The International Journal for
Translation & Interpreting
Research
trans-int.org

The complementarity of Chinese translation methods of English metrical poetry

Li Chongyue
Jiangsu University
andrewstudy@163.com

Abstract: Chinese translators have hitherto devised three strategies to render English metrical poetry into Chinese: Sinolisation, liberal translation, and poetic form transplantation. Translators practicing the methods of sinolisation and liberal translation belong to the group in favour of spiritual resemblance. Translators who follow the method of poetic form transplantation belong to the group in favour of formal resemblance. It is quite obvious that the two groups disagree on the translation standard or guiding principle. Actually, the translation standards of the two groups can coexist, and the translation methods under the guidance of these different translation standards can coexist. It is impractical and impossible to use one Chinese translation method or standard to guide the Chinese translation practice, and the diverse Chinese translation methods of English metrical poetry can coexist and complement each other in the foreseeable future.

Keywords: English metrical poetry; Chinese translation; translation method; complementarity

1. Introduction

The Chinese introduction of English metrical poetry dates back to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1908), and various Chinese translation methods have emerged. Up to now, poetry translators still hold conflicting opinions about the Chinese translation method to render English metrical verse, and their attitude towards other translation methods is usually negative. Some translators even claim that early-emerging methods are becoming 'outdated' and will be replaced by late-emerging ones, just as what happens in biological evolution (Huang, 2001). However, the fact exists that Chinese renditions adopting different methods, including the so-called outdated ones, are popular with many readers, and that some translators still prefer the 'outdated' methods to render English metrical verse.

2．Disagreement of Chinese translators on the poetry translation standard

The focus of attention of most Chinese poetry translators is how to handle the paradox between form and spirit. From the treatment of form-spirit relationship, they fall into two schools: one school gives priority to formal resemblance, and the other one to spiritual resemblance.

Not a few poem translators in China (Cheng, 1923; Liu, 1996; Feng, 1978; Wang, 1962) put their major emphasis on conveying the original poem's spirit instead of the form. According to them, an ideal rendition of a poem should be a poem itself which transmits the original emotions, conveys the original content, and retains the original form, but in practice the exact reproduction of form is impossible, and the essence of poetry translation is the transference of spirit instead of form. Whether a translated poem resembles the original lies in conveying the spirit, not in transferring the form, and the first thing that must be preserved is the spirit and meaning. For the sake of the transfer of spirit, some sacrifice of the form is inevitable and justifiable, and pursuing the form instead of the spirit is attending to trifles while neglecting the essentials. A translation is only an approximation to the original poem, and the first and foremost concern is spiritual resemblance.

Other poem translators (Bian, Ye, Yuan & Chen, 1959; Huang, 1999; Jiang & Xu, 1996) think that form and spirit are inseparable, and formal resemblance is the premise for spiritual resemblance. Much concerned about the reproduction of literary form, prosody, and so on, they try to imitate or transplant the formal aspects of the original. They think that formal resemblance goes before spiritual resemblance and spiritual resemblance can be achieved only by formal resemblance, and there has never been a successful poetry translation that discards formal resemblance but pursues spiritual resemblance. They claim that the poetic form, from which we can judge the nationality, the time, the content orientation, and the style of a verse, is the most prominent feature of a poem; that the language used in metrical verse is quantified; and whether a translation is faithful to and to what extent it follows the original can be observed from its outer form. Huang (1999) proposed a system for the evaluation of the quality of poetry translation. The extent of formal resemblance of a translation to the original can be judged from four levels or perspectives, with each level containing three grades.

It is exactly such disagreement on poetry translation standard or guiding principle that leads to different Chinese translation methods of English metrical verse.

3. Chinese translation methods of English metrical poetry

Generally speaking, there are three Chinese translation methods of English metrical poetry: sinolisation, liberal translation and poetic form transplantation.

3.1 Sinolisation

Any translation from other languages into Chinese is, in a sense, some kind of sinolisation. Here, sinolisation is used in a narrower sense, referring to the practice of translating English metrical verse into Chinese traditional poetic forms, such as *siyan, wuyan*, *qiyan, ciquti*,[1] and other Chinese traditional forms. This approach is the first method ever adopted by Chinese poetry translators, and predominates the earliest period in the history of Chinese translation of English metrical verse. At the very beginning of the introduction of English metrical poems into China, it was natural to render them into Chinese traditional poetic forms, because at that time these forms, especially *siyan*, *wuyan* and *qiyan*, were indisputably the carrier of poetry, and translators then were quite adept in composing Chinese traditional poems.

According to Qian (1982), the first English metrical poetry translated into Chinese is *A psalm of life* written by American poet Henry Wadsworth

---

1. *Siyan, wuyan, qiyan, ciquti* : Types of classical Chinese poems. There are four characters to each line of *siyan* (四言) poem , five characters to each line of *wuyan* (五言) poem , and seven characters to each line of *qiyan* (七言) poem. C*iquti* (词曲体) is classical Chinese poetry composed in the form of *ci* or *qu, ci* is a form of poetry composed to certain tunes in fixed numbers of lines and words, originating in the Tang Dynasty and fully developed in the Song Dynasty, and *qu* is a type of verse for singing, which emerged in the Southern Song and Jin Dynasties and became popular in the Yuan Dynasty.

Longfellow. The translation, however, was a cooperative work by two people – Thomas Francis Wade, the British envoy to China, and Dong Xun, a high official of the Qing Dynasty. Their translation was in two steps: Wade translated the original poem into Chinese, and then Dong polished Wade's rendition according to the requirements of Chinese classical poetry. Take the first stanza of the poem as example:

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

勿以忧时言
人生若虚梦
性灵睡即与死无异
不仅形骸尚灵在 (Tr. by Wade)

莫将烦恼著诗篇
百岁原如一觉眠
梦短梦长同是梦
独留真气满坤乾 (Tr. by Dong Xun)

There is no doubt that Wade understood the original English poem thoroughly, but his command of Chinese language was not good enough. His translation, which is more like prose with line divisions, is not very smooth or accurate, some parts being somewhat unclear and difficult to understand. On the other hand, because Dong did not master the English language, his translation was based on Wade's version; and he paid so much of his attention to the classical Chinese poetic form *qiyan* and the didactic content of the translation that some of the semantic content of the original poem got lost. A *Pinyin* phonetic transcription of Dong's translation clearly shows that the Chinese version strictly follows the classical poetic pattern of *qiyan*, that is, there are seven characters in each line, and Lines 2 and 4 rhyme with Line 1. Below is a *Pinyin* phonetic transcription of Dong's translation:

Mo jiang fan nao zhu shi pian
Bai sui yuan ru yi jiao mian
Meng duan meng chang tong shi meng
Du liu zhen qi man kun qian

Dong's semantic distortion of the original can be seen from a back-translation of the Chinese version:

Do not talk about vexations in a poem,
Regarding a one-hundred-year life as a sleep.
A brief dream is as good as a long one,
So leave your great name in the world.

Both Dong and Wade being officials, their cooperation was more a diplomatic activity than a translation practice.

According to the study of Huang (2001), the earliest Chinese translator of English metrical poetry, if perceived from the perspective of literary translation, is Yan Fu, who, in his Chinese translation of *Evolution and ethics*, rendered some metrical poems into Chinese, such as some lines from *An essay on man* by Alexander Pope:

All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All Chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good;

Below is Yan’s Chinese translation:

元宰有秘机，
斯人特未悟；
世事岂偶然，
彼苍审措注。
乍疑乐律乖，
庸知各得所；
虽有偏沴灾，
终则其利浦。

Yan translated the original poem into Chinese using the form of *wuyan*. His translation, which is refined and elegant, having the flavour of Chinese classical poetry, was very popular among the Chinese literati, even some conservatives at that time, and therefore has exerted an important impact on later translators and translations. Yan was adept in both English and Chinese, and his translation was semantically faithful to the original. The popularity of his translation was partly due to the classical Chinese poetic form of *wuyan*, that is, there are five characters in each line and Lines 2, 4 and 8 rhyme. A *Pinyin* phonetic transcription of the translation can indicate the formal characteristics of the Chinese version:

Yuan zai you mi ji,
Si ren te wei wu;
Shi shi qi ou ran,
Bi cang shen cuo zhu.
Zha yi le lv guai,
Yong zhi ge de suo;
Sui you pian zhen zhai,
Zhong ze qi li pu.

Although the sinolisation method predominated the early Chinese translation of English metrical poetry, as time goes on, this method arouses acrimonious dispute. Advocates of the sinolisation method usually put forward two arguments. The first is that Chinese traditional poetic forms have been deeply ingrained in most Chinese people, and are thus more popular than other poetic forms. Chinese classical poetic forms are proved to be still attractive to today’s Chinese readers. Wang (1995), after inspecting more than one thousand Chinese poems of all kinds, including Chinese translations from other languages, finds that Chinese classical poetic forms, especially *wuyan* and *qiyan*, are favourite forms among Chinese readers, and that they still have much vitality in the present day. This fact explains why even at present English metrical poetry translations taking Chinese traditional poetic forms remain popular among many readers, and why some poetry translators deem that Chinese classical poetic forms will provoke a sense of intimacy in most readers’ minds, and take sinolisation method as more suitable.

Secondly, the fact that translations in the form of Chinese classical poetry are more catchy and readable further strengthens the translators’ preference for the method. Feng (1978, p.111) insists that poems, for the sake of circulation, "should be written in a way that is chantable and easy for memorization," otherwise they will not win popularity easily. There are two categories of poetry, one to be read by the eye, the other to be read by the mouth, the latter being superior to the former. Chinese new poetry belongs to the former and is not easy for circulation among people, since it is less rhythmic and is not quite chantable. Clearly, for the sake of chanting, memorisation, and circulation, translating English metrical verse into Chinese classical poetry forms is plausible.

Some translators, like Lao Long and Yuan Kejia, though they do not support English metrical poems all being rendered into Chinese traditional forms, do find it practical in translating certain English metrical poems. In Lao's opinion (1987), English metrical poems have different styles and forms, some elegant, some primitively simple, and some plain and colloquial, so it is somewhat arbitrary to translate all into Chinese classical poetic forms. Their translation should, depending on the content and style, adopt different forms: some into *wuyan*, *qiyan*, and other similar classical poetic forms, and some into free verse or semi-free verse. Only in this way can the spirit of the original be better conveyed. Yuan (1995, p.5) was doubtful about the feasibility of translating English metrical poems into Chinese classical ones, believing that by doing so, "the original poems' beauty would be spoiled." When he was translating American ballads in 1970s, he tried the forms of *wuyan* and *qiyan*, and found they worked quite well in some renditions.

Counter-arguments are constantly proposed by objectors to the method of sinolisation. They contend that translators supporting this method forget about one of their duties, that is, introducing foreign poetic culture into China, which can promote the development of Chinese new poetry. "If all foreign poems were rendered into Chinese classical poems," contend Jiang and Xu (1996, p.382), "how could Chinese-only readers get to know the features of Shakespeare's sonnet, Mayakovsky's staircase verse, etc? […] and the development of Chinese new poetry, whose emergence is under the enlightenment of translated poems, would be postponed". On the other hand, in the eyes of objectors, say, Huang Gaoxin and Bian Zhilin, sinolisation is not faithful to the original in the respect of form, which they think is no less important than the semantic content, and is not faithful to the author and the source culture either. They also think that, while readers are enjoying such translations, mental association with Chinese traditional subjects or concepts would be aroused, which would be confusing and even funny.

Among other things, Huang (1999), who is a representative of these objectors, puts forward an argument that Chinese traditional poetic forms, either *siyan*, *wuyan* or *qiyan*, etc., are too condensed in form to reproduce the colloquial but structurally complicated language of English metrical poetry; and that the limited Chinese traditional poetic forms cannot accommodate the diverse contents of English metrical poetry. "The old forms of Chinese poetry, whether *siyan*, *wuyan* or *qiyan*, have limitations so that it can hardly embody the meaning, image and artistic conception of the original," contends Liu (1991, p.166). Another reason is that such renditions as Su Manshu's rendition of Byron's *The Ocean* are "rather difficult for the broad masses of young readers to understand and appreciate" (Liu, 1991, pp.166-167). It is obvious that these objectors think that, since the poetic lines of Chinese traditional or classical poetry are stipulated and generally quite short, translators may have to distort the content of the original in their rendition, and that the language expressions used in Chinese classical poetic forms are too archaic to be easily accessed by ordinary readers.

The method of sinolisation, as the first Chinese translation method of English metrical verse, has provoked much contention. Supporters and objectors all put forcible arguments to justify their standpoints. Translating English metrical verse into Chinese classical poetic forms has its strengths and weaknesses, the former being that translations taking these forms are indeed more chantable and catchy, since their rhythms and metrical structures, which have been employed for thousands of years, are the ones inherent in Chinese language; the latter being that their rhythms and metrical structures have nothing to do with the original, thus the exotic flavour in form is weakened, and readers who are ignorant of poetic forms of English metrical poetry can never get to know them via translations made in this method.

3.2 Liberal translation

After the very first case of Chinese translation of *A psalm of life*, for almost half a century, the sinolisation method solely dominated the stage of rendering English metrical verse into Chinese. With the change of times and *pai-hua* (白话 vernacular) Chinese replacing the classical Chinese as the literary language, some translators began to practice translating English metrical poetry in *pai-hua* Chinese. Since no poetic rules or versifications for *pai-hua* Chinese had been established, and under the influence of Western free verse and semi-free verse, the liberal translation method went on the stage of poetry translation.

3.2.1 Translating English metrical poetry into prose

Only a few translators adopted this approach, the most famous ones being Zhu Shenghao, who translated Shakespeare’s plays into Chinese, and Fang Chong, whose translation of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* impresses many readers. Generally speaking, the approach of translating English metrical verse into prose is practiced by the least practitioners. The reason may lie in the fact that this method changes the literary genre of the original. Turner (1976) contends that the translation of poetry into prose, which is only semantically accurate, is not itself a poem and remains a crib, since it misses the point and soul of poetry. Tuner represents those who object to translating verse into prose. From their perspective, a poem loses its legitimacy to be a poem when it is translated into a different literary genre.

Though most poetry translators are not in favour of the method, some are supporters of it. Weng Xianliang, for example, is supportive of this method, and says that “translation is not facsimile and the resemblance to the original lies in the spirit instead of the form, and that rhyming and line division in the translation are not important” (cited in Liu,1996, p.365). And he further contends that if poetry translators do not free themselves, their renditions will be too rigid to keep the flavour of the original (Weng, 1985). Translators in favour of the method think that formal elements of English metrical poetry, like rhythm, rhyme, etc., are quite distinct from those of Chinese language, and it is futile to try to relive these elements in Chinese. They believe that it is more meaningful to pay heed to the spirit of the original than to pay attention to formal elements, and that translating into prose can to the largest extent free translators from the burdens of such things as rhythm, rhyme, etc., and the spirit can be better conveyed.

Translating verse into prose undoubtedly liberates translators from the restraints of rhythm, rhyme, etc., and thus provides more freedom for them to convey to the largest extent the semantic content of the original poem. Its strength is also its defect – the adopting of prosaic style makes it impossible for readers to realize what they are reading was originally a poem. This method cannot be supported unconditionally. From our perspective, this method is more suited for content-centred poetry, such as epic, poetic drama. The existence of prosaic translations in China of Homer’s epic, Dante’s *The*

Divine Comedy, and Shakespeare's poetic drama proves the justifiability of translating English metrical poetry into Chinese prose.

3.2.2 Translating English metrical poetry into Chinese free or semi-free verse

Since, compared to Chinese classical poetry, Chinese new or modern poetry has a comparatively short history of less than one hundred years, Chinese poets have not reached an agreement on what should be the rhythm unit of *pai-hua* poetry. Some poets, as well as poetry translators, think that the rhythm unit of new poetry should be Chinese character, while the others are in favour of *dun*[2] (Bian, Ye, Yuan, & Chen, 1959/1987); comparatively speaking, the latter enjoys more popularity and influence. This divergence also leads to different translation approaches in translators favouring poetic form transplantation, which we will discuss later.

Further clarification of the rhythm unit *dun* is necessary, because it is not as simple and clear as Chinese characters. Since some poets and poetry translators do not agree on Chinese characters being the rhythm unit of new poetry, and in their translation practice they cannot find in Chinese language a ready equivalent of foot, which is the rhythm unit of English metrical poetry, after strenuous exploration they put forward some new concepts. Wen Yiduo first put forward the concept of *yinchi* (sound ruler) in the 1920s. Later, in the 1930s, Sun Dayu proposed constructing *pai-hua* poetic lines with *yinzu* (sound group). He Qifang, after the founding of People's Republic of China, presented the concept of *dun*, which is very similar to the two previous concepts. Of the three concepts, *dun* is more popularly used to address the rhythm unit of *pai-hua* poetry. *Dun* is a semantic and phonological unit which usually consists of two or three Chinese characters (there are one- or four-character *dun*, but they are not common). It is in agreement with the practice of two- or three-character words, which are in a dominant place in *pai-hua* Chinese. For example, if the following four poetic lines are divided into *dun*, they go like this:

> 这是 | 一沟 | 绝望的 | 死水，
> 清风 | 吹不起 | 半点 | 漪沦。
> 不如 | 多扔些 | 破铜 | 烂铁，
> 爽性 | 泼你的 | 剩菜 | 残羹。

Clearly, as a kind of semantic unit, *dun* also takes account of the phonological feature of *pai-hua* Chinese, i.e. the dominance of two- or three-character Chinese words.

Compared with metrical poetry, in aspects of stanza, rhythm, and rhyme, free verse and semi-free verse, as their names suggest, are more flexible and do not have many restrictions. Different from Chinese classical poetry, Chinese free verse and semi-free verse are written in *pai-hua* Chinese. Another feature is that their rhythm patterns are not regular, whether from the perspective of Chinese characters or *dun*. The difference between free and semi-free verse is that the latter sometimes has rhyming and parallel structures while the former does not.

Similar to supporters of the sinolisation method, advocates of the approach of rendering English metrical poetry into Chinese *pai-hua* free verse or semi-free verse do not consider the formal elements of the original

---

[2] *Dun* (顿), a slight pause between sense groups

English metrical poetry inviolable either. What they are much concerned about is the transfer of the spirit of the original. They believe that without the restriction of formal elements, greater accuracy in semantic content and spirit can be achieved.

The slight difference between translators favouring this approach and those favouring translating English metrical verse into prose is that the former think that poetry should be translated into poetry instead of another literary genre. Guo Moruo, a distinguished Chinese poet and translator, speaks of this point clearly, “Chinese translations of foreign poetry must be like poetry[…] Poetry is composed of certain poetic elements such as style and versification. If all these are completely cancelled, such renditions would be tasteless and not poetic at all” (Guo,1999, p.59).

We have examined the two directions of the liberal translation method of English metrical poetry, i.e. translating into prose and translating into free verse or semi-free verse. Translators favouring the two approaches are those who give priority to spiritual instead of formal resemblance. Their viewpoint is that it is too idealistic to reproduce the form and spirit, and that for the sake of preserving the spirit of the original, alteration to the form should be tolerable. Through the analysis of concrete translations, we find that the method indeed liberates translators from the fetters of form, and thus has more potential to be semantically more approximate to the original, but its drawback is that Chinese readers cannot get much knowledge about the formal characteristics of English metrical verse. Compared with translating English metrical into free verse or semi-free verse, translating into prose usually happens in the translation of content-oriented epics, poetic dramas, etc.

3.3 Poetic form transplantation

Poetic form transplantation refers to the practice of imitating the versification of the original English metrical poem. It has three directions: replacing English syllables with Chinese characters, replacing English foot with Chinese *dun*, and replacing both English syllables and foot with Chinese characters and *dun* (Huang, 2004).

3.3.1 Replacing English syllables with Chinese characters

As previously mentioned, there are two different views of the rhythm unit of *pai-hua* poetry, one taking Chinese characters as the rhythm unit, the other taking *dun* as the rhythm unit. Translators who take Chinese characters as the rhythm unit of *pai-hua* poetry replace English syllables with Chinese characters in their poetic form transplantation practice. In their eyes, Chinese characters are the equivalent of English syllables in poetry translation. What they are concerned about is the neatness of the number of Chinese characters.

In their translation practice, translators following this approach use, in every line, the same or approximately the same number of Chinese characters to replace the syllables of the original. As for the rhyme, they try to imitate that of the original although they sometimes make minor alterations. Take Dai Liuling’s translation of the first stanza of Shakespeare’s Sonnet Eighteen as an example:

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? a
Thou art more lovely and more temperate: b
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, a
And summer’s lease hath all too short a date: b

我怎样能把你比做夏天？ a
你比她更可爱也更温和： b

五月的娇蕾有暴风震颠， a
夏季的寿命很短就渡过： c

The original has four poetic lines, with each line comprising five iambic feet and ten syllables, and rhyme scheme being *abab*. In Dai's translation, every poetic line consists of ten Chinese characters, the ratio of syllables to Chinese characters per line being 1:1, and the rhyming is *abac*, which is slightly different to that of the original. Reading such a translation which has a neat form and the identical number of Chinese characters in each line, readers can easily and safely infer that the original is a regulated verse.

3.3.2 Replacing English foot with Chinese dun

Translators taking *dun* as the rhythm unit of *pai-hua* poetry advocate replacing English foot with Chinese *dun*; the number of *dun* per line should be the same as the number of foot in the original. However, they do not pay much heed to the number of Chinese characters per line; the number of Chinese characters may not be exactly the same as the number of the original syllables. As to the rhyming, they hold the same idea as those favouring replacing syllables with Chinese characters. In the following, we will take Bian Zhilin's translation of the first stanza of *The Isles of Greece* as an example to illustrate the characteristics of the method of replacing English foot with Chinese *dun*:

The isles of Greece! The isles of Greece! a
Where burning Sappho loved and sung. b
Where grew the arts of war and peace, a
Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung! b
Eternal summer gilds them yet, c
But all, except their sun, is set. c

希腊 | 群岛啊，| 希腊 | 群岛！ a
从前有 | 火热的 | 萨福 | 唱情歌， b
从前长 | 文治 | 武功的 | 花草， a
涌出过 | 德罗斯，| 跳出过 | 阿普罗！ b
夏天来 | 镀金，| 还长久 | 灿烂—— c
除了 | 太阳，| 什么都 | 落了山！ c

Bian uses four *dun* to replace the four iambic feet, and the rhyme pattern of the Chinese version is the same as that of the original, which is *ababcc*. Compared to translations replacing English syllables with Chinese characters, this kind of translation is not so neat in appearance, as the number of Chinese characters in each line is different.

3.3.3 Replacing both English syllable and foot with Chinese characters and dun

This approach was first devised by Huang Gaoxin in the 1980s. Although he advocates *dun* being the rhythm unit in Chinese, he thinks that translators should also pay attention to the number of Chinese characters, since the number of syllables in the original is rather neat. Aware that translations using "replacing syllable with Chinese character" is well-arranged in appearance and translations adopting "replacing foot with *dun*" is neat in sound, after arduous exploration and much translation practice, he puts forward the method of "replacing both syllable and foot with Chinese character and *dun*, and reproducing the original rhyming." Compared to the two previous ones, this approach's faithfulness to the original metrical form is greater. And the requirement for translators using this method is indeed comparatively more demanding. The properties of this approach can be observed from the example below:

I Strove with None
I strove with none, for none was worth my strife; a
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, art; b
I warmed both hands before the fire of life; a
It sinks, and I am ready to depart. b

This iambic pentameter quatrain is written by Walter Savage Landor:

我与世 | 无争，| 因为我 | 不屑 | 与谁争； a
大自然 | 我热爱，| 自然 | 之后 | 数艺术。 b
生活的 | 火上，| 我把手 | 烘得 | 热腾腾； a
火现在 | 快熄灭，| 我已 | 准备好 | 离去。 b
(Tr. by Huang Gaoxin)

Huang’s rendition has five *dun* per line, which exactly reflects the foot number of the original poem; and the rhyming is also reproduced. He, however, has made some alteration to the number of Chinese characters in the *dun*. In the rendition, every line has twelve Chinese characters, the ratio of syllables to Chinese characters being expanded to 1:1.2. Such a minor unvarying expansion of the number of Chinese characters in each line, in Huang’s words, can provide translators a little freedom, and thus is tolerable (Huang, 2007). In the translation of *A book of verses underneath the bough*, which has been mentioned above, we can perceive the exact transplantation of the original metrical form; both the *dun* number, Chinese character number and rhyming all exactly reflect their equivalents in the original.

Although the method of poetic form transplantation achieves some kind of success in reproducing the formal elements of the original, it still faces considerable opposition. Feng (1981, pp.247-248) thinks that since English is a stress language, and Chinese is a tone language, *dun* and foot are not equivalent. For instance, the most common iambic pentameter poetic line, five stressed syllables alternating with five unstressed ones, will not give readers the impression that the line is quite long; on the contrary, a Chinese ten-character poetic line will give readers that impression, since every character bears a tone which must be clearly pronounced. And he further gives an example: “温洛龄 | 一带 | 草木 | 深诉着 | 悲苦；// 雷铿冈 | 披离的 | 林莽 | 似叹息 | 填膺”. Such lines, each having five *dun*, twelve or thirteen Chinese characters, do not sound as smooth and rhythmical as the original.

Weng (1983, p.137) contends that “*dun* and foot are not equivalent, and the musical effects they produce are obviously different”. From his perspective, since Chinese language and English language have their distinctive metrical properties, alteration in translation is unavoidable, the only difference being that each translator has his own sense of propriety, and he is opposed to rigidly adhering to duplicating the original rhythm. The rhythm unit of English poetry, foot, has equal time-intervals and contains a regular combination of stressed and unstressed syllables; it is impossible to be transplanted into Chinese language. Similarly, Lao (1995) contends that the rhythm unit of Chinese classical poetry, i.e. *pingze* (平仄，level and oblique tones) cannot be transferred in to English poetry. Supportive of using the Chinese traditional poetic forms, and free verse or semi-free verse to translate English metrical poetry, he thinks that the transfer of metrical form is in the second place, while the transfer of spirit is the first and foremost.

Feng, Weng, and Lao’s views are echoed by Zhao (2003, p209), who says “Chinese poetry and English poetry are so greatly different from each other that any attempts at imitating the form cannot produce the same effect produced by the original”.

4. The complementarity of Chinese translation methods of English metrical poetry

We have examined different Chinese translation methods of English metrical poetry in Section 3, and found that the reason for the divergence is that different translators favouring different methods have different translation norms, and they have conflicting understanding about the relationship between form and spirit in the translation process. Translators supporting the methods of sinolisation and liberal translation prefer spiritual resemblance to formal resemblance, or rather, their translation norm is spiritual resemblance, and translators favouring poetic form transplantation uphold the opposite opinion. Each side wants to establish their translation standard as legitimate and authoritative, and dispel the translation standard held by the other. In fact, we have sound reasons to propose the coexistence and complementarity of different translation methods.

4.1 Multiple functions of poetry

Generally speaking, poetry has five major functions: pure aesthetic function, recreational function, didactic function, cognitive function, and utilitarian function (Gu, 2003).Pure aesthetic function refers to the arousal of the reader’s sense of beauty by such formal elements in poetry as language skills, meter, style, rhetoric, etc. Recreational function refers to the enjoyment poetry brings to readers. Besides formal elements, this also includes theme, ideological content, emotional impact, etc. Didactic function emphasises the moralising role of some poems, such as the medieval Catholic poetry. Poetry can help readers acquire knowledge, verities, etc, and promote their cognitive development; this is what is called the cognitive function of poetry. For example, *Faust*, a poetic drama written by Goethe, is a rather philosophical work. Utilitarian function, as the name suggests, is concerned with the practical function of poetry. For instance, some health care tips are written in the form of poetry, which facilitates people’s memorisation.

English metrical verse, a subset of poetry, also has these functions. Specifically, one poem may have only one or two functions, another may have more or even all the five functions. Different translators may want to highlight different functions while translating, which unquestionably decides there should be more than one Chinese translation method. For an English metrical verse, some translators may want to distinguish its aesthetic value, some its didactic function, and some its utilitarian function.

Take *The Isles of Greece* as an example. One of the pioneers of Chinese *pai-hua* poetry, Hu Shi, translated it in the form of *lisaoti*[3]. The reason, we think, is that he wanted to emphasise the didactic and utilitarian function of the poem. The *lisaoti* style expresses emotions openly and directly. Hu Shi's rendition taking the form of *lisaoti* is in accordance with the inherent rhythms of Chinese language, and thus facilitates people's memorisation and chanting. Such a rendition can better arouse Chinese people's patriotism and opposition to foreign invaders. As for a translator who values the cognitive function, they may transplant the original poetic form to introduce some knowledge about English metrical verse to Chinese readers.

---

[3] *Lisaoti* : the style of *Lisao* (离骚, Encountering Sorrow), one of the most remarkable poetic works by Qu Yuan (cir. 340-278 B.C.), the first great romantic poet of China. The poem , characterised by the use of six-syllable couplets, the two lines of each couplet being connected by a meaningless syllable *xi* (兮), was probably written during the period when the poet had been exiled by his king..

4.2 Diversity of human aesthetic values

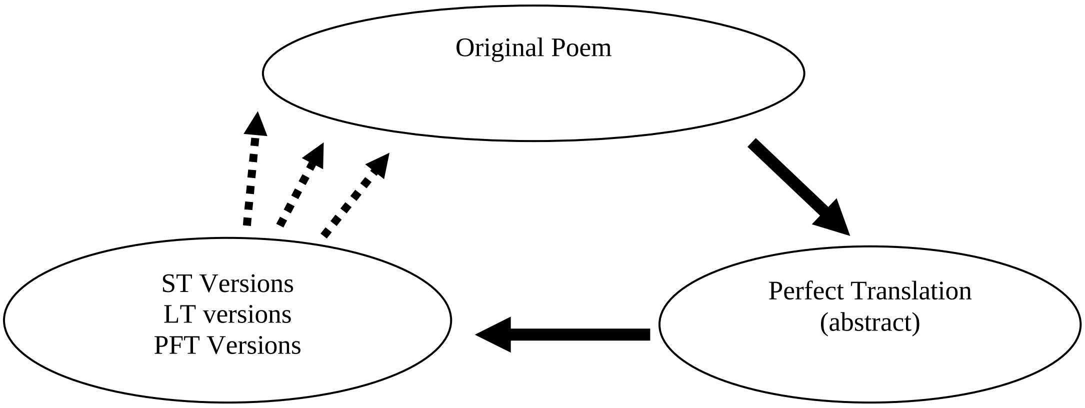
From the angle of human aesthetic values, we also have a rational justification for the coexistence of different Chinese translation methods of English metrical verse. Undoubtedly, diverse aesthetic values lead to different translation styles. Conversely, it can be said that the coexistence of different translators and translation styles has great influence on human aesthetic interests, making them more varied. Diversity entails richness, and implies that we should adopt a more accommodating attitude towards different ways of translating. For example, a work of poetry may have several or even tens of renditions, each with its own merits. We can translate an English metrical poem into classical poetry, free verse, semi-free verse, *pai-hua* metrical verse which imitates the original, or even prose. Each of these has its own charms, so we cannot easily decide in favour of one against the other; one translation style cannot satisfy all the different kinds of translators and readers. Translations are undertaken and read not just for didactic, cognitive purposes, but also for entertainment, and the more styles of entertainment there are, the better.

It is partly correct to say that aesthetically people tend to love novelty, because they are also nostalgic; these two inclinations blend to constitute the basic characteristics of human aesthetic psychology (Gu, 1990). This is the most important reason for people's aesthetic interests being so diverse. Again, with reference to poetry translation, if *pai-hua* poetry is good, are classical forms necessarily bad? Free verse should be encouraged, but should regulated verse be suppressed? The most crucial point, we think, is the perspective from which one views the whole thing.

4.3 Advantages of multiple complementary versions

Lefevere (1975) suggests that almost all poetry translations concentrate on some aspects of the original poem, rather than on the original as a whole. The coexistence of multiple versions would give readers diverse opportunities to approach the original from different aspects. While talking about the introduction of foreign poetry to readers who do not master the source language, Trahan (1988, p.4) is not in favour of providing the so-called best translation, rather, she advocates the supply of "a number of complementary versions" which each approaches the original from different angles; and on the basis of these versions, the partial views readers gained will "fuse into an experience of the poem as a whole". Schulte (1988, p.2) expresses similar ideas, "hardly any one single translation does justice to original poem[…] Here the concept of multiple translations becomes an invaluable tool to increase the reader's comprehension of a given poem"; and he thinks, "The actual poem, its possible meaning, and aesthetic dimension, resides somewhere between the solutions offered by each individual translator".

Since many differences exist between the English language and the Chinese language in such respects as linguistic structure, cultural background, mode of thinking and ways of expression, the translatability in poetry translation cannot but be relative. In the process of poetry translation, there must be "losses in varying degrees ranging from linguistic style, artistic feature to concrete mode of expression" (Sun, 2001, p.123). When exposed to multiple complementary versions, which presuppose multiple complementary translation methods, readers will approximate the original more closely. This is the reason why we are supportive of the coexistence of multiple Chinese translation methods of English metrical poetry. Whichever translation method it is, it is anchored to the same original poem. The following diagram shows the relationship between the original poem and different renditions:



(*ST stands for sinolisation translation, LT for liberal translation, and PFT for poetic form transplantation*)

Liu (1974, p.20) compares reading a translated poem to "looking at a beautiful woman through a veil," the thickness of which is decided by the skill and consideration of the translator; and he further contends that no translator "possess[es] the magic power of lifting the veil" and what they can do is to provide the best rendition that they can. In that case, why don't we provide the best translations of more translators to reduce the thickness of veil?

5. Conclusion

The poetry translators who are in favour of formal resemblance think that form and spirit are indivisible, and in their translation practice they give priority to formal resemblance, taking form as the premise for spirit. On the contrary, those who put special emphasis on spiritual resemblance contend that the genius of poetry translation is reproducing the spirit rather than the form. It is exactly such divergence on translation standard or guiding principle that leads to the different translation methods. The multiplicity of poetry's functions and diversity of human aesthetic interests decide there should be more than one single translation style or translation method. No single translation can reach the closest approximation in all respects to the original. Existence of multiple complementary renditions can better help readers get a relatively more comprehensive view of the original. Accordingly, the coexistence of diverse translation methods is theoretically justifiable.

Through our study, we find that although the three major translation methods of English metrical verse, i.e. sinolisation, liberal translation, and poetic form transplantation, come out in the chronological order, the later ones do not and cannot replace the earlier ones. At the present time, every translation method has its practitioners, and the three methods are like three parallel roads, none of which can replace the others in the foreseeable future.

Acknowledgements:

The research is supported by Humanities & Social Sciences Fund of Jiangsu University (JDR2006B08), and Humanities & Social Sciences Fund for Colleges and Universities in Jiangsu Province (08SJD7400004).

References

Bian, Z., Ye, S., Yuan, K., & Chen, S. (1959/1987). The problem of poem translation. In Editorial Department (Ed.), *The art of poem translation*, (pp.99-106). Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.

Cheng, F. (1923). On poetry translation. In Hai, A. (Ed.), *A centennial anthology of Sino-Occidental poetry translation*, (pp.40-45). Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Feng, H. (1978). Some problems of poetry translation. In Editorial Department (Ed.), *The art of poem translation*, (pp.111-121). Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.

Feng, H. (1981). Poetry translation and Sinolization. In Editorial Department (Ed.), *The art of poem translation*, (pp.247-250). Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.

Gu, Z. (1990) *An appreciative dictionary of great poems in the world*. Beijing: Peking University Press.

Gu, Z. (2003). *China and West: Comparative poetics and translatology*. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.

Guo, Z. (1999). *A study of famous translators*. Wuhan: Hubei Education Press.

Hai, A. (Ed.) (2007). *A centennial anthology of Sino-Occidental poetry translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Huang, G. (1999). *From Rubai to Canterbury – Views on Chinese translation of English verse*. Wuhan: Hubei Education Press.

Huang, G. (2001). The evolutive direction of poem translation: A review of the Chinese translation of English verse in the past century. *Foreign language & translation*, *2*, 1-12.

Huang, G. (2004). Transplantation of poetic form is a justifiable and practical pursuit. *Foreign language & translation*, *2*, 4-16.

Huang, G. (2007). *Studies on Chinese translation of English verse*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Jiang, F., & Xu, J. (1996). Similarity in both form and spirit: One pursuit in poetry translation. In Hai. A. (Ed.), *A centennial anthology of Sino-Occidental poetry translation*, (pp.377-388). Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Lao, L. (1987). Poem translation. In Editorial Department (Ed.), *The art of poem translation*, (pp214-223). Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.

Lao, L. (1995). Is the poetic meter translatable? *Journal of University of International Relations*, *2*, 40-43.

Lefevere, A. (1975). *Translating poetry: Seven strategies and a blueprint*. Assen and Amsterdam: van Gorcum.

Liu, C. (1991). *Wenxue Fanyi Shijiang* [Ten Lectures on Literary Translation]. Beijing: China translation & Publishing Corporation.

Liu, C. (1996). On poem translation – Preface to English Translation of 53 Ancient Chinese Poems. In Hai, A. (Ed.), *A centennial anthology of Sino-Occidental poetry translation*, (pp.358-371). Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Liu, J. (1974). *The art of Chinese poetry*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Qian, Z. (1982). The first English poem translated into Chinese and others. In Hai, A. (Ed.), *A centennial anthology of Sino-Occidental poetry translation*, (pp173-194). Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Schulte, R. (1988). Multiple translations: An interpretive perspective. *Translation Review*, *28*, 1-3.

Sun, Y. (2001). *Bidirectional Chinese-English dictionary of terms of translation studies*. Jinan: Shandong University Press.

Trahan, E. (1988). The reader as synthesizer: An approach to poetry translation. *Translation Review*, *28*, 3-6.

Turner, J. (1976). *A golden treasury of Chinese poetry*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Wang, B. (1995). My view on the Chinese translation of English verse. *Foreign Languages*, *5*, 37-40.

Wang, K. (1962). Shelly’s views about poem translation. In Editorial Department (Ed.), *The art of poem translation*, (pp.107-110). Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.

Weng, X. (1983). *Can’t images be conveyed in translation?* Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.

Weng, X. (1985). *English translation of ancient Chinese poems*. Beijing: Beijing Press.

Yuan, K. (1995). *Sailing to Byzantium (Selected Chinese translations by famous translators).* Beijing: China Workers Press.

Zhao, Y. (2003). *Muses travelling abroad*. Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Press