may object to my using a French phrase in an English translation of a Chinese classical poem, but this Gallic term for moonlight does have the virtue of being faithful to what the line says by way of rhetorical assertion. At the same time, it does much to reinforce the impression that Li Bai is writing within a formalist tradition:

“*Clair de lune*” is the title of a poem by Paul Verlaine that was set to music by Claude Debussy and Gabriel Fauré. The fact that Verlaine composed this poem while still under the potent spell of Gautier’s *Le Livre de jade* lends the translation an allusive texture that is almost as rich as the poem it represents.¹

Bradbury’s choices are interesting and well thought out. He has chosen a metre, has noticed and mirrored end rhyme and internal (partial) rhyme (“jewel” for the *ņuwak* of the first line with “shoe” for *muat* in the second, and “lune” for *ņuat* in the fourth), but these aspects of his translation will not be apparent to the target-text reader unless they are explained in a note. Of his own translation, Pound’s cryptic but clear notes state: “Jewel stairs, therefore a palace. Grievance, therefore there is something to complain of. Gauze stockings, therefore a court lady, not a servant who complains. Clear autumn, therefore he has no excuse on account of weather. [Here Pound is no doubt alluding to the man for whom the woman is waiting.] Also she has come early, for the dew has not merely whitened the stirs, but has soaked her stockings. The poem is especially prized because she utters no direct reproach.”² Cooper’s gives historical notes and references to allusion as annotation to his translation, but does not comment directly on the choices he has made, for example his choice to break each line into two, and his use of indentation on even-numbered lines.³

The translations differ in their attempts to echo the poem’s structural elements. Bradbury is the only translator to use rhyme, and to echo the parallelism of the first couplet. Hinton draws attention to the third “turnaround” line, with its change in semantic rhythm, with enjambement; the use of three periods at the end of the second line and the question form following can perhaps be said to do the same in the uncredited translation from Cai. This translation is also the only to use no punctuation whatsoever. Hamil and Hinton have used layout to divide the poem into its two couplets, but this does not seem to replicate any sort of effect in the original. The same is true of Pound’s offset “dew”.

Summary

This short poem, with its seemingly simple language, is firmly anchored in an historical literary tradition, where semantic layers within characters and words and allusion create a

¹ http://www.cipherjournal.com/html/bradbury_stairs.html#2, accessed 071011. He further clarifies, in a note on the same site: The influence of Gautier’s *Le Livre de jade* on Verlaine’s poetry has not been widely noted by scholars, no doubt because Gautier has fallen off the literary map and *Le Livre de jade*, which Verlaine enthusiastically reviewed shortly before composing “*Clair de Lune*”, has been out of print for more than half a century. Verlaine and Gautier shared the same publisher and penchant for melodious phrasing and exotic atmospheres.

² Pound 1915: 13

³ Cooper’s notes can be found in Cooper 1973: 112-13

context that is very much an inseparable part of the whole poem. The translations I have discussed can all be said to be poetic translations, though it could be argued that those of Hamil and Hinton lean toward the scholarly. The translators vary in the perspective from which they write, the degree to which they retain elements in their original lines or move them to others, their definitions and interpretations of elements (jade/marble, the curtain, the verbs associated with the dew, the movement of the curtain, and the act of looking at the moon), and their relationship to formal elements (the breaking up of lines, indentation, rhyme). Each translator does however convey at least something in a manner “faithful” to the original (that is, with no interpretation, additions, moving of elements between lines, or embellishment), and some have created poems that read as if they are original poems in the target language (House’s covert translation). As I have shown in this discussion, there are important elements and layers of meaning in this poem that cannot be conveyed in a single translation; indeed, some can only be transmitted via annotation. Annotation alone however is not enough, because while it explains what is *in* the poetry, it does not *create* poetry. A combination of Hamil and Hinton’s straightforward versions, the more poetic versions of Cooper, Cai, Pound, and Obata, Bradbury’s version with its carefully thought-out strategy (which must be explained in annotation if his choices are to achieve their effect), and finally a structural translation with annotation of the historical, literary, and linguistic allusions and layers of meaning will however allow for stereoscopic reading and a literary, poetic experience of the whole poem. The result of such a reading will be a much more complete understanding of the poem than otherwise would have been possible in a single translation, with or without annotation.

“Taking Leave of a Friend” (送友人)¹

Poem with structural translation

1	青山橫北郭	green • mountain lie across • north • out-city wall
2	白水遶東城	white • water coil • east • city
3	此地一為別	this • place <u>one</u> • become • separate
4	孤蓬萬里征	alone • grass clump ten-thousand • mile • travel
5	浮雲遊子意	float + cloud [floating clouds] travel + (noun suffix) [traveler] • think
6	落日故人情	fall + sun [setting sun] friend + person [old friend] • feeling
7	揮手自茲去	wave • hand <u>from here</u> • now • go
8	蕭蕭班馬鳴	xiao – xiao* <u>divide**</u> • horse • neigh

* 蕭蕭 is an onomatopoeion for the sound of a horse neighing.²

** According to at least one commentator, 班 in this context has the same meaning as 別 (to leave, separate).³

About the poem

This poem, in pentasyllabic regulated verse, has three exceptions (underscored) to the rules of tonal distribution. The tonal deviations in rows 3 and 7 also create a problem for the characters immediately following (both become lone *ping* tones, surrounded on each side by *ze* tones, which is discouraged). It is not always possible to know whether or not deviations in the patterns of tonal distribution were done purposely to achieve an effect. In addition, as mentioned in section 3.2.4, some of the rules are not followed as strictly as others, and that is the case here. It is however interesting to note that all three words with deviating tones are central to the theme of parting: one becomes separate, the friends depart from here, and divide/separate. This gives the translator an interesting opportunity to experiment with target-language equivalences to a formal aspect of a source-text. Other formal elements the translator must consider are the parallel third couplet with its juxtaposition of natural and human elements, and the onomatopoeion in the final line.

The first couplet is parallel, which is not standard:

青山橫北郭 green • mountain | lie across • north • out-city wall
白水遶東城 white • water | coil • east • city

There is no parallelism in the second couplet, which again is not standard. The third however is parallel:

¹ QTS scroll 177. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=138855&if=en>, accessed 29.10.2011

² Ma & Liu 1990: 211

³ Ibid.

浮雲遊子意 float • cloud | travel + (noun suffix) [traveler] • think
落日故人情 fall • sun | friend + person [old friend] • feeling

Translations

Taking Leave of a Friend (Pound)¹

Blue mountains to the north of the walls,
White river winding about them;
Here we must make separation
And go out through a thousand miles of dead grass.

Mind like a floating wide cloud,
Sunset like the parting of old acquaintances
Who bow over their clasped hands at a distance.
our houses neigh to each other
as we are departing.

A Farewell to a Friend (Bynner)³

With a blue line of mountains north of the wall,
And east of the city a white curve of water,
Here you must leave me and drift away
Like a loosened water-plant hundreds of miles....
I shall think of you in a floating cloud;
So in the sunset think of me.
...We wave our hands to say good-bye,
And my horse is neighing again and again.

Taking Leave of a Friend (Yip)²

Green mountains lie across the north wall.
White water winds the east city.
Here once we part,
Lone tumbleweed, a million miles to travel.
Floating clouds, a wanderer's mood.
Setting sun, an old friend's feeling.
We wave hands, you go from here.
Neigh, neigh, goes the horse at parting.

A Farewell (Herbert A. Giles)⁴

Where blue hills cross the northern sky,
Beyond the moat which girds the town,
'Twas there we stopped to say Goodbye!
And one white sail alone dropped down.
Your heart was full of wandering thought;
For me,--my sun had set indeed;
To wave a last adieu we sought,
Voiced for us by each whinnying steed!

Taking Leave of a Friend (Shigeyoshi Obata)⁵

Blue mountains lie beyond the north wall;
Round the city's eastern side flows the white water.
Here we part, friend, once and forever.
You go ten thousand miles, drifting away
Like an unrooted water-grass.
Oh, the floating clouds and the thoughts of a wanderer!
Oh, the sunset and the longing of an old friend!
We ride away from each other, waving our hands,
While our horses neigh softly, softly . . .

About the poem

The translator meets his first hurdle at the very beginning of this poem. The character 青 refers to green, blue, or greenish black, and as this concept does not exist in the English vocabulary for colour, each translator quoted above has been forced to explicate the implicit.

¹ Pound in Weinberger 2003: 82

² Yip 1969: 212

³ <http://wengu.tartarie.com/wg/wengu.php?l=Tangshi&no=102>, accessed 14.03.2011

⁴ <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks08/0800171.txt>, accessed 14.03.2011

⁵ <http://www.humanistictexts.org/LiPo.htm#4> Taking Leave of a Friend, accessed 13.03.2011

With the exception of Pound (who has divided the last line into two lines) and Obata (who has divided the last line of the second couplet into two lines), all translators have chosen to retain the eight-line structure of the original. In Pound's case, this division of the last line creates an interesting echo of the (perhaps) misplaced tone at the position of the third character of the last line – the character 班, to leave. The leave-taking is jarring after the beautiful nature descriptions, and made even more so by the choice of the wrong tone for that particular word. Pound did not himself understand Chinese, and relied on English cribs provided to him by Fenollosa.¹ He was concerned with effect, not scholarly accuracy. He said that he was interested in “the dynamic content” of a poem, not its “shell”; “what part of poetry was ‘indestructible,’ what part could *not be lost* by translation, and – scarcely less important – what effects were obtainable in *one* language only and were utterly incapable of being translated”.² It is therefore highly unlikely that Pound purposefully echoed the emphasis created by a (perhaps purposefully) misplaced tone, but the result is there nonetheless.

Giles is the only translator to have attempted to mirror the rhyme of the original, but it would seem he has based this on the modern pronunciation, which has two rhymes (the last characters in the first and second couplets, and the last characters of the third and fourth couplets). The Early Middle Chinese pronunciation shows that the source text had only one rhyme throughout. In addition, Giles has gone slightly overboard, creating two rhymes within the first and second couplets, and again within the third and fourth couplets – a total of four rhymes. His exaggerated use of rhyme has forced him to make choices that are far enough away from the original text so as to be called paraphrase. His is an attempt at a poetic translation.

In the third couplet, we see an example of the juxtaposition of elements and the images they evoke, as discussed in Chapter III. The translators' choices are interesting to compare. One commentator states that the floating clouds are compared to a traveler because they travel freely, on no set path, and the setting sun that reaches the mountain but remains in sight is reminiscent of the feelings of old friends when they part.³ The couplet has been interpreted in various ways. Pound has created similes by the inclusion of “like”:

Mind like a floating wide cloud,
Sunset like the parting of old acquaintances

¹ Yip 1969: 82

² Pound quoted in Yip 1969: 70

³ Ma 1990: 211

Yip on the other hand has chosen to retain the original structure, where no relationship between the two elements in each line is made explicit:

Floating clouds, a wanderer's mood.
Setting sun, an old friend's feeling.

Obata has done almost exactly the same, with only a slight embellishment:

Oh, the floating clouds and the thoughts of a wanderer!
Oh, the sunset and the longing of an old friend!

Bynner has created reciprocity, which is an interesting twist on the parallelism of the lines:

I shall think of you in a floating cloud;
So in the sunset think of me.

Giles has assigned one line to each of the friends:

Your heart was full of wandering thought;
For me,--my sun had set indeed;

The translations of Pound and Yip are interesting in relation to each other. Yip's version is taken from his book *Ezra Pound's Cathay*, from an appendix entitled "Cathay Retranslated". In the book, Yip points out that the translator must "[...] decide which are the essential parts of the poem that have to be preserved even at the expense of violating the medium and which parts of the text can be pared away or modified to suit the laws of the medium without destruction to either".¹ He is concerned with the difference between the unanalytical presentation of the poem afforded by the purposeful ambiguity of Chinese poetic language, and the fact that while deviation from source-text sentence structure is sometimes necessary and can often be defended, it does in fact alter the presentation of the poem and thereby also the reader's experience. The analytical (read: explicated) translation *directs* the reader in a way the original poem does not. Echoes of Nida's formal equivalence can be heard when Yip states that the most successful translations come about when the translator seems to have placed a primary emphasis on the linguistic structure of the line found in the source language.² He uses the first two lines of the poem as one example.

青山橫北郭	green • mountain lie across • north • out-city wall
白水遶東城	white • water coil • east • city

The subject – verb – object structure is reflected in the translations of Pound and Obata:

¹ Yip 1969: 9-10

² Ibid., 12

Blue mountains to the north of the walls,
White river winding about them;

Blue mountains lie beyond the north wall;
Round the city's eastern side flows the white water.

...but not in those of Bynner or Giles:

With a blue line of mountains north of the wall,
And east of the city a white curve of water,

Where blue hills cross the northern sky,
Beyond the moat which girds the town,

Another structural alteration can be found in the introduction of a new formal feature, enjambement – rarely seen in Classical Chinese poetry – that two poets use in the second couplet:

此地一為別	this • place one • become • separate
孤蓬萬里征	alone • grass clump ten-thousand • mile • travel

Bynner between the lines of the couplet, adding a word of comparison and thereby creating a simile in the target text:

Here you must leave me and drift away
Like a loosened water-plant hundreds of miles....

...and Obata by dividing the second line into two lines, also creating a simile:

Here we part, friend, once and forever.
You go ten thousand miles, drifting away
Like an unrooted water-grass.

Yip argues that in the source text and in those translations that preserve the original sentence structure, we see “things in nature, very much like the objects in a painting, working upon us, while in Giles and Bynner..., we are led to these things by way of intellectual, directional devices (“Where” “With”). We see the process of analysis at work rather than the things acting themselves out before us”.¹ In other words, by leading us, the readers, the translator removes the possibility for simultaneous interpretations. It would therefore seem that Yip would prefer that the translator not fill in the ellipses described by Cheng, or at least no more than necessary for poetic effect.

¹ Yip 1969: 16

Yip's own translations, including that of this poem, are presented in his book together with those of Pound, and are scholarly translations "[...] produced...only to show the line-unit and general format of the poems".¹ As such, he has in effect created a translation typology intended to be read alongside Pound's versions.

The final couplet – the turning point in the poetic form – has also been dealt with in different ways. There is a feeling of parallelism in the waving hand / whinnying horse, and the final verb at the end of each line, as well as in the duality of the partings of both men and beasts:

揮手自茲去	wave • hand from • this/now • go
蕭蕭班馬鳴	xiao – xiao leave • horse • neigh

True to his ideals, Yip has retained the word order inasmuch as is possible while still being idiomatic English. He has however explicated (*we wave, you go, the horse*):

[We] wave hands, [you] go from here.
Neigh, neigh, [goes the] horse at parting.

Obata is less strict with word order and is perhaps therefore more successful in creating an image of parting:

We ride away from each other, waving our hands,
While our horses neigh softly, softly ...

He has chosen to explicate the volume of the neighing, which does give a feeling of parting (sound appears to grow softer as its source moves away from the listener). He could however have chosen "While our horses softly neigh, neigh..." had he wished to remain closer to the original. His choice is more successful than Bynner's "And my horse is neighing again and again". Pound's formal deviation results in the first line of the couplet occurring in the middle of a translated line:

Sunset like the parting of old acquaintances
Who bow over their clasped hands at a distance.
our horses neigh to each other
as we are departing.

Not only has he moved elements between lines, but he has explicated freely with his old acquaintances who don't wave but who bow over clasped hands at a distance. Finally, despite

¹ Yip 1969: 181

the fact that his departure from the source text has been the most dramatic, Giles has created the most poetic closing image:

To wave a last adieu we sought,
Voiced for us by each whinnying steed!

There is one last aspect of this poem as a whole that is a challenge to the translator: its anchor in Chinese literary history, and the effect this had on the source-text reader. Yip speaks of “activities of ‘secret echoes and complementary correspondences’”, whereby a poet is influenced by and incorporates aspects of other poems into a work. Yip shows how motifs and images in this poem borrow from others. Yip lists multiple examples of floating clouds and the setting sun being used in poems of parting, and compares the first couplet of Li Bai’s poem to the following from “The Song from the South” (Chu Ci, 楚辭), an anthology that stretches from approximately 475 to 221 BC:

Up the mountains, down the rivers,
See friends home.

The over-all style and content is compared to Yu Xin’s (庾信, 513–581): "Parting from Chou Hung-cheng":

North of Fu feng, at the Stone Bridge.
Before Han-ku, the ancient Pass.
Once we part here,
To meet again? How many years?
Yellow geese look back, flying.
They linger, heart-smitten, dejected.
I know no end to sorrow.
In vain, to abate the strings of the lute.

Here we recognize a geographical placement that includes a body of water (bridge) in the first couplet, parting in the second, a parting animal (geese here in the second couplet as opposed to the horses of the final couplet in Li Bai’s poem). This results in an effect where “[w]hat we read is not one poem but a fabric of many poems, the concerto and symphony comprised of many other poems and voices”. Yip states:

In the case of Li Po's "Taking Leave of a Friend," more than a thousand poems must have traversed the poet's consciousness. But, even with this limited array of possible voices, we can still see that, when a classical Chinese poet writes a poem, he wants to talk, with these voices, to his friend (clearly, a friend who also knows most of the sources of these voices) and to invite him to move together into the spaces and the times in which these voices occurred. In this way, he can more fully communicate to him what he feels, which is not a simple form of sadness but the total sum of the

different accents of sadness other poets have experienced and expressed. To write a poem is not simply to leave a note: "I am leaving. Please don't forget me!" Words and phrases in the poem are springboards into larger spaces and deeper times. A poem is never locked within a text but is a conversation across historical space and time.¹

The rich borrowing from and influence of literary history is woven into the text, a fact that will be lost target-text readers if it is not included in annotation in the structural translation.

Summary

The five quoted translations can be placed at slightly different points on a translation typology grid. Yip's version, with its strong adherence to the form and word order of the original, is clearly a scholarly translation. It gives the most accurate representation of the original in idiomatic English, seen from a technical standpoint. Read together with an annotated structural translation, all technical aspects of the source-text language and culture have been transmitted. However, it in no way gives a literary or poetic experience.

Obata's version gives only a slightly more literary impression, due to his interpretation in the third couplet. Giles, Pound, and Bynner are fairly conservative in their adherence to the original. Although Giles is the only translator to have attempted rhyme, this has forced him to deviate from the source text to such a degree (most notably his treatment of the fourth line, where he ignores the source text completely) that the rhyme seems not to be worth the effort, especially when one considers that this has been transmitted technically in the structural translation.

Pound delivers the most successful poetic translation. His first couplet gives a picture of the natural setting, from which he segues organically to the second couplet, making these four lines a natural unit. He justifies his explication of the parallelism in the difficult (for translation purposes) third couplet by connecting it in meaning to his highly-interpreted final couplet – where he manages, intentionally or not, to echo the tonal deviation that emphasises the friends' parting. The reader with a stereoscopic eye on the Chinese text, side-by-side with the structural translation and Yip's scholarly translation, has understood enough of the source text to see what is "wrong" with Pound's poem – before he realises that that is exactly why it works. These four texts together illustrate the interaction that occurs between a group of translations and how it can create a dynamic reading experience. This is immeasurably preferable to a single translation and a list of annotations the reader must digest.

¹ Yip 1993: 146-149

4.2 Two poems by Du Fu

“Thoughts While Traveling at Night” (旅夜書懷)¹

1	細草微風岸	slender + grass gentle • wind • shore
2	危檣獨夜舟	upright ² • mast lone • night • boat
3	星垂平野闊	star • hang down flat/level + open country [countryside] • vast
4	月湧大江流	moon • rise/emerge/well up great • river • flow
5	名豈文章著	reputation/fame/name • how writing + composition [literary work] • show/prove/notable
6	官應老病休	office • should old + sick [aging] • retire/stop
7	飄飄何所似	float in the air/flutter + float in the air/flutter [lightly /flutter/blown about] what • that which • similar
8	天地一沙鷗	heaven • earth one/single • sand + gull [seagull]

About the poem

This poem was likely written in June or July of 1765, during the poet’s journey down the Yangtze river (大江 can be read as “长江”, Yangzte, or it can just mean great river. 江 can also mean Yangzte), or in the spring of 767, while he was traveling between Guizhou and Chiangling.³ It follows the formal requirements for pentasyllabic regulated verse perfectly. Two elements that translators should be particularly aware of are the juxtaposition of and relationship between nature and the human condition, and how the presence of the poet is manifested.

Translations

A Night Abroad (Witter Bynner)⁴

A light wind is rippling at the grassy shore. . . .
Through the night, to my motionless tall mast,
The stars lean down from open space,
And the moon comes running up the river.
. . . If only my art might bring me fame
And free my sick old age from office! —
Flitting, flitting, what am I like
But a sand-snipe in the wide, wide world!

Thoughts While Night Traveling (Tony Barnstone & Chou Ping)

Slender wind shifts the shore’s fine grass.
Lonely night below the boat’s tall mast.
Stars hang low as the vast plain splays;
the swaying moon makes the great river race.
How can poems make me known?
I’m old and sick, my career done.
Drifting, just drifting. What kind of man am I?
A lone gull floating between earth and sky.

¹ QTS scroll 229. <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=150970&if=en>, accessed 29.10.2011

² 高聳貌, [appearance of standing tall and erect], *Gu hanyu da cidian* 2000: 544

³ Hawkes 1967: 201

⁴ Unless noted otherwise, all translations for this poem are taken from <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/bps/gateway/passages/tu-fu.htm>, accessed 19.03.2011.

Writes of what he feels, traveling by night
(Stephen Owen)

Slender grasses, breeze faint on the shore,
Here, the looming mast, the lone night boat.
Stars hang down on the breadth of the plain,
The moon gushes in the great river's current.
My name shall not be known from my writing;
Sick, growing old, I must yield up my post.
Wind-tossed, fluttering — what is my likeness?
In Heaven and Earth, a single gull of the sands.

Night Thoughts While Travelling (Kenneth
Rexroth)

A light breeze rustles the reeds
Along the river banks. The
Mast of my lonely boat soars
Into the night. Stars blossom
Over the vast desert of
Waters. Moonlight flows on the
Surging river. My poems have
Made me famous but I grow
Old, ill and tired, blown hither
And yon; I am like a gull
Lost between heaven and earth.

Thoughts on a Night Journey (Cyril Birch)

Reeds by the bank bending, stirred by the breeze,
High-masted boat advancing alone in the night,
Stars drawn low by the vastness of the plain,
The moon rushing forward in the river's flow.
How should I look for fame to what I have written?
In age and sickness, how continue to serve?
Wandering, drifting, what can I take for likeness?
— A gull that wheels alone between earth and sky.

Night Thoughts Aboard a Boat
(James J. Y. Liu & Irving Y. Lo)

A bank of fine grass and light breeze,
A tall-masted solitary night boat.
Stars descend over the vast wild plain;
The moon bobs in the Great River's flow.
Fame: is it ever to be won in literature?
Office: I should give up, old and sick.
Floating, floating, what am I like?
Between earth and sky, a gull alone.

Night Journey Thoughts (A. S. Kline)

Bent grasses in slender breeze.
Boat's mast high in empty night.
Starlight shining near the plain.
Moon floating on river's light.
All this writing, but no name.
Illness and years, without a place.
Drifting, wandering, what am I?
A white bird over earth and sky.

Night Thoughts of a Traveller (Rewi Alley)

Thin reeds, and from the land
A soft breeze; our mast stands
Tall and stark in the night
And I am alone; stars hang
Over the great plain, and
The moon moves with the flowing river;
Fame may not come together
With literary merit;
A broken-down, worn-out
Official should simply rest!
It seems I am but as a sand bird
Blown before the elements.

Night Thoughts Afloat (Arthur Cooper)

By bent grasses
in a gentle wind
Under straight mast
I'm alone tonight,

And the stars hang
above the broad plain
But moon's afloat
in this Great River:

Oh, where's my name
among the poets?
Official rank?
"Retired for ill-health."

Drifting, drifting,
what am I more than
A single gull
between sky and earth?

Thoughts While Travelling at Night
(Innes Herdan)

A faint wind
 through the fine grasses
 on the shore;
High mast
 and lonely boat
 in the night.
The stars reach down to the wide level fields,
The moon rushes on
 in the swing of the Great River.

Shall I ever make a name in poetry?
Old and sick,
 it is time for me to retire.
Driven this way and that like —
 what shall I say?
Like a solitary gull
 blown between earth and sky!

Thoughts When Travelling at Night
(Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang)

Between soft, grassy banks in the light breeze
A lone, tall-masted boat sails through the night;
Stars hang low above the wide, flat plain,
And up rides the moon as the mighty river flows on.
Since I have not in truth won fame by writing,
In old age and illness I should retire from office.
Drifting along, to what can I liken myself?
A lonely beach gull between heaven and earth.

Thoughts of a Night on Board
(James P. Seaton, 1982 version)

Slender grasses, a light breeze on the banks.
Tall mast, a solitary night on board.
A falling star, and the vast plain broader.
Surging moon, on the Great River flows.
Can fame grow from the written word alone?
The official, old and sick, must let it be.
Afloat, afloat, just so . . .
Heaven, and Earth, and one black gull.

Thoughts While Travelling at Night
(Vikram Seth)

Light breeze on the fine grass.
I stand alone at the mast.

Stars lean on the vast wild plain.
Moon bobs in the Great River's spate.

Letters have brought no fame.

Office? Too old to obtain.

Drifting, what am I like?
A gull between earth and sky.

Night Thoughts (Henry H. Hart)

Tufts of grass on the bank
Stirred by the breeze.
A lone boat,
A tall mast in the night.
Stars hanging low
Over wild land and tilled field.
Moonlight shimmering
On the swift-flowing Great River.
How can I win fame
By the work of my pen?
Worn out in public service,
I am wiser to resign.
Tossed about
In the whirlwinds of life,
What am I?
A seagull hovering
'Twixt heaven and earth!

Thoughts Written While Traveling at Night
(Keith Holyoak)

The fine grass
by the riverbank stirs in the breeze;
 the tall mast
in the night is a lonely sliver.
 Stars hang
all across the vast plain;
 the moon bobs
in the flow of the great river.
 My poetry
has not made a name for me;
 now age and sickness
have cost me the post I was given.
 Drifting, drifting,
what do I resemble?
 A lone gull
lost between earth and heaven.

Night Thoughts Traveling (David Young)¹

A light wind stirs
the fine beach grass

the tall mast stands
over this lone night boat

the stars hang close
above the level plain

the moon bobs along
in the great river

will poems like this
ever bring me fame?

age and sickness bar me
from holding a high office

drifting, drifting here
what am I really like?

a lone sand gull
somewhere between earth and sky.

Remembering Ken's Tu Fu* (Dan Potter)

Adrift
in marshes
my mast poles into
the starry field

as the moon floats by
wondering about fame

changing ages

and I flutter
a kestrel

adrift

** because I woke up remembering
reading many versions of the famous poem
on your site . . .*

A Traveller at Night Writes His Thoughts (Florence Ayscough)

Fine grass; slight breeze from bank;
High mast; alone at night in boat.

Over level widening waste stars droop-flowers;
Moon flows as water on vast surging stream.

Fame! is it manifest by essays, poems?
An official, old, sick, should rest.

What do I resemble, blown by wind blown by wind?
A gull on the sand between Heaven and Earth.

Thoughts While Traveling at Night (William Hung)

Between two shores of tender grass, in the slight breeze, Glides this lonely high-masted boat. The stars seem to reach down to the fields, flat and wide; The moon seems to be swimming as the Great River flows.

Am I really to achieve an honored name in literature? I ought to give up all hopes of official service because of age and illness. To what shall I compare myself, as I am blown about? Just a beach gull between heaven and earth.

¹ Young 2010: 213

Thoughts Written While Travelling at Night (David Hawkes)¹

By the bank where the fine grass bends in a gentle wind, my boat's tall mast stands in the solitary night. The stars hang down over the great emptiness of the level plain, and the moon bobs on the running waters of the Great River. Literature will bring me no fame. A career is denied me by my age and sickness. What do I most resemble in my aimless wanderings? A seagull drifting between earth and sky!

travel night write feelings (Stephen Owen)

fine/thin grass/plants faint wind shore
high/precarious mast alone/lone night boat
stars hang level wilderness broad
moon gush/bubble great river flow
name/fame how —literary writings— make known
office must old sick quit
fluttering fluttering what —be resembled to—
Heaven Earth one sand gull

Traveling night write thoughts
(David Hawkes)

Fine grass slight wind bank
Tall mast lonely night boat
Stars hang-down level plain vastness
Moon bobs-from great-river's flow
Name how literature famous
Office due-to age-sickness resigned
Drifting-drifting what-am like
Sky-earth one sand-gull

Nocturnal Reflections While Traveling (Mark Alexander)

Gently grass soft wind shore
Tall mast alone night boat
Stars fall flat fields broad
Moon rises great river flows
Name not literary works mark
Official should old sick stop
Flutter flutter what place seem
Heaven earth one sand gull

Discussion

This poem offers the translator the opportunity to work with a perfectly executed verse form. The poem follows the common pattern of juxtaposing a nature scene (*jing*, 景) with thoughts or emotions (*qing*, 情).

The first two couplets give a description of a nature scene at night; the second two introduce the poet into the poem. Eva Shan Chou brings attention to yet another interesting aspect: the shift in the presence of the poet. She argues that while the poet is seemingly absent from the first two couplets, he is in fact present throughout:

It is “[...] his eye that takes in the grassy bank (in line 1), that withdraws to observe the boat carrying him (in line 2), that looks out onto the vast starry plains (in line 3), and that finally looks near at hand again, into the moon-reflecting waters around him (in line 4). Quietly, intimately, the focus of attention changes in each line, although always at ground level. In the second half of the poem, anguish and desperation break in, unmistakably calling attention to the poet's presence. his strong feelings culminate in a comparison of himself to a gull flying between heaven and earth.”²

¹ Hawkes 1967: 202

² Chou 1995: 189

Most of the translations quoted above reflect the original in that the poet is not obviously present until the third couplet. In some cases, however, the poet's presence has been explicated – or perhaps interpreted, depending upon one's view of Chou's argument – into the first and second couplets. Examples from the first couplet include Bynner, who writes “my motionless tall mast”, Rexroth's “Mast of my lonely boat”, Potter's “my mast”, and Hawkes' “my boat's tall mast”. Alley, Cooper, and Seth have interpreted 獨 – lone – to apply to the poet, with “And I am alone”, “I'm alone tonight”, and “I stand alone at the mast”. With Chou's reading as a point of departure, all of these choices serve to blur the original distinction of a change from an implied to a clear presence of the poet in the text. Rexroth's choice to introduce enjambement, and to use it throughout, results in a relocation of elements to new lines, a formal shift from an even number of lines to an odd number (eight to eleven), and an expansion of the poem's length, all of which serves to make the poet's changing perspective in the text even less obvious. Alley does the same, to only a slightly lesser degree. Bynner however does the opposite. He uses punctuation to set off the first two couplets, with their lack of an explicitly present poet, with the beginning of the third couplet, where – again, based on Chou's thinking – we can choose to assume an implied “I” or “my” in the first line. It can however also be argued that the mast and moon of the first two couplets are symbols for the poet, who feels himself to be alone in a larger cosmic setting.

One noticeable difference between the various target texts is whether the translator interprets the boat to be in motion or moored. The source text merely states ‘upright • mast | lone • night • boat’. Lu describes this line as meaning “anchored where grass grows everywhere”,¹ and Liang as “leans against the riverside”,² but neither of these commentaries has a clear basis in the original. The boat is “motionless” in Bynner's version. Birch's boat is “advancing”, the Yangs' boat “sails”, Hung's mast “glides”. In the remaining versions, no distinction is made. As mentioned in a footnote above, the mast itself is described in the original as having the appearance of standing tall and erect. This has been interpreted as “looming”, “high”, “tall”, as a “high-masted boat”, a mast that “soars” or “poles into the starry field”, is “straight”, “standing tall”, or simply a “mast”.

The second couplet also receives varying interpretations. Alley's version is close to the original, despite the enjambement: “stars hang / Over the great plain, and / The moon moves with the flowing water”. The stars “descend” over the plain and the moon “bobs” above the water in Liu and Lo's version, Hart's stars “hang low” and his “moonlight” is

¹ Lu 2006: 412 (“停泊于生满草”)

² Liang 1988: 51 (“桅杆高高的帆船孤零零地靠在江边”)

“shimmering”, Herdan’s stars “reach down” and her moon “rushes on”, Birch’s stars are “drawn low” and his moon is “rushing forward in the river’s flow”, and Seth’s stars “lean” and moon – like that of Liu/Lo and Young – “bobs”. Seaton chooses to retain the parallelism of the original with his “A falling star, and the vast plain broader. / Surging moon, on the Great River flows”.

The third couplet brings us to the poet. The character 豈, ‘how’, is often used to introduce a rhetorical question where the answer is expected to be negative.¹ The first line can therefore be read as ‘Surely my poetry could not make me famous’. This interpretation is perhaps the basis for Kline’s “All this writing, but no name”, Owen’s “My name shall not be known from my writing”, Alley’s “Fame may not come together with literary merit”, Cooper’s “Oh, where’s my name among the poets?”, and Seth’s “Letters have brought no fame”, to name some. 豈 can however also be used in cases where the answer is expected to be affirmative, and this reading is explicated by Rexroth’s “My poems have / Made me famous”. Others have chosen an ambiguous reading, perhaps more in line with the original, in the form of a question: Birch’s unidiomatic “How should I look for fame to what I have written?”, Herdan’s “Shall I ever make a name in poetry?”, Seaton’s “Can fame grow from the written word alone?”, and Ayscough’s “Fame! is it manifest by essays, poems?” are examples. If we compare Seth’s version with Bynner’s “If only my art might bring me fame / And free my sick old age from office!”, we see what seems to be two sets of circumstances: in the former, the poet is perhaps looking back, while in the latter, he seems to be yearning for a recognition he hopes will come.

Six of the translators have dealt with the parallelism in this couplet in some way. It is alluded to in Ayscough’s translation by the setting apart of “Fame!” and “An official” at the beginning of each line. Holyoak has gone a step further: he sets apart “My poetry” and “now age and sickness” by giving these their own lines, followed in each case by indented lines that continue with “”has not made...” and “have cost me...”. Kline’s version has a similar effect, but without breaking the lines up: “All this writing, but no name. / Illness and years, without a place. Liu and Lo have used punctuation to topicalise the first word in each line: “Fame: is it ever to be won in literature? / Office: I should give up, old and sick.”. Hung has departed from the original to the greatest degree. In his version, the first lines of the third and fourth couplets are questions that are answered by the second lines, giving an impression of parallelism when all four lines are seen as one unit. His layout, in which he has divided the

¹ The discussion of 豈 is based on Pulleyblank 1995: 142-44

poem into two groups of four lines each, underscores this effect. Hawke's prose translation offers two parallel statements: "Literature will bring me no fame. A career is denied me by my age."

The translations of the last couplet are variations of the source text, with lesser or greater degrees of accuracy. Some translators have chosen to use reduplication to mimic 飄飄 ('lightly'/'to be blown about') at the beginning of the couplet, such as Liu and Lo ("Floating, floating"), Seaton ("Afloat, afloat"), Cooper, Young, and Holyoak ("Drifting, drifting"), and finally Barnstone and Ping ("Drifting, just drifting). Ayscough has moved it to the end of the couplet's first line ("blown by wind blown by wind"). Rexroth, Owen, and Kline have chosen to exploit the fact that the character has more than one related meaning with, respectively "blown hither and yon", "Wind-tossed, fluttering", "Drifting, wandering", and "Wandering, drifting". Herdan has expanded the two characters into three words in the target text, with "Driven this way and that" in the first line, and "blown" in the second. Birch has done something similar with his "Wandering, drifting" in the first line and "wheels" in the second. Other versions do not acknowledge the reduplication, but use "hover", "drift", or "blown". Most translators have chosen 'gull' or 'seagull' for 沙鷗, but some have translated the characters individually, as "beach gull" or "sand gull" or "sand bird", and one has chosen "sand-snipe". One has gone so far as "a gull on the sand", and another has chosen the mysterious "black gull", the only version with no basis whatsoever in the source text.

Seaton has used topicalisation to offset the first two couplets from the second two. He begins each of the first four lines with a direct translation of the first two characters in each line, followed by a comma, echoing the caesura in each line. The fact that he abandons this technique in the final two couplets serves to emphasise the change in subject matter: from a nature description to the poet's situation.

Herdan, Young, Holyoak, Ayscough, Bynner, and Seth all use layout in some manner to transpose formal element of the original into the target text. Herdan's version is interesting. Not only does she set off the first two couplets from the last two visually, but she chooses to mimic the topic-comment structure common in Chinese. She does so however by transposing elements from one part of a line to another. In the first line, "A faint wind" is topicalised, although the source text begins with "slender • grass" (and where the grass can be interpreted either as a topic or simply as an element from nature, parallel to "gentle • wind • shore"). In her second line, she could have chosen to topicalise the night, thereby creating parallelism, but her choice of the mast – while true to the original – makes her choice less coherent. Her second couplet retains the original parallelism, but her choice to divide the

second line is difficult to understand. Young has created eight units of two lines, where each unit is offset by a line break and represents one line of the original poem. Potter has done something similar, but uses indentation rather than line breaks. His version gives an interesting visual effect, where each indented line appears to be the topic of the following line. Ayscough has separated couplets with line breaks, and has made use of exaggerated space between what in some cases is a fairly literal rendition of the original character, and in other cases simply mimics the fact that individual characters each take up the same amount of physical space on the page. This gives the effect of words placed as characters, and can remind the reader that what he is reading is based on a source text, along the lines of House's overt translation. Bynner has used punctuation to offset the third couplet where the poet speaks of himself for the first time. Seth's version has eight lines, but he divides them differently from all the other translators. He retains the information in the source text lines in their original places, and groups the first, second, and fourth couplets as units set off by line breaks. In the third couplet however he has chosen to set off each of the two lines. The result is five units, rather than four couplets, and the third couplet – in which the poet takes centre stage – grabs our attention. His second and third couplets are parallel, and he has made a clear attempt to create simple lines that give a feeling of natural rhythm.

Seth is also one of the two translators who uses rhyme. He uses two vowel rhymes – /a/ in the first couplet and /ā/ in the second and third couplets (the same rhyme used by Barnstone and Ping) – and no rhyme at all in the final couplet. Both this rhyme scheme (rhyme in all but the last couplet) and his layout, described above, can be seen as a way to mimic the usual progression of this type of poem: opening, development, turn-about, conclusion. The fact that the conclusion – which often leaves the reader with a question, or seems to be a departure from that which has gone before – is the only section with no rhyme, emphasises the poet's despair in regard to his own situation, and adds even more contrast to the picture from nature given in the first two couplets.

Kline also uses rhyme between the last word in the second lines of the first two couplets. This has the effect of separating the nature scene from the couplets where the poet is in focus.

Summary

The number of different solutions for what in effect is a fairly straightforward poem is surprising, and interesting in relation to translation typologies. The three literal translations by Owen, Hawkes, and Alexander, which have not been discussed in the preceding section, are

included as alternatives that can be considered when creating a structural translation. Each gives a good representation of the meanings of the characters, and placed in the structural translation typology, any of them could be used to navigate the original text. The prose translations by Hung and Hawkes speak for themselves; they give a summary of the content of the poem, and even – in the case of Hung – a feeling of parallelism in the second half.

Of the remaining translations, those of Owen, Kline, Liu and Lo, and Yang and Yang seem to be intended as scholarly translations. They show the content and much of the structure of the source text in idiomatic English, but without managing to produce a poetic literary experience for the reader. The versions by Barnstone and Ping, Alley, Rexroth, and Birch are difficult to categorise. They give the reader the feeling that a poetic effect was intended, but the techniques used within seem mechanical. Rexroth in particular, with his consistent use of enjambement, seems to strive for a poem in the target language. The result however falls somewhere between poetry and prose. The various experiments with layout are likely meant to produce poetic translations; this group includes Young, Holyoak, Cooper, Herdan, and Seth. Of these, Holyoak, Herdan, and Seth have produced the most interesting versions.

Potter and Ayscough are in their own categories. Potter's poem falls outside of the typologies discussed in this paper. His poem is interesting because it is a response to having read many translated versions of this poem. In this sense it can be viewed as a modern companion piece. Ayscough's poem is interesting because it has elements of all three typologies: structural in that it translates word-for-character and uses layout to indicate the boundaries between characters in the original; scholarly, in that the representation of elements in their original places is for the most part accurate; and poetic, because the translator has combined these elements in such a way that the sum of the whole gives a poetic effect.

With such a wealth of translations from which to choose, many combinations are possible for the editor who wishes to present this poem via a set of translation typologies. Some combination of the literal translations presented in the form of a structural translation, together with a scholarly translation (or perhaps Rexroth's poetic prose?) and two or three of the poetic translations (such as those of Seth, Herdan, and Holyoak) could for example be presented together with the source text. If one were to add Ayscough's interesting hybrid and Potter's companion piece (with, of course, a brief footnote explaining the concept), the reader would not only have several translations from which to choose, interesting by virtue of their differences, but also and most importantly have a thorough point of departure for understanding the whole poem.

“Gazing at Mount Tai”

望岳 gaze into the distance • high mountain peak

1	岱宗夫如何	Dai-zong that • be like + what/how [‘is like what’]
2	齊魯青未了	Qi • Lu green/blue • is not yet + finish [endless/vast]
3	造化鍾神秀	create + transform [creation/heaven] bring together • spirit/essence + beauty [?]**
4	陰陽割昏曉	yin • yang sever • dawn • dusk
5	盪胸生層雲	shake/heave/scour/cleanse + breast give birth to • layer • cloud
6	決眚入歸鳥	burst • corner of eye enter • return • bird
7	會當凌絕頂	will • certainly ascend • extreme + top [mountaintop]
8	一覽眾山小	Throughout + look at [bird’s-eye view] multitude • mountain • small

About the poem

Based on what is known of Du Fu’s travels, it is likely that it was written in the late 730s, shortly after he first failed the *jinshi* examination, or on another trip he made in 744. It is one of the few extant poems from this period in his life.¹

This poem is a *gutishi*. It has oblique rhyme at the ends of the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth lines. (In Pulleyblank’s system, the first three rhyming characters are [lɛw’], [xɛw’], [tɛw’], and that at the end of the eighth line is [siaw’]. Baxter however has perfect rhyme in all lines (*sjewX*, *lewX*, *tewX*, and *sewX*.)² The poem clearly does not follow *jintishi* patterns. For the translator, this poem is rife with interesting historical, literary, cultural, and semantic challenges.

Translations

Gazing from Afar to the Lofty Mountain (Florence Ayscough)³

What then is the nature of Tai Tsung, Honourable Ancestor of all Mountains?
Seen from Ch’i in North, from Ch’u in South, its green colour does not fade away.
Invested at hour of formation and evolution with supernatural qualities,
Dividing northern shade from southern light, it cuts the darkness from the dawn.
Into cloud layers, rising from its scoured breast,
Fly birds returning to roost; my eyes open until the corners crack follow their flight.
I shall climb Nothing Beyond Peak,
Whence beheld, all hills are small.

¹ Owen 1981: 187; Hsieh 1994: 4

² Baxter 2000

³ <http://homepages.ecs.vuw.ac.nz/~ray/ChineseEssays/WangYue.htm>, accessed 01.10.2011

Gazing up the T'ai Mountain (William Hung)¹

How becomes the T'ai a worshipful mountain?
See how the greenness of the surrounding plains is never lost.
Creation has lavished there its mysterious wonders;
The sunny and shady sides fashion dawn and dusk at the same moment.
The growing layers of clouds might scour one's bosom of worldly thoughts;
To follow those returning birds would strain my eyes.
One day I shall climb like Confucius to the top
To see how the surrounding hills dwarf into moles.

Gazing at the Sacred Peak (David Hinton)²

For all this, what is the mountain god like?
An unending green of lands north and south:
From ethereal beauty Creation distills
There, *yin* and *yang* split dusk and dawn.

Swelling clouds sweep by. Returning birds
ruin my eyes vanishing. One day soon,
at the summit, the other mountains will be
small enough to hold, all in a single glance.

Looking at the Mountain Tai (Wu Juntao)³

How should I take the grandiose Mountain Tai?
'Tween Qi and Lu's borders the green ranges lie.
The Creator bestows all beauties on,
Its peaks screen daylight and cast shadows long.
The rolls of clouds would lave my bosom on high,
The home-coming birds would lure my staring eye.
Thus I'll ascend to the sky-reaching tops,
And see the mountains around are but dots.

A View of T'ai-Shan (Witter Bynner)⁴

What shall I say of the Great Peak? –
The ancient dukedoms are everywhere green,
Inspired and stirred by the breath of creation,
With the Twin Forces balancing day and night.
...I bare my breast toward opening clouds,
I strain my sight after birds flying home.
When shall I reach the top and hold
All mountains in a single glance?

Gazing at Mount Tai (David Young)³

How to describe a peak
that has produced such reverence?

there's the greenness that surrounds it—
two provinces, Qi and Lu

all creation is contained
on those dark slopes, that sunny side

layers of clouds refresh
climber and climbed alike

the birds fly up and up
beyond our straining eyes

someday I want to stand
right there on the summit

the other mountains dwarfed
spreading in all directions!

¹ <http://homepages.ecs.vuw.ac.nz/~ray/ChineseEssays/WangYue.htm>, accessed 01.10.2011. Quoted from Hung, William. 1952. *Tu Fu: China's Greatest Poet*. New York: Harvard University Press.

² Hinton 1988: 3

³ Wu 1981: 40

⁴ <http://homepages.ecs.vuw.ac.nz/~ray/ChineseEssays/WangYue.htm>, accessed 01.10.2011

In Contemplation of Mount T'ai
(François Cheng, trans. Seaton)¹

Mountain of Mountains it's called. Why so?
The green of Ch'i and Lu is lost to view.
Here Creation crystalizes grace.
With north and southern slopes defining dusk and dawn.
Chest straining, where thick clouds grow.
Eyes bursting to see returning birds.
Shall I, one day, attain that final summit?
All other mountains, at a glance, grown small?

En contemplant le mont T'ai
(François Cheng)²

Tai-tsung / comment est-ce
Ch'i-lu / verdure sans fin
Création / concentrer grâce divine
Yin-yang / découper crépuscule-aube
Poitrine dilatée / naître nuages étagés
Yeux tendus / pénétrer oiseaux reentrant
Devoir sûrement / atteindre ultime sommet
Un regard / multiples monts s'amoinrir

Gazing at Tai Shan (Dave Bonta)⁵

This mountain of mountains – how
to put it in words?
Throughout Qi and Lu, a blue
that never fades. The Maker fills it
with power, unearthly beauty.
North face, south face divide
the dark from the dawn.

Heaving lungs
give birth to layered clouds,
straining eyes join the birds
returning to the peak.
Someday I swear I'll climb
clear to the summit,
watch all other mountains
shrink into
a single
glance!

Viewing Mt. Tai (Dongbo)⁴

How about old Mt. Tai?
Holding apart Qi and Lu.
Natures [*sic*] bounty elegant,
Slicing YinYang
 begetting day and night.
Rocking my bosom
 spawning thunderheads,
Scowling
 at returning birds.
Approaching the summit
 One glance below
 Only puny hills!

³ Young 2010: 5

¹ Cheng trans. Seaton 1982: 147

² Cheng 1977: 180

⁴ http://www.mountainsongs.net/poem_.php?id=202, accessed 01.10.2011

⁵ www.vianegativa.us/2004/03/26/mysterious-mountains, accessed 01.10.2011

Gazing Afar at the Marchmount¹

Tai the Revered-now, what to compare it with?
Over Ch'i and Lu, its azure never ending.
In it the Shaping Mutator concentrated the flourishing of
divinity;
Shaded and sun-lit it cleaves the dusk from the dawn.
A heaving breast-giving rise to cumulus clouds;
Bursting eye-sockets-giving entrance to homing birds.
Someday I will surmount its incomparable crest-
Then in a single scanning the host of hills will dwindle!

Untitled² (William Hung)

Mount Tai—What is it like?
Through Qi and Lu its azure never ends;
Here the Creator gathers wonders divine,
Its northern and southern slopes divide dusk and dawn.
Heaving breast—growing layered clouds,
Split eye-sockets—enter returning birds;
One day I (too) will mount the highest peak,
Where in one glance all other mountains dwindle.

Looking at Mount T'ai-shan (Wai-lim Yip)³

How about the Mount of Mounts?
From Ch'i to Lu, never ending green.
Great Transformation centers here divine beauty.
Shade and light divides here dusk and dawn.
Rolling chest: in it are born layers of clouds.
Eyelids strained to open by incoming birds from afar.
Ah! To stand atop the highest peak
To see: how tiny the rest of the hills!

Discussion

This poem presents the translator with historical and culture-bound challenges, and in addition contains an ambiguous couplet with many possible readings. The challenges begin with the characters 岱宗, which is another name for Mount Tai (泰山, literally 'peace mountain'). Mount Tai is known as the Eastern peak, the greatest of the Five Peaks or five sacred mountains (五山). Historically it was a place for sacrifices, and has even been believed to have a spirit that communicates with the Lord of Heaven and has acted as an intermediary between the emperor and the gods. References to it as a revered sacred object can be found in

¹ Quoted in Kroll 1983: 232

² William Hung 1940: 1.5-6, quoted in Hsieh 1994: 4

³ <http://homepages.ecs.vuw.ac.nz/~ray/ChineseEssays/WangYue.htm>, accessed 02.10.2011. Taken from Yip, Wai-lim ed. 1976. *Chinese Poetry: Major Modes and Genres*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

the works of other poets, such as Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303), Sun Chuo 孫綽 (ca. 310-397) and Chang Hua 長華 (232-300),¹ and it is referred to as an arbitrator of fate in the work of the poetess Xie Daoyun 謝道韞 (before 340-after 399).² Mount Tai's symbolic meaning would likely have been known to the educated source-text reader, and sets the tone for the poem. This should therefore be transmitted in some way in the group of translation typologies if the target-text reader is to understand the cultural context.³ This name 岱宗 therefore presents the first interesting challenge to the translator, first and foremost due to the strong culture associations this particular mountain has for source-text readers, but also due to the various ways in which the first character has been interpreted. The second of the two characters is unproblematic – it means 'revered ancestor' – but the first character has been much discussed. Various commentators have glossed it as 太 (as in 'greatest' mountain) or 胎 (which means 'womb' or 'gestator'). Kroll points out that the second gloss is not as strange as it may seem, due to the fact that mountains were considered "conspicuous loci of nascent life", and that even the seemingly simple 山 – mountain – has been glossed variously as 宣 ('diffuser'), 產 ('generant').⁴ Knoll goes on to point out that Cui Lingen, 崔靈恩, "one of the greatest classical scholars and teachers of the first half of the sixth century", glosses the 岱 in 岱宗 in the context of 代謝, "to supersede successively, and explains that since spring is the time when new life replaces old, T'ai shan – as the Eastern sacred peak (in the traditional system of wu-hsing correspondences, the east correlates symbolically with springtime) – is called Tai because it is where 'the myriad beings, born in turn, supplant each other (萬物更生相代)'" . Knoll therefore suggests that Mount Tai "seems to mean something like 'Mountain of [Animate] Interchange' or 'Alp of Transition' – T'ai Shan as presider over the transmutation of life and death".⁵ This somewhat confusing discussion that occurs already upon encountering the first two characters of the poem is important in the context of translation typologies for two reasons. The first is that it illustrates vividly that even the most straightforward type of translation – the structural, word-for-word or word-for-character

¹ Kroll 1983: 225-26, 233. This article also gives numerous references to other works that discuss Mount Tai as a sacred object.

² Ibid., 230

³ Interestingly, one of the author's college-educated Chinese informants claims that this literary historical background is not part of the consciousness of modern Chinese readers. She states that Mount Tai is first and foremost in the awareness of the Chinese of today because Du Fu's poem is part of the high school curriculum, and because the mountain is promoted by the Chinese government as a tourist attraction for Chinese.

⁴ Kroll 1983: 229

⁵ Ibid., 229-30

translation – can present difficulties. One solution for 泰宗 might reasonably be “Tai + revered ancestor [name of a mountain peak]”, where the first character is further explained via annotation. One could also opt, as I have done in the structural translation above, for “tai-zong”, in which case the separate and combined meanings of the two characters in this context must be explained via annotation. The second reason the discussion is interesting in relation to translation typologies, is that this example also illustrates the fact that an allusion to a rich literary historical tradition and discussion must be transmitted in some way if the reader is to have all the tools necessary to grasp the whole poem. The translator’s challenge in this respect is to convey enough information to give the reader an appreciation for the context, without putting him into a coma with the level of detail I have allowed myself in the preceding explanation!

The choice of the colour 青 (blue or green) in the couplet’s second line alludes to the East, because 青 is the colour associated with the East, and Mount Tai was and is known as the foremost ceremonial centre in Eastern China.¹ Four of the quoted translators have chosen green, two have chosen azure. Azure, though it technically does have an element of green, is generally used to mean blue.² Because neither green nor blue (or any other colour, for that matter) carries an equivalent allusion to the East in English, we again have information that will be lost to the target-text reader unless it is conveyed via annotation in the structural translation. The colour green is also appropriate to the mountain itself, as 80 percent of its surface is covered with vegetation.³

Hinton’s translation begins with “For all this”, which with the possible exception of “this” (夫, which here can be translated as the independent pronoun 彼, “it”) has no basis in the original. It is possible that by “all this” he is attempting to refer to the mythology surrounding the mountain. His solution for 如何, for which there is no one idiomatic solution appropriate to all contexts in English, is an elegant integration (“what is the mountain god like?”). In the couplet’s second line, Hinton uses north and south as a substitution for the kingdoms of Qi and Lu (Mount Tai straddled the border of these two competing states), and in doing so mirrors the *yin* and *yang* that appear in the second couplet. He clearly feels that the ‘unending green’ (青未了) refers to the lands on either side of the mountain, not the mountain itself.

¹ Kroll 1983: 232

² Azure is half-way between blue and cyan on the RDB colour wheel; cyan is a mixture of blue and green. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azure_\(color\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azure_(color)) and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyan>, accessed 02.10.2011

³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Tai, accessed 20.04.2011

Young's first line manages to communicate the fact Mount Tai is a place that is and has been revered, but he has chosen to add a footnote to his translation on this point: "Mount Tai is one of China's five 'sacred mountains'.¹ The dark and sunny slopes represent *yin* and *yang*, hence the interpretation 'all creation'", and he conveys the 如何 of the original well in his question form beginning with "how". In the second line of the first couplet he – like Hinton – interprets the green to be a description of the area around the mountain, rather than the mountain itself. Whereas the green is 'endless' (未了) in the source text, it 'surrounds' the mountain in Young's translation.

Wu errs by placing the poet firmly in the first line, in the section of the poem that – in the original – clearly is not about the poet, but rather is description of nature.

Wu's translation does have one interesting aspect when compared to those of Hinton and Young: in his second line, he lets the reader know that it is the mountain that is green, not the surrounding areas of Qi and Lu. His second couplet is devoid of any parallelism. His choice to rhyme within each couplet comes at the expense of other possibilities.

Seaton's translation is an English presentation of Cheng's French translation. The purpose of this particular target text is therefore slightly different from that of the others presented here: it is part of a translated edition of Cheng's book on Chinese poetics, and its function is to convey Cheng's translation of this poem to English-speaking readers as accurately as possible. It is therefore a translation that is one step further removed from the source text; Seaton is in effect bound by two source texts. In the first couplet, his "Mountain of Mountains it's called. Why so?" manages to convey the mystique surrounding the mountain and supplies an admirably exact but yet idiomatic solution for 如何. In the couplet's second line, he – like Hinton and Young – interpret the green that is "lost to view" to be that of the surrounding area rather than the mountain itself. (Cheng's original is the more poetic "verdue sans fin", unending green vegetation.)

The version quoted in Kroll uses "Tai the Revered" to communicate the mountain's status, and his "now, what to compare it with?" is a reasonable solution for 如何. The effect of the first line is however somewhat hampered by the use of punctuation in the middle of the line, a practice completely absent from the source-text genre. The "azure" of the couplet's last line is clearly a description of the mountain and not the surrounding kingdoms.

Ayscough's "what then is the nature of Tai Tsung" is an interesting solution for 如何. Her choice is idiomatic English, and gives the reader a feeling of entering the poem *in medias*

¹ Hung 1952, quoted in Young 2010: 5

res. Her “Honourable Ancestor of all Mountains” gives a clear indication that this mountain is special in some respect, both by the titular effect of the line and by the use of capital letters, and she incorporates both Ch’i and Ch’u¹ and north and south elegantly in her second line. Her “does not fade” is a good translation of 未了; literal, but still idiomatic.

Seaton’s English version of Cheng’s French translation begins with perhaps the most successful solution. His “Mountain of Mountains it’s called. Why so?” is compact, as is the source-line, with a natural, idiomatic solution for 如何. “The green of Ch’i and Lu is lost to view” seems a bit odd; when something is lost to view, it has usually left one’s field of vision, but here the image would seem to be green stretching out as far as the eye can see. Cheng’s original is the much more poetic “*verdure sans fin*”. Yip’s “never ending green” is similar, but his first line – “How about the Mount of Mounts?” is a bit jarring in its lack of reverence.

In the first line of the second couplet, Du Fu borrows the phrase 神秀, ‘superb essence’ (or ‘flourishing of divinity’ in Kroll’s interpretation²) from Sun Chuo, who used it hundreds of years earlier to describe the mountain. (Yet another aspect of literary history that will be lost to target-text readers without annotation.) Liang comments that this first line means that nature concentrates all of the beauty of other mountains in Mount Tai (大自然把山嶽的雄奇秀異都集中在泰山了).³ This couplet is parallel:

造化鍾神秀	create + transform		bring together • spirit/essence + beauty
陰陽割昏曉	yin • yang		sever • dusk • dawn

The *yin* and *yang* (陰陽) are parallel to 造化. They refer here to the southern and northern sides of the mountain. In addition, *yin* encompasses the feminine or negative principle in nature, including the northern (shady) side of a hill, and *yang* refers to the male or positive principle in nature, and the southern (sunlit) side of a hill. This is echoed in the ‘dawn / dusk’ at the end of the second couplet. The result is a rich, interwoven effect, which is not possible to convey in its entirety via a single translation, simply because the various connotations of *yin* and *yang* are not known to the majority of target-language readers, and there is no equivalent in English. Seaton explicates *yin* and *yang* to be north and south; Hinton keeps the parallel “*yin* and *yang*, dusk and dawn” in the second line only and does not convey the parallelism present in the couplet as a whole, though it is possible that his “north and south” in the first couplet and “*yin* and *yang*” in the second is a nod to this parallelism. Young

¹ This is either a mistake or a deliberate change on Ayscough’s part. Chu was another state to the south of Lu.

² Kroll 1983: 233

³ Liang 1988: 134

attempts to allude to the metaphysical aspect of *yin* and *yang*, which are explicated as the north and south slopes of the mountain, by saying that “all creation is contained on those dark slopes, that sunny side”. Hung (1940) avoids enjambement but still manages to create an elegant bridge between the end of the first and the beginning of the second couplet in the form of a semicolon and the initial “Here” of the third line:

Here the Creator gathers wonders divine,
Its northern and southern slopes divide dusk and dawn.

The peculiar “Shaping Mutator” of the second couplet in the version by the translator quoted in Kroll seems to be an attempt to describe a deity in a term not particular to a specific religion; *yin* and *yang* are explicated as “Shaded and sun-lit”. The choice of “cleaves” for 割 is similar to Hinton’s “split”, and is a more graphic and literal solution than the “divide” of Hung’s 1940 translation. Dungbo’s version is true to the original wording, but lacks the rich implications of *yin* and *yang*:

Slicing YinYang
begetting day and night.

Bynner has alluded to the metaphysical with his interpretation of *yin* and *yang* as “twin forces” that balance day and night.

The third couplet is by far the most interesting part of this poem from a translation standpoint. Like the second couplet, it is parallel:

盪胸生層雲	shake/heave/scour/cleanse + breast		give birth to • layer • cloud
決眚入歸鳥	burst	• corner of eye	enter • return • bird

Its meaning is ambiguous, and has been much discussed.¹ Hsieh argues that the meaning of the rest of the poem is not difficult to discern, which makes the obscurity in the third couplet even more puzzling. It is not clear if it is Du Fu’s breast and eyes that are involved – in which case the lines should be read from the standpoint of poetic inversion – or if the mountain is being personified. Francois Cheng suggests that “[i]n the absence of the personal pronoun it is possible to ask whether the “straining chest” and the “bursting eyes” are those of the poet, or of the mountain personified. In reality the poet is trying to express precisely the *identification*

¹ For a list of several studies, see Hsieh 1994: 1 (note 4)

of the climber with the mountain, and to give a vision of the mountain within.”¹ Is Du Fu truly gazing at the mountain from a distance, as the title would suggest? If so, the clouds at its peak cannot be rushing past the poet’s own breast unless he is imagining how it is to be on the mountain. Perhaps the mountain gives birth to layered clouds, the sight of which cause’s the poet’s breast (which in that case perhaps stands for an emotional states, that which is shaken by the mountain) to heave in exhilaration? The character 盪 has more than one possible meaning in this context, such as scour or cleanse.² One commentator glosses it as “滌蕩胸襟”, which can mean to cleanse the breadth of mind.³ So perhaps the site of the great mountain clears the mind or even creates a sense of peace.

The ‘split eye socket’ image has provoked discussion as to why Du Fu chose such a violent way to express himself. 決眦 has precedents as ways to express a wide-open or staring gaze, or hunters who split eyes when they hit their mark, but also as a metaphor for losing one’s vision due to gazing into the distance. Both of these interpretations are based on sources where the description involves birds, so there may be some connection between the two in Du Fu’s usage.⁴ Stephen Owen points out that Du Fu’s “[...] command of earlier literature far exceeded that of any poet before him, but he truly ‘used’ the past, with all the implications of control and mastery that belong to the word ‘use’”.⁵ It is therefore safe to assume that Du Fu was aware of how the expression had been used earlier. Hsieh suggests that the use of such a painful image to depict watching birds at a distance is the poet’s way of conveying his distress at having failed the imperial examination, likening the combination of the image of split eye sockets and birds to the hunting imagery often used by failed examination candidates to describe their feelings. “A failed examination candidate was often referred to as someone struck by an arrow or a shot-pellet”.⁶ Hsieh postulates that the idea of returning to Mount Tai as a metaphor for death, mentioned in numerous poems about the mountain, the image of returning birds, which has precedent in another Mount Tai poem (that of Tao Yuanming 陶淵明, 365-427), coupled with the image of the poet as a shot-down bird/failed examination candidate, all result in a line that is describing the poet as having died – figuratively – after

¹ Cheng trans. Seaton 1982: 147. From Cheng 1977: 180: “[...] à cause de l’absence du pronom personnel, on se demande si “poitrine dilatée” et “yeux tendus” sont ceux du poète ou de la montagne personnifiée. En réalité, le poète cherche justement à suggérer que le grimpeur “fait corps” avec la montagne et vit la vision de al montagne de l’intérieur.”

² Hsieh 1994: 4-5

³ Liang 1988: 134

⁴ Owen 1981: 360

⁵ Ibid., 185

⁶ Owen 1977: 164

having failed the exam (the bird, shot down, returns to the mountain). This possibility is supported if one chooses to read the 盪胸 of the couplet's first line as the heaving breast of the stricken bird. Mount Tai as a resting place is also mirrored by the antithetical 生 – to give birth to – of the first line. Hsieh suggests that this duality is also present in the *yin* and *yang* of the second couplet.¹ So it is possible that this difficult couplet is not as puzzling as it seems, but – if one assumes he is writing about his feelings about his failed examination – rather is Du Fu's subtle and elegant way of including his inner distress in the poem. On the other hand, Du Fu was still quite young at the time he wrote this poem; he had his life ahead of him, and failing the imperial examination was by no means uncommon. I tend to agree with Stephen Owen, who offers the following, more plausible explanation:

[...] 決眚 is literally, as translated, “split the eye-pupils”, what good archers did to birds in the *Tzu-hsü fu*. Chiu-chia explains the phrase as destroying one's visual abilities in gazing far, and rejects the association of archery. I would agree with the Chiu-chia interpretation and would suggest that the term is transferred from the destruction of the eyes to the squinting involved in watching the tiny specks of birds disappear into the mountain. However, the fact that birds are involved both here and in the well-known *Tzu-hsü fu* leads one to suspect that there is some relation between the two. It is possible that Tu Fu is suggesting a close attention to the birds like an archer's taking aim; in this case, the line would be “Watching, as though to shoot and split their eye pupils, my gaze follows the homing birds into the mountain. *Njip* 入, “enter”, clearly refers both to the movement of the birds “into” the mountain and to the poet's vision that follows them “in”.²

Kroll suggests that it is not logical to read the third couplet as a description of the poet. He points out that the title of the work is *gazing into the distance* at Mount Tai, and that it is odd that the focus in a poem that is so clearly about the mountain itself, should have such an abrupt shift of focus. He feels the shift happens organically in the seventh line with ‘[When/if I/one] ascends the mountain’. This view is supported by Owen, who suggests that the poet “[g]radually [...] ascends the mountain with his eyes, following the birds in flight, until finally he imagines the completion of the ascent when he attains the complementary large vision *from* the summit”.³ If however the mountain is the subject of the third couplet, the lines can be read as ‘Its heaving breast gives rise to cumulous clouds’ and ‘Its bursting eye-sockets [that is, small caverns on the mountain side] give entrance to homing birds’. Kroll points out that this makes sense, because if the poet is indeed on the mountain, why would he need to

¹ Hsieh 1994: 9-13

² Owen 1981: 380, note 6

³ *Ibid.*, 188

strain his eyes to see birds coming *toward* him? Hsieh feels this interpretation is too extreme, and points out that the third couplet is the natural turning point in an eight-line poem of this period, so a shift of focus here is not at all unusual.¹ In addition, such a shift is very often in the direction of a personal subjective “response”. While Kroll prefers the anthropomorphic reading, he also allows for the possibility that the couplet is an example of deliberate ambiguity.²

The translators quoted above offer a variety of solutions: Wu, Bynner, and Hinton for example take the poet to be the subject, while Hung (1952), Yip, and the translator quoted in Kroll use the mountain. Seaton, Cheng, Bonta, and Hung (1940) have not explicated the subject. Hinton’s birds “ruin” his eyes by “vanishing”, presumably because the poet is struggling to see them as they fly into the distance. Wu’s “staring eyes” are “lured” by “home-coming birds”. Cheng’s eyes are “bursting to see returning birds”. Dongbo’s eyes are scowling at returning birds. Young has improvised, and chosen a solution that confusingly seems to be a type of explicated ambiguity. In his first line, he covers both poet and mountain (“layers of clouds refresh climber and climbed alike”); his second line has the poet as a point of departure, but includes the mountain (“the birds fly up and up beyond our straining eyes”). Ayscough’s birds are flying into the clouds as her poet watches them. The clouds themselves are referred to as rolling, opening, swelling, rolls of clouds, cloud layers, cumulus, growing layered clouds, and even thunderheads.

The translated third couplets vary in the level of parallelism they display. Some follow the source text closely; they do not explicate the subject, and they retain the parallelism. Others explicate the subject but retain parallelism, yet others – such as Ayscough – both explicate the subject and ignore the parallelism. Dongbo appears to let the poet and the mountain share the status of subject, and uses layout to strengthen the feeling of parallelism.

In the final couplet, the focus is clearly on the poet and his feelings. Du Fu alludes to a phrase in Mencius (孟子, 372–289 BCE) that describes Confucius’ experience upon ascending this mountain: “On climbing T’ai Shan, [Confucius] considered the subcelestial realm to dwindle” (登泰山而小天下).³ The literary reference, likely at least somewhat familiar to source-text readers, is important information in the context of Du Fu’s situation at the time the poem was composed and therefore important for its interpretation. It places the reading experience in a larger literary context that is unfamiliar to the target-text reader unless the

¹ Hsieh 1994: 6

² Kroll 1983: 234-35

³ Mencius 7A.24, quoted in Kroll 1984: 235

translator makes it known. If one reads despair in the third couplet, these two lines demonstrate a shift to optimism; despite his current situation, Du Fu envisions the time when he will be able to ascend the mountain (pass the examination), and therefore see other ‘mountains’ (his current problems) as being of lesser relative importance. If one reads the third couplet as an exuberant experience of the physical mountain, it functions as a turning point that continues with an optimistic poet who pictures his future ascent, whether it is the mountain peak or a metaphysical peak that is meant.

What does the discussion of this source text and these selected translations tell us about the presentation of this poem via translation typologies? Two issues stand out:

- *Historical context* was without question an integral part of the reading experience of the contemporary reader, as it is for the source-text reader today. In addition to the historical context discussed above, this poem is part of a wealth of Mount Tai poems stretching back hundreds of years. Du Fu participated in that tradition when he chose to write this poem, and his Chinese readers were (and are) steeped in the same tradition. Source-text readers had and have a genre expectation and an understanding of the allusions that simply do not exist in target-text readers. Translation as we are accustomed to it – that is, a single translation of a poem – is not equipped to convey this information. Annotation is completely necessary, and is best suited to a technical explanation, such as a structural translation. In the context of a structural translation, annotation does not disturb the reading process of the literary translations, which are necessary if the poem is to be experienced as a poem in the target language.
- *Ambiguity* abounds in this poem. The name of the mountain, the implications of yin and yang, the question of the subject of the third couplet and the poet’s emotion in the fourth couplet are all open to more than one reading in the source text. The requirements of the English language in regard to structure and explication make it impossible to convey all of this in a single translation. Read side-by-side, Cheng’s word-for-word translation, where even the caesura is indicated, the straight-forward scholarly translations of Hung (1940) and Yip, the poetic version by Ayscough, Wu’s rhyme, and perhaps even Dongbo’s use of layout, all offer different readings, differing explication and interpretation. In short, they each transmit something of the experience of reading the source text.

In a poem of this type it can be argued that so much of the reading experience is created by aspects that cannot be translated by conventional means, that annotation is the one best

solution. Why bother with more than one translation, assuming the annotation is thorough enough? The answer lies in why readers of translation read. Chan describes the situation of readers of translated fiction in this way:

Readers of translation are a special category; they are unlike the translators who read the original novel, then translate in the light of their own interpretation for a target audience. They are also quite different from source-language readers, who can rely on their linguistic and cultural background to decipher the meaning of the work in question; it was after all intended for them in the first place. Finally, they must be set off from readers with foreign language competence who can read a text in its original language. Even in the case of readers who have some purchase in the foreign language, the fact that they choose to read a translated novel means that they prefer their passage to an alien realm to be made easier, even though the difficulties in crossing borders are not completely eliminated.¹

I believe the same can be said of readers of translated poetry, and I would add one element to Chan's excellent description: readers of translation read in order to enjoy a text, to have a literary reading experience. Their goal is to enter into a poem with its layers of meaning and emerge on the other side having experienced something new, not to delve into scholarly footnotes to analyse the experience. In a poem with as much "untranslatable" information as the Mount Tai poem, annotation is of course necessary. But this must not come at the expense or instead of poetic translations the reader can enjoy. The benefit of reading a poem stereoscopically – the source text alongside structural, scholarly, and poetic translations – is that it gives the reader the experience of reading that would be lacking if the only help on offer were annotation. Only then will the reader see the poem with 'double vision'.

¹ Chan 2010: 21

V Conclusion

I began by stating that traditional translation theory offers little or no help to the translator of poetry, but that elements of this theory can be used to construct a theoretical platform for the discussion of poetry translation. In this thesis I have attempted to do just that: to contribute to a theory of poetry translation by offering such a platform. I have constructed this platform from a reader-oriented perspective, and have drawn on elements from existing translation theory from a functional point of departure. Using Classical Chinese poetry from the Tang Dynasty as my case, I have demonstrated that the various layers and possible readings of a Classical Chinese poem cannot be transmitted by any single translation alone, and postulated that the solution is to present this poetry in a set of complementary translation typologies. This approach requires a broader view of translation: rather than simply referring to the act of transmitting a text from one language to another, I suggested that translation can also be viewed as the transmission of the various elements and meanings in a text from one language to another. My discussion was structured by four questions: who are the readers, and how do they read; why is the text being translated; how will the target text be used; what is the intended effect, and how can that effect be achieved?

I argued that a set of translations created with function-based complementary typologies can come close to transmitting what Owens terms the ‘whole’ poem; that is, its linguistic, rhythmic, aural, and associative elements. It is my claim that this way of presenting a poem in translation gives the reader the best possible point of departure from which to understand the poem in its original context, and that it also allows him to better understand and evaluate the choices a given translator has made, thereby becoming a more critical reader of translations.

In Chapter II, I used the definitions of Chesterman and Pym as a point of departure to defined the readers of translated Classical Chinese poetry relevant to this study: participative – those with an active interest in learning what resides in the source text – and observational – those who were not aware they were interested, but whose interest is piqued by virtue of their exposure to more than one translation. Drawing on Iser, Dewey, and Bentley, I showed how the reading of a translation is an active, self-correcting process between a reader, a translator, and a text. I have shown that given enough information about the source-text, readers are able to develop what Chan calls “double vision”: they allow their knowledge of both the source and target contexts to inform their interpretations of a poem. Further, I explained that double vision is facilitated by stereoscopic reading, a term I have adapted from Rose, where more than one translation is read alongside the source text. Taking Rose’s stereoscopic reading one

step further, I propose that these translations must have a structured relationship to one another. This ensures that they act as a coherent whole and provide the reader with access to as much of the ‘whole poem’ as possible. I suggested that the basis for the structure in this relationship can be found in Owens’s concept of moving the reader or moving the text, and pointed out that the goal must not only be to attempt to make what is poetry in one language into something that is poetry in another (moving the poem to the reader), but also to show the reader of a target language *why* the source-language text is poetry (moving the reader to the text). Thus, I established that the motivation for translating a poem in the broader sense must be to give the readers as much access as possible to that which is inherent in the source text, and that translations of a poem can then be used together as a unit of complementary target texts to make possible stereoscopic reading and, as a result, the development of a reader’s double vision.

I then demonstrated that although no established, academic theory of poetry translation exists, and the existing established translation theories do for the most part not discuss the translation of verse, aspects of theory can however be used to define the function of a given translation typology and the effect it is meant to have. Nida’s formal and dynamic equivalence and his definitions of adequacy and validity; Newmark’s semantic and communicative translation; Koller’s equivalence typologies; Reiss and Vermeer’s *Skopos* theory; Toury’s descriptive translation studies; and House’s overt and covert translation were discussed in relation to the translation purposes they are meant to fulfill, and where they fall on the continuum of moving the reader to the text, or the text to the reader. Finally, the product and function-oriented subcategories of the descriptive branch of Holmes’s ‘pure’ translation study was discussed as a point of departure for evaluating translations in relation to their intended functions.

In Chapter III, I examined in more detail the various layers in a Classical Chinese poem in order to illustrate challenges the translator faces at the level of the word and the text, and to suggest how these challenges can be dealt with in translation typologies. I demonstrated why something as seemingly straightforward as a “literal” translation is complicated by differing concepts of word class in the source and target languages. I discussed how the structure of Classical Chinese allowed poets to open for more than one reading of a poem or of elements within a poem by making use of purposeful ambiguity and optional precision, how the level of explication required by English makes this difficult to transmit, and how this problem can be exaggerated by over-explication and interpretation on the part of the translator. I illustrated challenges that arise when the target language and

culture has no equivalent for culture-specific references created by allusion, symbolism, and metaphor in the source text. I showed why it is difficult to mimic the sound and rhythm of Classical Chinese verse, and discussed how the writing system of Chinese has in some cases influenced translators, and how it occasionally serves to underscore semantic and thematic elements in the poem. Finally, based on my arguments and examples in Chapters II and III, I defined three translation typologies:

1. Structural translation, which provides information at the level of the character and/or word and line, including rhyme, rhythm, and formal elements, and allows for annotation of linguistic and culture-bound elements;
2. Scholarly translation, a straightforward, idiomatic translation that does not attempt to create a poem in the target language but rather provides an idiomatic presentation in the target text of the source-text words;
3. Poetic translation, an attempt to create a poetic effect in the target language, where the intended effect is something more than and greater than the words themselves.

In Chapter IV, I illustrated my argument by analysing four poems written by two Tang-dynasty poets. I created structural translations of each, pointed out linguistic and culture-bound elements that would require annotation, and provided pronunciation and tonal analysis as background information where relevant. I presented and critiqued several translations of each in relation to which aspects of the poem had or had not been conveyed. Here, the various strategies employed by the translators and the resulting consequences made themselves apparent. These include:

- explicating the implicit, thereby eliminating the purposeful ambiguity that allows for multiple readings in the source text;
- interpretation, where a meaning in the source text is embellished or added to;
- restructuring elements, moving them from their places in the source text to new places in the target text;
- demetaphorisation, a surface translation where allusion or symbolism present in the source text is eradicated due to a lack of such associations in the target text;
- retention of formal features present in the source text, or introduction of new formal features

- omission of elements present in the source text, or addition of new elements into the target text.

In my summarising discussion of each poem I suggested where the translations fit on a typological continuum, and how certain of them could work together in a set of typologies designed to facilitate stereoscopic reading.

I would like to close with a quote from Tony Barnes:

All this means that the perfect translation of Chinese poetry is well-nigh impossible. Without a detailed commentary giving the sources and contexts of echoes and allusions, the reader is going to miss a great deal, perhaps even the essentials of a poem; but who in the West wants to plough through commentaries? We feel that a poem should speak directly heart to heart within our own shared codes, but if we are going to explore Chinese poetry seriously we must be prepared to immerse ourselves in the great sea of words that extends over the last three thousand years, ever discovering new echoes and resonances. In the course of such an exploration we should not expect to find startlingly new ideas, just subtle and surprising variations on age-old themes, a more rarefied pleasure than being yelled at or mystified in modern European languages.¹

Tony Barnes hits the nail on the head. In order to understand as much as possible about a Classical Chinese poem, the reader must be prepared to immerse himself in the text. Thus far, the tools to do so have not been readily available to those who are not able to read Classical Chinese. These readers have been dependent on the choices made by single translators, usually presented individually in volumes of translated poetry. Where more than one translator's work has been presented together, no attempt has been made to create a structural relationship between them. With a set of complementary translations, the reader has access to choice. When the translator makes choices that come at the expense of other readings, he is aware of what he chooses to omit; the reader on the other hand cannot know, based on a single translation, what has been left out. Although the reader has in this paper been defined as one who, for varying reasons, appreciates access to the 'whole' poem, it is important to remember, as stated in Chapter II, that a reader's willingness to read a particular text "[...] will be exceeded if the text makes things too clear or, on the other hand, too obscure: boredom and overstrain represent the two poles of tolerance, and in either case the reader is likely to opt out of the game." A reader who is given a typologically-organised sets of translations can choose to navigate the source text by means of a structural translation, ponder

¹ Barnes 2007: 197

scholarly and poetic translations, and emerge from the act of reading with an experience of the many layers the poet intended. Conversely, he may find himself continually seeking out a particular translation type among those on offer, and choose not to relate to the other types of translations in the group. His experience of the poem is however now based on choice, not chance.

In this thesis, I have attempted to fill some of the gaps in translation theory in regard to poetry. I have viewed translation from a reader-oriented point of view, and demonstrated that if the reader is to experience the ‘whole’ poem and discover the echoes and resonances of which Barnes speaks, he must have access to more than one translation of the same poem, and these translations must have a structured relationship to each other. A poem transmitted in this way can be read stereoscopically; this type of reading allows the reader to see what is missing between the lines of a given translation. Only then will he have the knowledge of both source and target texts necessary to develop a reader’s double vision. The purpose of translation must be to provide him with the tools to do just that.

Appendix: Pronunciation and Tonal Distribution

The charts below show Early Middle and Modern Chinese pronunciation and patterns of tonal distribution for the poems in Chapter IV.

Li Bai, “Jade Staircase Lament”

玉階怨 jade • steps • complaint

1	玉階生白露	jade • stair bear/cause to happen/grow/exist • white • dew
2	夜久侵羅襪	night • long enter/invade/occupy/advances gradually • silk • stocking
3	卻下水晶簾	withdraw • down water • crystal • curtain
4	玲瓏望秋月	(sound) + jade ornament [bright] gaze • autumn + moon [autumn moon]

	1		2		3		4		5	
1	ɲuwak	yù	kəij/ke:j	jiē	ʂiajŋ/ ʂe:ŋ	shēng	baijk/ be:jk	bái	lɔ ^h	lù
2	jiɑ ^h	yè	kuw'	jiǔ	ts ^h im	qīn	la	luó	muat	wà
3	k ^h iak	què	ɣai ^h / ɣe: ^h	xià	ɕwi'	shuǐ	tsiajŋ	jīng	liam	lián
4	le:jŋ	líng	luawŋ*	lóng	muaw ^h	wàng	ts ^h uw	qiū	ɲuat	yuè
1	Z		P		P		Z		Z	
2	Z		Z		P		P		Zr	
3	Z		Z		Z		P		P	
4	P		P		Z		P		Zr	

* This character not in Pulleyblank 1991. The pronunciation given here is for 龍.

Li Bai, “Taking Leave of a Friend”

送友人 see someone off • friend + person [friend]

1	青山橫北郭	green • mountain lie across • north • out-city wall
2	白水遶東城	white • water coil • east • city
3	此地一為別	this • place <u>one</u> • become • separate
4	孤蓬萬里征	alone • grass clump ten-thousand • mile • travel
5	浮雲遊子意	float • cloud travel + (noun suffix) [traveler] • think
6	落日故人情	fall + sun [setting sun] friend + person [old friend] • feeling
7	揮手自茲去	wave • hand <u>from here</u> • now • go
8	蕭蕭班馬鳴	xiao – xiao <u>divide</u> • horse • neigh

	1		2		3		4		5	
1	ts ^h ejŋ	qīng	ʂəin/ ʂɛ:n	shān	ɣwaijŋ/ ɣwɛ:jŋ	héng	pək	běi	kwak	guō
2	baijk/ be:jk	bái	ɕwi'	shuǐ	ɲiaw ^h	rào	təwŋ	dōng	dziajŋ	chéng
3	ts ^h iǎ' / ts ^h i'	cǐ	dí ^h	dì	ʔjit	yī	wiǎ/wǐ	wéi	piat	bié
4	kɔ	gū	bəwŋ	péng	muan ^h	wàn	li' / li'	lǐ	tɕiajŋ	zhēng
5	buw	fú	wun	yún	juw	yóu	tsi' / tsi	zǐ	ʔi ^h / ʔi ^h	yì
6	lak	luò	ɲit	rì	kɔ ^h	gù	ɲin	rén	dziajŋ	qíng
7	xuj	huī	ɕuw'	shǒu	dzi ^h	zì	tsi' / tsi	zī	k ^h iǎ' / kfiyǎ`	qù
8	sew	xiāo	sew	xiāo	pain/ pɛ:n	bān	mai' / mɛ:'	mǎ	miajŋ	míng
1	P		P		P		Z		Z	
2	P		Z		Z		P		Pr	
3	Z		Z		Z*		P		Z	
4	P		P		Z		Z		Pr	
5	P		P		P		Z		Z	
6	Z		Z		Z		P		Pr	
7	P		Z		Z*		P		Z	
8	P		P		P*		Z		Pr	

Du Fu, “Thoughts While Traveling at Night”

旅夜書懷 travel • night • write • state of mind/heart

1	細草微風岸	slender + grass gentle • wind • shore
2	危檣獨夜舟	upright ¹ • mast lone • night • boat
3	星垂平野闊	star • hang down flat/level + open country [countryside] • vast
4	月湧大江流	moon • rise/emerge/well up great • river • flow
5	名豈文章著	reputation/fame/name • how writing + composition [literary work] • show/prove/notable
6	官應老病休	office • should old + sick [aging] • retire/stop
7	飄飄何所似	float in the air/flutter + float in the air/flutter [lightly /flutter/blown about] what • that which • similar
8	天地一沙鷗	heaven • earth one/single • sand + gull [seagull]

	1		2		3		4		5	
1	sej ^h	xì	ts ^h aw'	cǎo	muj	wēi	puwŋ	fēng	ŋan ^h	àn
2	ŋwiǎ/ ŋwi	wēi	dziɑŋ	qiáng	dəwk	dú	jiɑ ^h	yè	tɕuw	zhōu
3	sejŋ	xīng	dzwiǎ/dzwi	chuí	biajŋ	píng	jiɑ'	yě	k ^h wat	kuò
4	ŋuat	yuè	juawŋ'	yǒng	da', daj ^h	dà	kaiwŋ/ kœ:wŋ	jiāng	luw	liú
5	mjiɑjŋ	míng	k ^h ij	qǐ	mun	wén	tɕiaŋ	zhāng	driǎ ^h	zhù
6	kwan	guān	ʔiŋ	yīng	law'	lǎo	biajŋ ^h	bìng	xuw	xiū
7	p ^h jiaw	piāo	p ^h jiaw	piāo	ya	hé	ʂiǎ'	suǒ	zi'/zi'	sì
8	t ^h en	tiān	di ^h	dì	ʔjit	yī	ʂai/ʂe:	shā	ʔəw	ōu
1	Z		Z		P		P		Z	
2	P		P		Z		Z		Pr	
3	P		P		P		Z		Z	
4	Z		Z		Z		P		Pr	
5	P		Z		P		P		Z	
6	P		P		Z		Z		Pr	
7	P		P		P		Z		Z	
8	P		Z		Z		P		Pr	

¹ 高聳貌, [appearance of standing tall and erect], *Gu hanyu da cidian* 古汉语大词典 2000: 544

Du Fu, “Gazing at Mount Tai”

望岳 look/gaze into the distance • high mountain

See the discussion of end rhyme in this poem on page 98.

1	岱宗夫如何	Dai-zong that • be like + what/how [is like what]
2	齊魯青未了	Qi • Lu green/blue • is not yet + finish [endless/vast]
3	造化鍾神秀 **	create + transform [creation/heaven] bring together • spirit/essence • beauty
4	陰陽割昏曉	yin • yang sever • dusk • dawn
5	盪胸生層雲	shake/heave/scour/cleanse + breast give birth to • layer • cloud
6	決眚入歸鳥	burst* • corner of eye enter • return • bird
7	會當凌絕頂	will • certainly ascend • extreme + top [mountaintop]
8	一覽眾山小	throughout + look at [bird’s-eye view] multitude • mountain • small

	1		2		3		4		5	
1	dəj ^h	dài	tsawŋ	zōng	buə	fū	ɲiə	rú	ɣa	hé
2	dzej	Qí	lɔ’	Lǚ	ts ^h ejŋ	qīng	muɟ ^h	wèi	lɛw’	liǎo
3	dzaw’	zào	xwai ^h / xwɛ: ^h	huà	tɕuawŋ	zhōng	ʒin	shén	suw ^h	xiù
4	ʔim	yīn	jiəŋ	yáng	kat	gē	xwən	hūn	xɛw’	xiǎo
5	daŋ’	dàng	xuawŋ	xiōng	ɕiajŋ/ ɕɛ:jŋ	shēng	dzəŋ	céng	wun	yún
6	kwet	jué	dziǎ ^h / dzi ^h , dzej ^h	zì	ɲip	rù	kuj	guī	tɛw’	niǎo
7	ɣwaj ^h	huì			liŋ	líng	dzwiat	jué	tɛjŋ’	dǐng
8	ʔjit	yī	lam’	lǎn	tɕuwŋ ^h	zhòng	ɕəin/ ɕɛ:n	shān	siaw’	xiǎo
1	Z		P		P		P		P	
2	P		Z		P		Z		Zr	
3	Z		Z		P		Z		Z	
4	P		P		Z		Z		Zr	
5	Z		P		P		P		P	
6	Z		Z		Z		P		Zr	
7	Z		P		P		Z		Z	
8	Z		Z		Z		P		Zr	

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