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## The Presentation of Sound and Color in English Translation of Tang Poetry

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**ABSTRACT:** *As the peak of Chinese literature, Tang poetry is also the magnificent pearl of the world literature treasury. Spreading the brilliant achievements of Tang poetry in the context of globalization is of great significance for shaping a good image of China on the international stage. This article selects the literary giant of the Tang dynasty Wang Wei's poetry as a representative, from the latest English version of Wang Wei poetry, focus on difficulties of the English translation about sound and color in Wang Wei's poetry, makes an in-depth analysis of the thinking logic and original meaning reproduction in the translation process, in order to provide theoretical reference for the international dissemination of excellent traditional Chinese culture, and promote the exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations of the world.*

**KEYWORDS:** presentation, sound, color, English translation, tang, poetry.

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## INTRODUCTION

A synthesizer of Chinese idyllism and a representative of Tang Literature, Wang Wei (王维, 701? or 699?-761) exerted immense influence on his contemporaries and later generations. He was not only versed in poetry and prose but also accomplished in areas such as music, painting and calligraphy. We cannot but mention Su Shi (苏轼, 1037-1101)'s ingenious remarks on him in *Writing on Vimalakirti's A Picture of Misty Rain of Mount Bluefield* (Shu Mojie Lantian Yanyu Tu 书摩诘《蓝田烟雨图》), included in the second volume of *Su Shi's Inscriptions* (Dongpo Ti Ba 东坡题跋), which may be the most famous of all evaluations of him: "Savoring Wang Wei's poem, you see a painting; savoring his painting, you see a poem." (Su, 2020: 2209). The dictum "poetry in painting and painting in poetry" has since been identified with Wang Wei's art, it has also become the most memorable characteristic of Wang Wei's art.

Wang Wei's poems, exquisite, profound and spirited, offer a viewer a show of sublimated but detached water-ink paintings and a flash of sound-images between shine and shade, between motion and stillness. Because of his uniqueness and epoch-making achievements, he is the greatest literary master of all time, and accordingly a must for

15

all translators, eastern or western. Stephen Owen(1946- ), Xu Yuanchong(许渊冲,1921-2021) and others have done good jobs in translating some of his best works, and now Professor Zhao Yanchun(赵彦春,1962- ) has translated all his poems extant. *A Complete Edition of Wang Wei's Poems in Chinese and English with Annotations(Wang Wei Shige Quanji Ying Yi 王维诗歌全集英译*. Shanghai: Shanghai University Press,2020) would be of great value for the world to know Wang Wei's excellent literary style and artistic achievements.

Professor Zhao Yanchun is a scholar that has contributed a lot to the spread of excellent traditional Chinese culture. Equipped with solid academic training of the English language and in-depth perusals of classic Chinese Literature, he has published over 24 English translations of Chinese classics such as *Three Word Primer in English Rhyme(Ying Yun Sanzijing with Illustrations 英韵《三字经》插图本*,Beijing:Higher Education Press,2017), *The Book of Songs in English Rhyme (Ying Yun Shijing 英韵《诗经》*. Beijing:Higher Education Press,2019), *Analects (Lunyu Ying Yi 《论语》英译*. Beijing:Higher Education Press,2019),*The Word and the World(Daodejing Ying Yi 《道德经》英译*. Beijing:Higher Education Press,2018) ,*Sir Lush (Zhuangzi Ying Yi 《庄子》英译*. Beijing: Higher Education Press,2019),*A Complete Edition of Pai Li's Poems in Chinese and English(Li Bai Shige Quanji Ying Yi 李白诗歌全集英译*. Shanghai: Shanghai University Press,2020), *Fu Tu's Poems in Chinese and English with Annotations(Du Fu Shige Quanji Ying Yi 杜甫诗歌英译*. Shanghai: Shanghai University Press,2020),and so on.

His work *A Complete Edition of Wang Wei in Chinese and English with Annotations* reflects Zhao's comprehension of all Wang Wei's poems in various styles, an elegant and exquisite representation of what Su Shi termed as "poetry in painting and painting in poetry" of Wang Wei's artistic realm so much so that a Western reader can apprehend the beauty of woods and springs in Wang Wei's poems and what is the most idyllic in Chinese Literature even if without relevant background knowledge. Zhao's English translation of Wang Wei's Poetry is characterized by four features of Zhao's translation of Tang Poetry, i.e., sound, light, power and shade. Sound bespeaks Zhao's rigorous pursuit of the fidelity of rhyme and meter correspondent with the originals; light reveals Zhao's delicate shining of radial and colorful impressionism and true-to-life realism; power exhibits Zhao's minute snap of, and focus on, the shock of an instant change of scenes; shade represents Zhao's moving expression of the lingering trace and echo of universal love in Wei's poems. These four features capture the spell of Zhao's translation. His English translation of Wang Wei's poems is a best illustration of these four features,on behalf of the high level of translating Tang Poetry into English within the scope of the world.

As Wang Wei's poetry is one of the examples in the presentation of sound and color in Tang Poetry, this article focuses on Zhao's English translations of Wang Wei's poems, trying to take Wang Wei's Poems' the latest English translation as an example to explore how to spread the voice of China through translation and introduction of Tang poetry, establish a good cultural image of China, enhance the influence of Chinese culture, and promote the exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations of the world.

### Sound

Rhyme and meter are what Zhao pays greatest attention to in his translation of Wang Wei's poems. Zhao's pursuit of this technique is all but rigorous. When content is put in a primary position and kept intact, it is not easy to make it rhyme at the same time. But Zhao is a great success in keeping both meaning and form, making the rhyme and artistic conception a perfect fit. Let us look at his rendering of Wang Wei's two most famous poems.

"White cloud" is an image Wang Wei loved most, appearing in many of his works of various themes. "Arai Ken remarks that the love for white clouds testifies to Wang Wei had vigorousness of the people of the High Tang Dynasty." (Sensuke, 2005: 212). White clouds often appear in Wang Wei's most picturesque poems. In the case of such poems, *The South Mountains* (Zhongnanshan 终南山) and *My Villa at the South Mountains* (Zhongnan Bieye 终南别业) may occur to you. "Wang Wei loved The South Mountains. He had not only wrote famous masterpieces about The South Mountains, but also seemed to build villa when he was lived in Wangchuan. The South Mountains be idealized in his poems." (Sensuke, 2005: 211) These two poems, *The South Mountains* (Zhongnanshan 终南山) and *My Villa at the South Mountains* (Zhongnan Bieye 终南别业) were written in 741 A.D. when Wang Wei was reclusive in The South Mountains, they

are regarded as masterpieces of Tang poetry. So beautiful, magnificent and famous lines through the ages as "The white clouds behind merge as one(白云回望合); The blue haze inside becomes none(青霭入看无)." (Zhao, 2020: 197) "Where the creek ends, I take a rest(行到水穷处); To behold clouds arise white-dressed(坐看云起时)." (Zhao, 2020: 199), they have both of internal meaning and external meaning, otherwise they also have "flavor beyond flavor" (Zen), in order to accurately convey the artistic conception, it needs the translator to have a good grasp of the Chinese and English expression habits, context displacement and poetic meter.

At meanwhile, as the third and fourth lines of regulated verse, these four famous lines undertake the function of enriching and completing the internal meaning of the two poems. In the whole two poems, they are arranged to open, develop, transit and conclude, making the poems vivid and fluent, playing the role of keeping the semantic fluency. Now let's look at Zhao's translation of *The South Mountains*:

**The South Mountains (终南山) (Zhao, 2020: 197)**

Great One does near Capital soar;	(太乙近天都)
The range stretch onto the shore.	(连山接海隅)
The white clouds behind merge as one;	(白云回望合)
The blue haze inside becomes none.	(青霭入看无)
The main peak's a dividing line;	(分野中峰变)
The dales are in shade or in shine.	(阴晴众壑殊)
Here I would put up for the night,	(欲投人处宿)
Asking a logger across: Right?	(隔水问樵夫)

Kawai kozo commented on the poem: "The poem begins with the magnificence of The South Mountains, which is located in the center of the earth and expands infinitely vertically and horizontally. Its dynamic landscape description fully demonstrates the magnificence of the High Tang poetry, but that magnificence is rather regarded as a creation of metaphysical concepts supported by the world view of the High Tang poets than a faithful depiction of the landscape." (Kozo, 2013: 74). Zhao uses the tersest language to represent the poetic quality and uses pithy words to express the sense of space and painting of the displacement of scenes, a vivid depiction of the changing and shifting clouds and haze while keeping the sense of ineffability and enthrallment. What a deft touch! In his translation of "The white clouds behind merge as one (白云回望合); The blue haze inside becomes none (青霭入看无)." (Zhao, 2020: 197), "one" and "none" at the end of the lines while rhyming, coupled, and compatible with the meaning embodies a thick flavor of Zen.

Wang Wei's another masterpiece *My Villa at the South Mountains* is more widely acclaimed in Tang poetry, just as Ji Yun (纪昀, 1724-1805) commented on it: "The beauty of this poem, from extremely gorgeous ended in plain, but it can't be criticized as skipping over the normal steps. Otherwise, this is smelting to the perfection, and it is melted to the dross all melt. The maturity of self-restraint so that continuous manic all digested. And then nature's mystery enlightened, the poem outflowed in itself from the poet's mind, it is not something can be imitated and gotten." (Wang, 2020: 209) Especially the fifth and sixth lines "Where the creek ends, I take a rest (行到水穷处);

To behold clouds arise white-dressed(坐看云起时).”(Zhao, 2020: 199) live with the experience of being in a spiritual realm. Zha Shenxing(查慎行, 1650-1727) commented on the poem: “The fifth and sixth lines are natural, there is an endless lingering charm of scenery.”(Wang, 2020: 209) How to translate the detached Chinese painting-like aura into lines perceptible to English readers while mutely conveying the vast space embodied in the famous age-old dictum is a great challenge to a translator, who needs to have a good grasp of the nuances of both Chinese and English. Zhao’s treatment of the sequence of verbs and semantic supplement is superb:

**My Villa at the South Mountains (终南别业) (Zhao, 2020: 199)**

Middle aged, I worshiped Buddha;	(中岁颇好道)
Now old, I’ve a mountain villa.	(晚家南山陲)
Once in good mood, I stroll alone;	(兴来每独往)
The good scenes are to myself known.	(胜事空自知)
Where the creek ends, I take a rest,	(行到水穷处)
To behold clouds arise white-dressed.	(坐看云起时)
Sometimes a woodsman I am see	(偶然值林叟)
And forget time while talking free.	(谈笑无还期)

These two lines “Where the creek ends, I take a rest; To behold clouds arise white-dressed” show a sequence of actions in logically and Zhao explicitly reveals the logical relation and meanwhile supplements the poetic conception and milieu with “white-dressed”, which is entailed in clouds. This addition, while making it rhyme with “rest” in the previous line, leads out the author’s quietude and altitude as well as solving the possible problem of the inadequacy of a poetic line due to word-for-word translation. It is just as Japanese scholar Iritani Sensuke said: “He (Wang Wei) stared into the absolute quiet and lonely hell, and retained the healthy will to overcome despair. Through the darkness of hell, he can see the floating of white cloud.”(Sensuke, 2005: 212) “Facing the mountain towering above the white cloud, Wang Wei forgot his troubles and even almost forgot himself.”(Sensuke, 2005: 213) Zhao’s translation well represents the world full of contradictions and singular self consistent which was created by Wang Wei.

**Light**

In Wang Wei’s poems, the depiction of light and color is usually characterized by breath-taking immensity and magnanimity, which makes his poems magnificent ones. To successfully express this solemnity not without brilliance in its English translation,



one needs to manoeuvre syntactical constructions to protrude the sense of light and color in the picture. In *To the Front as an Envoy*(*Shi Zhi Saishang 使至塞上*), “O’er the wild smoke lonely curls straight(大漠孤烟直);To the River the sun round sets late(长河落日圆).”(Zhao, 2020: 145) , as was commented as “a grandest sight for all time” by Wang Guowei(王国维,1877-1927), is one of the most famous couplets of the wild desert ever depicted. To showcase the vastness and magnificence of the wild desert, Zhao translates the poem by rearranging the order of words, he adjoins attributives “lonely”(孤) and “round”(圆) to the back of the nouns “smoke”(烟) and “sun”(日) so that the latter two are highlighted as central images, hence the bleakness and solitude of the original is well illuminated:

**To the Front as an Envoy(使至塞上)(Zhao, 2020: 145)**

To inspect the front I drive down,	(单车欲问边)
Now thru the vassal’s Chuyan Town.	(属国过居延)
Thistledown past Han Fortress flies;	(征蓬出汉塞)
Wild geese fleet into the Hun’s skies.	(归雁入胡天)
O’er the wild smoke lonely curls straight;	(大漠孤烟直)
To the river the sun round sets late.	(长河落日圆)
At Hsiao Pass I meet a scout; the man	(萧关逢候骑)
Tells me the general’s at Yanjan.	(都护在燕然)

And “To the River the sun round sets late” creates the magnitude of the Yellow River and plays up the bleak sense of light touched with afterglow in the chillness of the wild desert and the inverted word order of “the sun round” presents a good theme-rheme relation for semantic extension. In 737, the twenty-fifth year of the Kaiyuan reign of the Tang Dynasty China, when Cui Xiyi(崔希逸,?-738AD), the vice general-governor of West Protectorate, defeated Tubo (today’s Tibet), Emperor Xuanzong of Tang(Li Longji 李隆基,685AD-762AD) sent Wang Wei as a royal inspector censor(监察御史) to the west for a military survey. To Wang Wei, it meant that he was expelled from the center of political power. Therefore, a sombre tone of depression and indignation permeates the poem composed en route to the front. Zhao has conserved this voiceless desolation idiosyncratic to Chinese border war poems with his artful treatment of the syntactic-logic construction.

As a representative of Wang Wei’s later landscape poetry, *The Deer Fence* (*Lu Zhai 鹿柴*) can be regarded as a model of expressing the poetic flavor of a poem to the fullest by means of the light image. Gu Lin(顾璘,1476-1545) commended on this poem: “This poem describes the deep scenery.”(Wang, 2020: 459) It is indeed to the point. The void hills and deep woods nearby the Deer Fence create a quiet setting at dusk, and the last

two lines “The deep wood sees the returned sun; Once again the green moss is shone.(返景入深林，复照青苔上)”(Zhao, 2020: 399) in particular give the afterglow a tint of personalized warmth. The Deer Fence is a place in Wangchuan. The difficulty in translating these two lines lies in the dimness of light and a feel of warmth in the veil of coldness. The last reflection of afterglow contrasting with the weightiness of the dim forest visualizes the calmness of the void hills and barrenness of the wild. Such a setting and feeling can only be conveyed intact by means of exquisite depiction, especially that of the interaction between the setting and images. Zhao’s translation gives such a construction:

**The Deer Fence(鹿柴)(Zhao, 2020: 399)**

In the mountains no one is found,           (空山不见人)  
But his voice is heard to resound.           (但闻人语响)  
The deep wood sees the returned sun;       (返景入深林)  
Once again the green moss is shone.       (复照青苔上)

Li Dongyang(李东阳,1447-1516) commended on this poem: “The importance of poetry lies in poetic meaning. The importance of poetic meaning lies in far rather than near, and lies in light rather than thick. The thick and near poetic meaning of a poem is easy to be recognized, but the light and far poetic meaning of a poem is difficult to be known. ...The poetic meaning of Wang Wei’s ‘The deep wood sees the returned sun; Once again the green moss is shone.(返景入深林，复照青苔上)’ is light but thicker, and near but further. This can be shared with wise men, but can not be told to laity.”(Wang, 2020: 459) The true meaning of these two lines of Wang Wei’s poem *The Deer Fence* was highly appreciated, while extracted far and near, thick and light as the focus of the two lines of this poem.

Zhao’s translation closely revolves around the point of far and near, thick and light. Zhao exhaustively reveals the subtle move of light and the impact the change of light exerts on other scenes and vividly displays how the image of light affects other images and his personification explicates the interaction between images, and every image has an acute touch of life, which shines in semantic procession, fulfilling the poetic appeal while approximating the original.

**Power**

In Wang Wei’s poems, his depiction and writing of an instant shocking effect can be ranked among the best of all greatest poets. In his translation of Wang Wei’s poems, Zhao, clearly aware of the poet’s art, gives vivid touches and proper representations, which can be illustrated with his translation of two famous poems, that is, *Watching*

*Hunting*(Guan Lie 观猎) and *Birds Twitter o'er the Brook*(Niao Ming Jian 鸟鸣涧).

Let's first take *Watching Hunting* for example. This poem is about hunting, consisting of three details, with the overall style of vigor, passion and pride. This kind of style is realized with adjectives denoting an instant shocking effect. And how to achieve a high-light effect equivalent to that of the original in its English translation is a problem to tackle. Meanwhile the artistic technique of the poem is also considered supernatural, as Shen Deqian(沈德潜,1673-1769) once exclaimed: "This kind of consummation in all of text, syntax and morphology reaches to peak, it is rare even in High Tang Poetry." (Shen, 2017:319) Therefore, how to make full use of the intricacy of text, syntax and morphology in translation is a challenge to face. Zhao, with his acute apprehension, has tackled the tricky problems one by one in his translation.

### **Watching Hunting (观猎) (Zhao, 2020:602)**

Against the wind rings the horn bow;	(风劲角弓鸣)
Wei sees the general hunting go.	(将军猎渭城)
The hawk looks sharply thru dry grass;	(草枯鹰眼疾)
The hoofs tread lightly on snow to pass.	(雪尽马蹄轻)
The steeds bolting through Newrich Town	(忽过新丰市)
Come back to Thin Willow anon.	(还归细柳营)
He looks back to where he has shot;	(回看射雕处)
It's all quiet and clouds there are not.	(千里暮云平)

Zhao deals with the three thrilling moments of the hunt, the three images, i.e., "Against the wind rings the horn bow"(角弓鸣), "The hawk looks sharply thru dry grass"(鹰眼疾), "The hoofs tread lightly on snow to pass"(马蹄轻) with different syntactical structures based on the ground-figure of the original so that the setting and the instant lightning and thundering, the speed and the force are well presented in the translation. Zhao's diction of "Against the wind rings the horn bow" as the setting tells the cause and effect--the wind causes the bow to ring, the interactive relationship between the wind and the bow is clearly demonstrated without separating them into separate images, so that an integration of the images is achieved. In "The hawk looks sharply thru dry grass"(草枯鹰眼疾), Zhao treats the hawk as THEME to foreground the predator spotting its prey over grass and the very instant of such an action. This treatment gives an life-like eye-catching picture. The change of word order highlights the instantaneous dynamics of the hawk's rapid search for prey on the withered grass, and turns "The hawk looks sharply thru dry grass" into a dynamic description of the rapidly changing object rather than a simple description of the object's characteristics, which highlights the strong pictorial sense of the poem itself and makes the real scene stand out on the



paper. In the case of “马蹄轻” translated into “The hoofs tread lightly on snow to pass”, Zhao may have made reference to the conception of “Through the snow left non-trace”(踏雪无痕), giving a thought to the horses’ trace on the snow, hence his wording of “tread” accompanied by “to pass” to showcase the instant of the horse treading on snow and the feel of lightness in contrast with the speed in the previous line. This line, like the previous one, treats “horse” as THEME and “snow” as RHEME for emphasis of AGENT. This dynamic cinematic translation fabulously represents “the most fecund instant” of the original (Long, Diyong, “A Narratological Study in Spatial Dimension”, *Chinese Journal of Social Sciences*, October. 19, 2012 ), giving readers an experience of shocking force and beauty.

*Birds Twitter o’er the Brook*(*Niao Ming Jian* 鸟鸣涧), another famous poem translated by Zhao shows the translator’s unique penmanship of a shocking instant and his power of how to convert it into high-grade elegant English. His translation of this poem gives enough attention to the echoing effect entailed in the chirping of the birds in the void hills.

**Birds Twitter o’er the Brook(鸟鸣涧)(Zhao, 2020: 633)**

I idle laurel flowers to fall;	(人闲桂花落)
Night quiets the vernal hills o’er all.	(夜静春山空)
The moon out, startled birds flutter;	(月出惊山鸟)
At times, o’er the brook they twitter.	(时鸣春涧中)

The first two lines follow the word order and rhythm of the original, with juxtaposed images and rhyme that Zhao adopts as usual. At the end of the sentence, Zhao’s translation has the rhyme characteristics which is he always maintains. The crux of the poem is the word “惊” in the line “The moon out, startled birds flutter”(月出惊山鸟). The moon is soundless, and just because of the dimness and calmness of the void dale, the slow rise of the moon and its pure light shed all around startle the birds in the dale to cheep. This depiction of the instant shocking effect gives the poem a sense of motion in stillness, stillness overriding motion, and motion and stillness befitting. With motion and stillness corresponding and interacting, how a translator can capture this shocking instant that birds are startled in the dale and figuratively display this sound and echo in broad moonlight is the key to success. Zhao simplifies what is redundant to reach the utmost similarity, and also gives consideration to semantic compensation in case of self-insufficiency of text. The word “flutter” at the end of line three additionally portrays the dynamic scene of startled birds flying around and enhances the completeness of its poetic environment. In the last line, fully considering the birds’ flying images and lingering sounds over the brook, Zhao puts “twitter” at the end. Though natural and

concise in wording of the translated poem, it still strongly shows Zhao's temporal-spatial consciousness and aesthetic reflection in the case of describing landscape and objects.

### Shade

Shade here refers to the ever-lasting trace or resonance of a poet's blazing passion interwoven in poetic lines projected on a reader's mind. Particularly in Wang Wei's writings, the universal theme of human emotions across time and space and across national borders has been entrenched as his most well-known poetic lines influencing posterity. As for how to trigger an English reader's similar reflection on a translated poem so that he can "Share the same moment though far away" ("天涯共此时", Zhang Jiuling 张九龄: *Looking at the Moon and Missing Lover Far Away* 望月怀远)(Zhang, 1960:591), Zhao has made a great endeavor as well. Below are Zhao's translations of the most popular two examples in Wang Wei's this kind of poems, namely *Seeing Off My Friend Yüan Two to Pacified West as an Envoy* (Song Yuan'er Shi An Xi 送元二使安西) and *On the Ninth Day of the Ninth Moon, Missing Brothers East of the Mountain* (Jiuyue Jiuri Yi Shan Dong Xiongdi 九月九日忆山东兄弟).

*Seeing Off My Friend Yüan Two to Pacified West as an Envoy* is a farewell poem by Wang Wei for sending off his friend Yüan Two at Wei Town to Pacified West, a protectorate set up by the Tang central government in the west regions of China. The image of "willow" appearing in the first two lines symbolizes farewell in Chinese traditional culture, so Wang Wei used it to create an atmosphere of parting with his friend. When translating the last two time-honored lines, namely "Have one more cup of wine I do maintain; (劝君更尽一杯酒) West of Sun Pass you have no old fellows. (西出阳关无故人)" to represent the original's vibe, Zhao renders them into English as follows:

### **Seeing Off My Friend Yüan Two to Pacified West as an Envoy(送元二使安西)(Zhao, 2020: 391)**

Dust in the town chocked with a morning rain,	(渭城朝雨浥轻尘)
The inn looks blue 'mid new weeping willows.	(客舍青青柳色新)
Have one more cup of wine I do maintain;	(劝君更尽一杯酒)
West of Sun Pass you have no old fellows.	(西出阳关无故人)

The very excellency of Zhao's translation lies in the clear intervention of English personal pronouns. The appearance of "I" and "you" forms a clearer guest-host relation and highlights the clear and unique friendship between them in the last line. Thus, in the translated text, it forms a one-to-one intimate dialogue, represents the poet's

repetitive motion of asking his friend to drink one more cup and expresses the poet's sincere wishes poured into the wine as well as his grief for parting by implication.

Wang Wei's another heptasyllabic quatrain *On the Ninth Day of the Ninth Moon, Missing Brothers East of the Mountain* is themed by a more universal human emotion, that is, nostalgia. The whole poem delicate in specific wording and context, brings to readers a great pleasure to savor its poetic and emotional essence. Good poetic lines, good verse indeed! Though unpretentious in writing, it has always been a touching poem for countless readers generation after generation. Wang Wei wrote it at the age of 17. For all its plainness and explicitness, it is not at all inferior in its perspective of impressiveness to his later poems featuring mature writing techniques and complex poetic feelings. Moreover, *On the Ninth Day of the Ninth Moon, Missing Brothers East of the Mountain* is one of the 10 clearly dated poems Wang Wei left to us, and it is a representative of his early-age poetry.

#### **On the Ninth Day of the Ninth Moon, Missing Brothers East of the Mountain**

(九月九日忆山东兄弟) (Zhao, 2020: 4)

An alien land sees me a lonely soul; (独在异乡为异客)  
I pine for my dear ones each festive day. (每逢佳节倍思亲)  
Far off, I know my brothers climb a knoll, (遥知兄弟登高处)  
All wearing cornel sprigs but one away. (遍插茱萸少一人)

At that time, Wang Wei should be in Chang'an(长安, the capital of the Tang Dynasty) to seek rank and fame, far away from Puzhou(蒲州, now Yongji 永济 in Shanxi 山西 Province), his hometown. He addressed his brothers back home as Brothers East of the Mountain, because Puzhou was located in the east of Mt. Hua(华山). On Double Ninth Day, he missed his dear ones afar and wrote this poem. There are two difficult points for translation: one is how to translate 异 that appears twice in the first line, so as to highlight the poet's loneliness; the other is how to represent the poet's strong feelings especially the great pity of not being able to go back home on Double Ninth Day.

As for “异乡” and “异客”, Zhao respectively applies the method of literal translation and liberal translation to represent the original's poetic taste. For the latter, “a lonely soul” is adopted to directly and accurately express the poet's loneliness in a place far off from home. For the second line, Zhao translates “亲” into “my dear ones” instead of “family”, defining a wider scope covering all relatives and friends emotionally close to himself, and more emphasizing an emotional connection between “亲” and the poet rather than just limiting it to kinship. In terms of logical relation among the sentences,

25

it is well connected to “a lonely soul” above in poetic feelings and environment, and also retains the semantic function of the original line, that is, introducing readers to the following, from a close range of surroundings to a distant vision for homeland afar. When it comes to the third line, Zhao adds a lyric subject “I” to further intervene, and express the poet’s solitary existence and his sorrow in a remote place far away from home. The special wording “far off” for “遥” is also such a smart choice. The breaking up results in a unique rhyme like a tone of sigh, vividly manifesting a young wanderer’s pity for not being able to return home to involve himself in the Double Ninth Day customs like climbing a height. As for the last line, the most touching part of the whole poem, Zhao makes a shift of perspective when translating “少一人” without sacrificing the semantic content of the original. Since in the original poem, the poet wrote from the perspective of “Brothers East of the Mountain” to display his absence for their gatherings, Zhao uses a totally different method from that applied to translating the first two lines. By avoiding literal translation like “without me”, Zhao does not adopt the same perspective as the first two lines, for the reason that it would fail to represent the shift of perspective in the original poem and also incorrectly emphasize an individual’s distinctiveness for a group. For this concern, Zhao translates 少一人 into “but one away”, which literally shows no clear personal subject and then completes the shift of perspective from the poet himself to that from Brothers East of the Mountain. By hiding a specific personal pronoun, the translation clarifies the poet as part of the group, displays the emotional interaction beyond space among all figures involved in the poem, and expresses the poet’s nostalgia for homeland. All in all, in Zhao’s translation, a lonely man in a remote place far away from home on Double Ninth Day is distinctly portrayed, and there is a sharp contrast between “far away from homeland” and “near at heart to his dear ones”. Zhao with his unfailing eye and attention to details, succeeds in fully and intensively expressing Wang Wei’s deep sorrow and confusion brought about by the torturing ambivalence that his homeland is far and but his feeling is near.

## CONCLUSION

Wang Wei is known as “Buddha of Poetry” for the serenity and open-minded beauty hidden between lines that delivers a sense of Zen, making his poems fascinating throughout the ages. In my opinion, it is precisely this kind of beauty that not only maximizes the most moving parts of this literary genre POETRY—purity and clarity, but also most entirely shows the characteristics of Tang Poetry — “Simplicity shows after all flashiness is washed off” (“豪华落尽见真淳”, Yuan Haowen 元好问: *Thirty Poems of On Poetry: The Forth Poem 论诗三十首其四*)(Yuan, 1995:171).

On April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020, British Broadcasting Corporation (hereinafter, BBC) broadcast a

documentary — *Du Fu*(杜甫,712-770): *China's Greatest Poet*, which is exactly the title of Mr. William Hung's work published by Harvard University Press in 1952. Nearly 70 years later, the first documentary ever made about Du Fu in the West follows Hung's definition of Du Fu's literary stature throughout China. In the documentary, Stephen Owen, a Harvard professor and world-renowned sinologist, equates with Shakespeare and Dante, arguing that they have created the very standard by which great poetry is judged. This cultural event is of great significance, which means that after the publication of William Hung's work with its repercussions in the western academic circle, the Western world once again recognizes and affirms Du Fu as the pioneer and preacher of world civilization. The broadcast of this documentary not only makes Du Fu the most dazzling Chinese literary IP worldwide in the new century, but also brings the great achievements of Chinese Tang Poetry to the world's attention in the new era. If we further interpret Stephen Owen's words, we can say that the brilliant names recorded in the history of Tang Poetry are the creators of the standards for judging great poetry. This also leads us to a reconsideration, that is, as Tang Poetry, formed in a country with the oldest living tradition of poetry in the world, is the carrier and proof of the ultimate beauty of Chinese literature, how should we keep on expanding the significance and path of its world communication? There is no doubt that the English translation of Tang Poetry is an indispensable part of it at any time.

In today's context of globalization, the most outstanding value of the English version of Wang Wei's complete works by Professor Zhao Yanchun lies in its excellent reproduction of the most critical aesthetic features of Tang Poetry — sincerity and purity. Ouyang Xiu(欧阳修,1007-1072), a poet in the Song Dynasty, once expressed his highest respect for Yin Zhu(尹洙,1001-1047) in *On Epitaph on Yin Zhu(Lun Yin Shilu Muzhi 论尹师鲁墓志)*, through closely imitating Yin's writing style. And Professor Zhao Yanchun's persistent pursuit of infinite closeness to the original text in the English translation of Wang Wei's poems can also be regarded as an inter-temporal meeting between an outstanding contemporary translator and a great poet of the Tang dynasty. These are the salient features of Zhao's translation of Wang Wei's works: "rich and colorful diction"(Zhong,1981:7), "mind interweaving in underlying words"(Liu,1998:357), "shaping exquisite images to express emotion"(Hu,1979:114), "language refined without redundancy"(Yan, 2005:26), it can be said that Zhao's translation of Wang Wei's works has created the standard whereby to judge the English translations of poetry of the Tang Dynasty.

As a bridge of communication and exchange between different cultures, translation is not only a transcoding play of language, but also the integration of context, the resonance of semantics, the convergence of tradition. It is an inevitable way that



prompts us to think deeply and to find out what François Jullien called “l’écart et l’entre”(space and inter-space) of different cultures and finally to build a community with a shared future for mankind. I believe, this is the original power and ultimate purpose of Mr. Zhao’s spell in translation, which finally turns into charming sound, light, power and shade that run through time, ancient and modern, and across China and the West, restoring the Tang’s atmosphere one thousand year ago. In the end, let me try to conclude with the opening words of the BBC’s documentary, *Du Fu: China’s Greatest Poet*: “In our time, right across the planet, the past is receding from us at an ever faster rate. And that’s specially so here in China. But the traveler searching for the meaning of China’s ancient culture, can still find it in China’s present.”

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