

Re-examination of Stephen Owen's English Complete Translation of The Poetry of Du Fu

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Abstract The complete English translation of the poetry of Du Fu (712-770) completed in 2016 translated by Prof. Stephen Owen, marks a new milestone of overseas academic works on Du Fu and traditional Chinese poetry. Based on extensive research on classical Chinese literature, Prof. Stephen Owen gradually cultivates his strategy and preferences on Chinese-English translation. It is, therefore, necessary to conduct a close reading on his sample translation of selected poems of ancient-style, regulated verses and quatrains to reveal and evaluate the value and quality of his translation objectively by analyzing the syntax, structure, imagery, rhyme, etc. under the vertical and horizontal perspectives of comparing others works with his own earlier versions. Using those approaches enhances better prediction of new predispositions and the direction of overseas studies of classical Chinese literature.

Keywords Du Fu(712-770); Chinese-English Translation; Studies on Overseas Chinese Literature; Stephen Owen

I

Professor Stephen Owen is one of the most important researchers on classical Chinese literature in North America and has a strong interest in traditional Chinese poetics and poetry. He has published many influential monographs and centers himself as a key figure in western academic circles on Sinology. He also devotes himself to Chinese-English translation of classical Chinese literature to display his learning and cultivation, such as *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Owen, 1992), and *An Anthology of Chinese Literature* (Owen, 1997). What's more, Owen has his own perspective on Du Fu studies. Apart from his profound discussion on chapters in books like *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High T'ang* (Owen, 1981), *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World* (Owen, 1985), and *The Cambridge*

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History of Chinese Literature (Chang & Owen, 2010), he officially completed *The Poetry of Du Fu* in January 2016 by renowned publishers based in Germany, Walter De Gruyter Inc. This is the second complete version of Du Fu's poetry in the English-speaking world since the pioneer Mr. James R. Murphy, boasts six huge scrolls with three thousand pages and presents a complete scholarly translation of Du's poetry alongside the original literary text in a critical edition.

Du Fu (712-770) is undoubtedly one of the most prominent and representative poets in ancient China, thus, the translation and interpretation changes of the poetry of Du Fu is always an issue of interests, not only home, such as *Selected Poems of Du Fu* trans. by Weijian Li & Xianliang Weng (1985), *Selected Poems of Tu Fu* by Wentong Xie (1985), *Tu Fu: One Hundred & Fifty Poems* by Juntao Wu (1985), and *Selected Poems of Du Fu* by Yuanhong Xu (2014), but also abroad, like *Tu Fu: Autobiography of a Chinese Poet* by Florence Ayscough (1929), *Tu Fu: China's Greatest Poet* by William Hung (1952), *Tu Fu Selected Poems* by Rewi Alley (1962), *A Little Primer of Tu Fu* by David Hawkes (1967), *Tu Fu* by A. R. Davis (1971), *Li Po and Tu Fu: Poems Selected and Translated with an Introduction and Notes* by Arthur Cooper (1973), *Selected Poems of Tu Fu* by David Hinton (1989), *Du Fu's Laments from the South* by David R. McCraw (1992), *Reconsidering Tu Fu: Literary Greatness and Cultural Context* by Eva Shan Chou (1995), *The Selected Poems of Du Fu* by Burton Watson (2002), *Du Fu: A Life in Poetry* by David Young (2008), *Spring in the Ruined City: Selected Poems of Du Fu* by Jonathan Waley (2008), *Murphy's Du Fu*, the first complete version of Du Fu's poetry in the English-speaking world by James R. Murphy (2009), and *The Poetry of Du Fu*, the second complete version by Stephen Owen (2016).

Among the translation and interpretation of the poetry of Du Fu abroad, Owen's great endeavor for the complete translation of the poetry of Du Fu has attracted more public attention due to his strong academic expertise, outstanding Chinese comprehension, and his broad horizon on comparative translation, as Nicholas Morrow Williams highly praised "[t]hat his edition of Du Fu's poems includes helpful annotation, such as explanatory footnotes, scholarly endnotes pointing out variants and justifying interpretations, and a guide to major allusions, makes it an invaluable scholarly tool." Based on the publication of this book, sequentially, an international conference on Du Fu that was held at Harvard University in October 2016 brought out a long-overdue collection of essays on Du Fu in English, which was published by Hong Kong University Press in 2020 (Xiaofei Tian ed., *Reading Du Fu: Nine Views*). This paper tries to reveal his contribution to traditional Chinese literature research by discussing his art of translation on Du Fu's classical poems and conducting a case study on Owen (2016)'s recently published monumental work.

II

Owen (2016) emphasized the importance of the accumulation of the academic tradition, and he elaborated on his conventional principles in his translation of Du Fu's poetry in a special chapter. First, he explained

the Nomenclature. That many conceptions confused western readers. He covered the family, given and courtesy names, official titles, racial and ethnic groups, etc. Then, he moved on to his method of dealing with the allusion by implementing a simple way which was minimalism, whereby he listed the common terms in an appendix with extensive discussion. Third, he discussed his strategy of translation on the antithesis of Du's long-regulated poems (or extended regulated verse) in a fluent style, plus some important issues such as Du Fu's colloquialism, ways to create footnotes, origins of allusions, and so on. How to translate the poetry of Du Fu into an acceptable version for the readers in the English world was the vital thing that Owen took into consideration, and this is what the paper aims to explore with a case study in the following parts.

As far as the reference to other works of literature is concerned, Prof. Owen mentioned an especially monumental translation, the first complete Chinese-German translation of the poetry of Du Fu by Prof. Erwin von Zach (1872-1942) in 1935, which influenced him greatly. Furthermore, he was aware of, and remarked in brief on many English translations, including versions of William Hung (1952), David Hawkes (1967), and David R. McCraw (1992). As for the references, Owen adopted *Detailed Annotation on Poetry of Du Fu* compiled by Qiu Zhao'ao (1638-1717) as the master copy which was written in chronological order. He also referred to a new comprehensive annotation published recently which might supersede Qiu's edition, *Complete Annotation on Poetry of Du Fu* edited by Xiao Difei (2014) and his disciples, in light of this, we can see that Owen is watching the academic trends in studies on Du Fu and makes full use of previous research achievements in his translation.

III

In comparison with the modern-style Chinese poems, the ancient-style poems allow a relative amount of liberty in the number of characters in a line (the length of a line), the number of lines, rhymes, tonal counterpoints, and antitheses. If it is applied in correspondence with translation, the English version seems like prose in freestyle rather than verse. Let's examine an ancient-style poem of Du Fu translated by Stephen Owen (2016).

Song of Eight Drinking Immortals

*He Zhizhang rides his horse as if sailing on a boat,
spots in his vision, he falls in a well and slumbers underwater.
Ruyang will go to dawn court only after having three quarts;
meeting a mash-cart on the road his mouth drools,
he's upset that he can't change his fief to Alespring.
The Minister of the Left gets up each day and spends ten thousand cash,
he drinks like the long behemoth sucking in a hundred rivers,*

the cup to his lips, he enjoys the “Sage,” and claims he avoids the “Worthy.”
Cui Zongzhi is carefree, a handsome young man,
he lifts his goblet showing the whites of his eyes and gazing at blue Heaven,
gleaming like a tree of jade standing in the wind.
Su Jin undergoes long abstention before an embroidered Buddha,
but when he’s drunk he always loves to escape Chan restrictions.
Li Bai makes a hundred poems out of one quart of ale,
in the marketplace of Chang’an he sleeps in the tavern.
The Son of Heaven called him to come, he wouldn’t get on the boat,
he himself declared: “Your subject is an immortal in his ale.”
After three cups Zhang Xu is bruited “Draft Script Sage”,
his cap fallen off, with bare head he stands before princes and dukes,
from the brush he wields paper drops like clouds and mist.
Only after five quarts is Jiao Sui really outstanding,
his grand discussions and bold arguments shock everyone at a feast.

This is a poem with special characteristics in its form, which is exactly what Qianfan Cheng (1984) commented. The outstanding characteristic in the form of Song of Eight Drinking Immortals is that it has no beginning or end for the whole poem, and each paragraph seems uncorrelated. Du Fu composed this poem partly by taking into account that all of the characters were tipplers, and the same rhymes occur at the end of each line. Poetry is a temporal art, while this poem selected a form of spatial art, to a great extent it is like a folding screen associated with eight individual pictures, which sketches the outline of the different characters in a simple manner like the freehand brushwork in traditional Chinese painting.

In beginning, the names of the “Eight Drinking Immortals”, Owen translated their names directly, i.e., He Zhizhang, Cui Zongzhi, and Li Bai; in case of royal titles, Li Jin as King of Ruyang; or with official ranks, Li Shizhi as the Minister of the Left. Maintaining loyalty to the original literature can be a good method, however, these “strange” names would bewilder foreign readers who are unfamiliar with the Chinese literary tradition, which Owen had complained about this problem in the preface. His remedy is to add explanatory notes; unfortunately, it did little to clarify the tips of these tipplers.

Secondly, the rhymes appear at the end of every line, which originated from a special form of heptasyllabic ancient-style verse, Cypress-beam Terrace Style since Emperor Wu of Han (156B.C.- 87B.C.) where his ministers composed one individual poem with their couplets. Owen seldom applies rhymes (not rhythms) in his translation in correspondence with Chinese verse, and this case was no exception.

Thirdly, the structural looseness of the form was worthy of attention. It looked like a heptasyllabic

verse overall, however, it described eight individual characters in detail together with different lengths, two lines were distributed at the head, tail, and waist of the poem, and three or four were arranged in the middle, which made it possible to regard them as independent episodes alike. Especially, like boat (船, chuán), front (前, qián) and sleep (眠, mián), the same characters emerge several times as rhymes, which was a taboo for the versification of Chinese verse. The appearance of the same characters was strictly limited in an individual episode, and only then could it be forgiven or accepted. Owen was aware of that, and demonstrated the episodes in the whole verse with space lines.

Finally, Owen's translation of poetic imagery needed to be examined. *Dou*(斗), an obsolete Chinese measurement of capacity equal to about 10.74 litres, Owen translated three *dou* into a QUART, which was about 0.95 or 1.14L according to U.S or British standards. Considering the exaggeration in the tradition of Chinese literature, and the thin alcoholicity during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the word QUART chosen in his edition was a compromise settlement for the readers. Besides, *Bei*(杯) was translated as GOBLET and CUP and alternatively avoided stiffness. *Jiu-quan*(酒泉) was interpreted as ALESPRING comprising ale and spring. Ale is any beer other than lager, stout, or porter, with similar alcoholicity to the alcoholic drink in the Tang period, which was a superb lexical translation! Meanwhile, Owen explained this in the footnotes to avoid the risk of this word losing the link with the name of the ancient place. *Xian*(贤), WORTHY was better than virtuous to indicate the high rank of The Minister, wherein the footnotes had additional explanations that it might also be a wine seemed unnecessary. *Chan*(禅), a transliteration rather than the customary "ZEN" (禅) seemed a little unusual. *Tian-zi* (天子) as THE SON OF HEAVEN was a literal translation, which was easily comprehensible for the readers who were familiar with traditional Chinese thought regarding the law of interaction between heaven and mankind, otherwise, replacing such terms with EMPEROR might be a smoother alternative and coordinates with princes and dukes which appeared later. So, Stephen Owen tried to find the subtle balance between assimilation and dissimilation in strategy and kept his own style of translation of ancient-style Chinese poems.

IV

If relaxed prosody of the ancient-style Chinese poems couldn't exhibit the perfect aesthetic characteristics in the correspondence of the translated English verse at a technical level, modern-style poems strictly requiring tonal counterpoint, antithesis, and rhyme in level tone might propose a paramount claim on formal aesthetics for the translation. Du Fu was the key poet who set up the canonical form of the heptasyllabic regulated verse of classical Chinese poetry on versification, syntax, structure, rhetoric, etc. He also innovated the extended or violated regulated verse and quatrains. On the other hand, the English translations paid more attention to these remarkable changes. We'll discuss one of his representative heptasyllabic regulated verses, *Climbing the Heights* in Owen (2016)'s translation, by comparing it with others' versions to analyze the merits and demerits of Owen's in terms of translation skills.

Climbing the Heights

*The wind blows hard, the heavens, high, gibbons howl in lament,
isles clear, sands white, where birds turn in flight.*

*Endless trees shed their leaves that descend in the whistling wind,
unending, the long River comes on churning.*

*Grieving for fall across ten thousand leagues, always a traveler,
often sick in this century of life I climb the terrace alone.*

*In hardship I bitterly resent these tangled, frost-white locks,
down and out, I recently quit cups of thick ale.*

Tremendous differences exist between English and Chinese versions, not only in linguistic forms of phonetic or syntactic features but also in values and behavior patterns based on various cultural contexts. Besides, classical Chinese poetry is uniquely based on literary Chinese which differentiates from vernacular Chinese in that it articulates the author's will and passion on the lexical or syntactic level. Once translated into foreign languages, it will undoubtedly lose its original flavour, which may result in an unavoidable question for every translator whether or not they should employ literal or free translation. Owen's choice was to try and maintain the original taste of classical Chinese poetry in his target version.

His translation accommodates the number and lengths of the lines, which are similar to the original in syntactic and lexical structures. This is achieved by controlling the length of the words, which helps to avoid a serious uneven phenomenon in length, and preserves a similar morphology, for example, Owen made a conscious effort to juxtapose three phrases of subject-predicate types in the first sentence, then changed into an adverbial clause of place with the structure of images overlaid to avoid monotony in the following line. In other versions, we can see,

*In a sharp gale from the wide sky apes are whimpering,
Birds are flying homeward over the clear lake and white sand.*

--Witter Bynner
(trans. by Owen, 2016)

*Hard blows the wind under a high sky
amid the gibbons' howls of woe;
Above the islet's pure water
and white sand, birds circle low.*

--C. K. Ho
(trans. by Cheng, 1984)

Obviously, the latter seemed redundant with the inserts of some prepositions such as IN, FROM,

OVER, UNDER, AMID, and ABOVE, which complicated the syntactic structure and oversimplified the ambiguity of potential reading. Moreover, they looked over-interpreted by the translators exchanging the lexical and syntactic orders in the translation as well as breaking the original juxtaposition.

Regarding the antithesis issue, Owen dealt with it differently. For instance, in the former and latter lines of the first couplet, there was a lack of strict antithesis, but he successfully handled a perfect antithesis in the second line as a special one, Four Pillars (the antithesis occurs in a line). The quantitative phrases in the third couplet were translated into TEN THOUSAND LEAGUES and THIS CENTURY OF LIFE could express the feeling of temporal and spatial transformation in the original one, while the adjective phrases in the second couplet were translated as ENDLESS and UNENDING which was a stroke of genius. However, it was a pity that Owen failed to apply the reduplicated words in the second couplet in his version. In the following section, we compare his work with others,

Without bounds is the forest, leaves fall, swish, swish, they drop;

No ending has Great River, swirl, swirl, it comes.

--Florence Ayscough

(trans. by Florence, 1929)

Boundless fall leaves swishing down and down,

Endless the Yangtze River rolling on and on.

--Zhiji Ren

(trans. by Ren&Yu, 2006)

Version C translated the reduplications with two verbs in similar form, SWISH, SWIRL, which demonstrates reoccurrence and the beauty of repetition; while version D selected overlying prepositions DOWN AND DOWN, ON AND ON in the English translation to parallel the Chinese verse wonderfully.

On the issue of allusions, Owen always insisted and applied that, which was mentioned previously. Owen gave no note to this poem in comparison with the six in Song of Eight Drinking Immortals because the latter (i.e., Li Bai) seemed too simple to be misunderstood by readers without complicated notes. If he could point out the festival of Double-ninth that was popular for ascending a height in China, it would be better to stay in contact with traditional Chinese culture.

Moving on to the translation of imagery, there still remains some points that are to be considered. For example, *Yuan* (猿) was often seen in Chinese literature as an animal whose sorrowful cry could make a travelers' heartbreak. In Owen's version, it was translated as GIBBON which was a precise choice, and was at the same, in other versions including William Fletcher (1919), Florence Ayscough (1929), William Hung (1952), Wu-Chi Liu (1990), Burton Watson (2002), Yingzhou Shi (2006) and C.K. Ho (2012), etc. According to the Oxford Dictionary, a *GIBBON* is a small, slender tree-dwelling ape with long powerful arms and loud hooting calls, native to the forests of SE Asia. Some translators such as Witter Bynner

(1931), A. R. Davis (1971), Y.C. Xu (2004) chose to use APE which was inferior to the former which looked ingenious and native, and coordinated the artistic sensation of the Chinese poetry, since the latter was defined as *a large primate that lacks a tail, including gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutan, and gibbons* in the same dictionary. On the other hand, using the word **MONKEY** to cater for the reading habits seemed like a misinterpretation, for instance, Rewi Alley (1964), Juntao Wu (1985), Weijian Li (1985), Wentong Xie (1985), Xianyi Yang & Gladys Yang (1990), Zhongjie Xu (2000), etc. The following, DESCEND IN THE WHISTLING WIND for *xiao-xiao-xia* (萧萧下) was not good enough to demonstrate the huge tension between the imagery in the antithesis and lost the aesthetic orientation of the reduplications. LONG RIVER for *Chang-jiang* (长江) with capital for River was different from the conventional usage of Yangtze. TEN THOUSAND LEAGUES for *wan-li* 万里 might be too stiff. As an archaism, a league was equal to about three miles, and was unfamiliar to the readers nowadays; other versions chose MILE or LI that was smoother to read; while *bai-nian* (百年) in the original as an approximate number translated as THIS CENTURY OF LIFE by Owen who might have borrowed the translation of A CENTURY'S DISEASES by his predecessor David Hawkes (1967) arrived at the highest quality of art with the implication of "a hundred year" which was beset dexterously and was superior to others, such as YEARS by Fletcher (1919) or Xu (2004), WHOLE LIFE by Hung (1952), Liu (1990) or David R. McCraw (1992), LIFELONG by Wu (1985) or Xie (1985), ALL (THE YEARS OF) MY LIFE by Yang (1990) or Eva Shan Chou (1995), without correspondence to HUNDRED, yet A/ONE HUNDRED (YEARS) by Ayscough (1929) or Bynner (1931) was rigid. Then, LOCK also as an archaism representing a piece of a person's hair that coils or hangs together added primitive simplicity for the translation, which might originate from the versions of Fletcher (1919) or Watson (2002), instead, (HAIRS OF) TEMPLE occurred often in other versions, as well as some misinterpretations like BROW HAIR by Ayscough (1929) or McCraw (1992) plus HEAD HAIRS by Hung (1952), Wai-Lim Yip (1976), Yushu Wang (2004). THICK ALE for *zhuo-jiu* (浊酒) similar to the taste of vintage in medieval China excelled others such as MUDDY WINE by Hung (1952) and Watson (2002), CLOUDY WINE by Ren & Yu (2006), UNSTRAINED WINE by Liu (1952), THICK DUST WINE by Bynner (1931), TURBULENT WINE by Yip (1976), and other versions even without mentioning *zhuo*. Thus, Owen's efforts in deliberating and polishing Chinese poetic imagery become clearer.

Last for the scheme of rhymes. The rhyme in Chinese is a regulated verse that usually occurs at the end of the even-numbered lines, sometimes it is also included in the first line, which is strictly limited in level tone and one rhyme throughout. However, Owen seldom took rhymes into his consideration in translation. He preferred rhythm which was vital to English verse and more often accepted by western readers. Owen (1992) cited a saying of Mencius (372 B.C.-289 B.C.) to explain his translation strategy, reflecting his loyalty to original contexts:

In explaining the poems of the Book of Songs, one must not permit the literary patterning to affect adversely [the understanding of] the statement; and one must not permit [our understanding of] the statement to affect adversely [our understanding of] what was on the writer's mind. We use our understanding to trace it back to what was [originally] in the writer's mind. ---- this is how to grasp it.

On the whole, the majority of overseas translators laid less emphasis on the scheme of rhymes and that of loyalty to the original texts, on the contrary, many local Chinese translators preferred to express the rhythmical beauty based on original linguistic form. For example, the translation of Watson (2002) had no rhymes in the target text which was similar to that of Owen (1992)'s.

*Wind shrills in the tall sky, gibbons wailing dolefully,
beaches clean, sands white, overhead the circling birds:
leaves fall, no end to them, rustling, rustling down;
ceaselessly the Long River rushes, rushes on.
Autumn sorrow ten thousand miles from home, always a traveler;
sickness dogging each year of my life, I climb the terrace alone.
Troubles, vexations, coat my sidelocks with frost;
listless at this new blow, I forgo the cup of muddy wine.*

While Fletcher (1919)'s version broke the original scheme of eight lines and presented a new appearance of rhymes that occurred in every two lines and changed in every couplet.

*The wind so fresh, the sky so high
Awake the gibbons' wailing cry.
The isles clear-cut, the sand so white,
Arrest the wheeling sea-gulls' flight.
Through endless space with rustling sound
The falling leaves are whirled around.
Beyond my ken a yeasty sea
The Yangtze's waves are rolling free.
From far away, in autumn drear,
I find myself a stranger here.
With dragging years and illness wage
Lone war upon this lofty stage.
With troubles vexed and trials sore
My locks are daily growing hoar:*

*Till Time, before whose steps I pine,
Set down this failing cup of wine!*

Looking back at the domestic translators and citing Yuanchong Xu (2014) as typically proposing the three principles of poetry translation, namely, beauty in a sense, sound, and form. His version (2004) carefully selected metrical words approximately to that of Fletcher as cry/fly [aɪ], shower/hour [aʊə], plight/flight [aɪt], and pine/wine [aɪn]. Nevertheless, Prof. Xu's principles of translation were potentially at risk of total or partial misinterpretation if he had catered to the need for rhyming.

What's more, it was worth mentioning that the version of a Filipino-Chinese, Shi (2006), who reproduced the rhymes in the target text at the same identical places as the source, and even selected metrical words that had similar finals or vowels as [aɪ] to the original which belonged to the tenth division *hui* (灰, grey) of Level Tones of Volume Upper of Ping-shui Rhyme¹. It really sounded retro!

*Wind sharp. Sky high. The gibbons whining cry.
Shore clear. Sands white. The birds back whirling fly.
The dropping leaves, unending, rustling fall.
Long River, limitless, comes rolling by.
Sad autumn, miles from home, I'm oft a guest.
Ill health in years, alone to heights I hie.
Distressed, my temples turning frost I hate.
Hard hit, foul cup of wine I just deny.*

Due to the absence of tonal pitches to distinguish meaning in English, the strict requirement for tonal counterpoint in the system of rhymes in Chinese regulated verse has been ignored, however, if Prof. Owen could take into account the conversion of feet and meters of the rhythms with a little universal or relaxed rhyme, it could become even more splendid and brilliant!

V

Apart from revising and improving his own previous translation, longitudinally is another way to check Owen's translation skills. We'll read a quatrain translated by Owen to examine his attempt at Du Fu's poetry. The Plan of the Eight Formations in his *The Poetry of Du Fu* (Owen, 2016),

The Plan of the Eight Formations

*His deeds covered a kingdom split in three,
his fame completed the Plan of the Eight Formations.*

¹ An official reference of rhyme for the versification of the regulated verse in ancient China prepared for the Imperial Examination which was developed and fulfilled by Wang Wen-Yü's Brief Rhyme of Newly Publishing (Jurchen Jin Dynasty, 1223) and Liu Yüan's Brief Rhyme of Ministry of Rites (Southern Song Dynasty, 1252).

*The river flows on, the stones do not turn,
a remnant bitterness at his failure to swallow Wu.*

The translation of the same poem in his *An Anthology of Chinese Literature* (Owen, 1997) published about 20 years ago reads as below.

The Diagram of Eight Formations

*His deeds overshadowed a land split in three,
His fame was achieved in these Eight Formations.
The river flows on, the rocks do not budge,
pain surviving from failure to swallow Wu.*

It is universally known that close reading is the basis of studies on literature, which is also demonstrated by how Stephen Owen explores the study and translation of literature, that is by comparing his texts with different periods through his socio-cultured view. Above all is the title. The concept of *ba-zhen*(八阵) which was proposed by Zhuge Liang (181-234) who applied this into military affairs, was recorded in official history, the History of The Three Kingdoms: “The pattern of Eight Formations derived from the art of war was of the essence.” Owen used DIAGRAM in his former edition that was a chart or something like a military map or sand table, which meant an armchair strategy; the latter “PLAN” revealed vividly the marvelous significance of strategy and tactics by a gifted mastermind. Translation of EIGHT FORMATIONS stemmed from Hawkes (1967) perhaps. As far as other versions, EIGHT BATTLE DISPOSITIONS (Hung, 1952), EIGHT-BATTLE ARRAYS (Dalian Wang, 1997) marked the keyword “battle” seemed a little rigid, while STONE FORTRESS (Xu, 2004) was a strategy to domesticate a title that struggled to be identical to the original.

The new first-line replaced OVERSHADOWED A LAND by COVERED A KINGDOM. “Overshadow” means eclipsing others, which might mislead the readers of target languages by giving them a wrong impression that Zhuge Liang was arrogant or domineering. Instead, “cover” seems unassuming or modest and helps to dispel his hegemonistic impression. “A land” might be regarded as either the political or geographical territory of entire China, or a tiny area before one’s eyes, yet “kingdom” specifies the range and also echoes “Three Kingdoms” in accordance with the customs of the English translation. Furthermore, “a kingdom” could refer to the Kingdom of Shu (221-263) following a restrictive attributive clause (split in three). For one thing, it indicated the so-called legitimacy of inheriting the Han Dynasty (202 B.C-220) declared by Shu, for another, it was also in accordance with the actual situation at that historical moment. Zhuge gradually became the representative figure of one of the greatest and was well respected for his intelligence, however, no matter how respectable he was over China; he belonged to the enemy camp for Wei (220-266) and Wu (229-280) at Three Kingdoms. As far as the coverage of his

merit was concerned, limited in Shu might be logical and reasonable. Owen's modification added extra implication beyond the mere words.

In the second line, Owen substituted COMPLETED for ACHIEVED and changed the passive voice into active. “Complete” signified finished or arriving at a successful target without extra effort, or advancing gradually in due order, while “achieve” meant reaching the desired objective by effort, skill, or courage in a utilitarian way, especially in passive voice. The adjunct to the “Eight Formations” was revised and modified from the adjective pronoun “these” and changed to “the Plan” in order to bring out a theme more coherent with the title.

Stepping into the third part, Owen capitalized RIVER, which lamented an unspecified river that was different from the unique name Yangtze, so that the reader was dragged from the past to present accompanying the switch of tense. *Shi* (石) was interpreted as STONE instead of ROCK, though, “rock” could be understood as a mass of solid mineral material projecting out of the water which excelled “stone” at this level, yet it might also be understood as shaking as a verb, which contrary to the poem who laid emphasis on “Not vibrate”, “stone” was simple and could be accepted without semantic ambiguity. Generally speaking, a rock is bigger than a stone, which led the readers to imagine that the ruins of Eight Formations in odds and ends had lost the strategic value already, “stone” preferred to be more despair in ruthless vicissitudes. Accordingly, the verb TURN was replaced by BUDGE. The old one just meant the slightest movement or change of opinion that involved emotional factors, while the new verb seemed inexorable due to the irresistible law of Nature which obviously suited the desolate poetic atmospheres.

The focus of modification was concentrated on *yi-hen* (遗恨), since the reader couldn't judge the syntactic structure of the two characters according to the original intention of Du Fu based on the ambiguity of the Chinese language existing in the vocabulary, grammar, and rhetoric systems. Owen used a nominal phrase with postpositive attributive in his former version. PAIN was defined as either unpleasant physical sensation or mental suffering and distress, carrying an extra indication of an endeavor and futile effort, SURVIVING hinted that it occurred continuously by luck or chance, even effective till now. He stressed the noun ahead of the modifier with an attributive preposition; BITTERNESS enlarged the feeling of fighting desperately like a cornered wild beast, which remained so faint after being eroded by the endless history; again, REMNANT strengthened the tension of satire between the futile surplus and permanent persistence. The nominal structure applied in either of the versions revealed that one of the commonest problems in Chinese-English translation was that Chinese takes advantage of the verbs while English with a noun. Both translated *Tun-wu* (吞吴) as SWALLOW WU inheriting that of Hawkes (1967). “Swallow” meant allowing something to pass down the throat or causing it to disappear was a word-for-word translation, which seemed inferior to that of Hung's EXPEDITION AGAINST (1952) to be comprehensible. WU as transliteration might complicate the readers who were unfamiliar with Chinese history. But Owen adopted another way to make it clear based on a footnote to the title:

The “Eight Formations” were a group of rocks in the Yangzi near Kuizhou, supposedly set there by Zhuge Liang to illustrate his proposed campaign against the state of Wu.

VI

Owen devoted himself to translation and studies on classical Chinese poetry with the whole of his time and energy so that we may have the honor to read the great and complete translation of The Poetry of Du Fu. The characteristics of his Chinese-English translation were as we discussed earlier, which have indicated his interest and the merits of inheriting from the philology of early Sinology, especially canonizing the methodology of his respected teacher, Hans Frankel (1916-2003), by taking into account of the topic and form of Chinese poetry and undertaking a close reading of the texts to grasp the essence of the description of the names and things. Moreover, he specialized in keeping a subtle balance between text analysis and context research by taking into account the case studies related to the phenomenon of cultural history. Such considerations were implemented through the academic perspective under the integral background of social-cultural history, so his translation was accredited. On one hand, it was close to the original text with regard to content by reserving as much exoticism, familiar imagery, and structure from Chinese poetics as possible. Under his instruction, the foreignization priority in translation tactics could be seen as an endeavor to carefully deliberate on the word or phrase translation without ingratiating himself with the readers. On the other hand, it maintained a similar lexical and syntactic structure to the original in artistic form, and with his conversant convention on dealing with syntax, antithesis, allusion, and imagery. However, some parts remain controversial, and no rhymes were applied in his translation to avoid misreading. In brief, the translation of Du Fu’s poetry by Stephen Owen was highly praised for its academic value.

Due to the evaluation mechanisms currently utilized within academic circles of classical and comparative literature in not only domestic Mainland China but also the majority of Europe and North America, the translation and annotation are often exclusive to academic achievement; consequently, annotated translation becomes more and more insignificant which separates the scholars from the elementary training of traditional philology and as a result disconnects the contact to the text. Allowing the English translation of classical Chinese poetry to survive solely dependent on interest rather than through academic channels can be extremely dangerous. The deeds of Stephen Owen at this moment have begun to attract more people towards annotated translation in literary studies. His work is honorable, respectable, and extraordinary, even though he held tenure at Harvard University to guarantee his work.

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