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Dai Wang-Shu's Chinese translation of Paul Verlaine revisited: on the pursuit of optimal fidelity in literary rendition

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ABSTRACT

As a renowned poet and translator of China in the 1930s, Dai Wang-Shu (戴望舒) is particularly reputed for his Chinese translation of French poets. Among them, Paul Verlaine, celebrated French symbolist poet, is claimed by literary critics to have found his genuine poetic echo in Dai's Chinese rendition. Chen Bing-Ying (陳丙瑩) contends that Dai's poetic translation has successfully rendered the profound implications and the rich, subtle musicality of Western poetry. Zhou Ning (周寧) claims that Dai is the only translator who manages to make Verlaine's French muse sing in the Chinese language. However, as Robert Frost states, "Poetry is that which gets lost in translation." The essay investigates the original poetic aspects of Verlaine's symbolist poems that have got lost in Dai's Chinese translation. It critically compares the poetic aspects of Verlaine's "le ciel est par-dessus le toit" and "il pleure dans mon coeur" with their Chinese counterparts in Dai's translation. Comparing Dai's renditions with those done by other French-Chinese translation scholars, it points out the merits and demerits of Dai's translated works, which leads the study to the exploration of a *proper* translation strategy between domestication and foreignization.

KEYWORDS

French-Chinese translation; poetic translation; Dai Wang-Shu; Paul Verlaine; domestication/foreignization; optimal fidelity

1. Introduction

As a renowned poet and translator of China in the 1930s, Dai Wang-Shu (戴望舒) is particularly reputed for his Chinese translation of French poets. Among them, Paul Verlaine, celebrated French symbolist poet (Hu 2000, 71-83; Ke-Lu Cheng 1996; Ke and Tung 1997), is claimed by literary critics to have found his genuine, if not perfect, poetic echo in the Chinese rendition carried out by Dai. In his *A Critical Biography of Dai Wang-Shu*, Chen Bing-Ying (1993, 240) even contends that Dai's poetic translation

> has successfully rendered the profound implications as well as the rich, subtle musicality of Western poetry (particularly the highly nuanced French symbolist poetry) with modern Chinese literary language and has thus set a good model for poetic translation scholars to follow. (1993, 240)[1]

The critic then takes Dai's translation of Verlaine's "Le ciel est par-dessus le toit" as an example to embark on a textual analysis that extols its well-wrought formal perfection and

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truthful rhythmical as well as musical representation – which altogether amounts to a fidelity almost beyond the critic's expectation (Chen 1993, 236–242).

As a matter of fact, a good number of French-Chinese translators or translation scholars have attempted to render the symbolist beauty and charm of Verlaine's renowned French poetic creation so as to convey its original flavor to Chinese readers. However, "poetry is that which gets lost in translation," as states Robert Frost. "Poetry is not the only area where sound symbolism makes itself felt, but it is a province where the internal nexus between sound and meaning changes from latent into patent and manifests itself most palpably and intensely" (Eliot 1975, 87, 88). How many original poetic aspects of Verlaine's poems have already lost in these Chinese translations? In *An Appreciative Dictionary of Famous Foreign Poems*, the co-author Zhou Ning (周寧) claims that he has deliberately compared Dai's translation of Verlaine's "le ciel est par-dessus le toit" with other Chinese renditions and found that Dai's version prevails over the others in that he is the only translator who manages to make Verlaine's French muse sing in the Chinese language (Sun and Zhou 1989, 128).

The present research attempts to analyze the literary aspects of Verlaine's "le ciel est par-dessus le toit" as well as "il pleure dans mon coeur" and to compare the original French poetic ambiance with the atmosphere shown in the Chinese counterpart as rendered by Dai Wang-Shu, pointing out the merits and above all "demerits" of Dai's Chinese translation: For the first poem – "il pleure dans mon coeur," he strives to render a French modernist "poem" (詩) into the form of ancient Chinese "*ci* poem" (詞) despite the formal and chronological faithfulness that he himself once exalted in his theorization on the art of translation; for the second – "le ciel est par-dessus le toit," he tends to search for musical perfection in spite of semantic clarity or intelligibility, which might result in either misunderstandings or interpretative obscurity in the reader.

Without a doubt, the most striking difficulty in translating Verlaine's French poetry into Chinese lies in the insolvable linguistic and cultural distance between the occidental and the oriental languages, as Eugene Nida analyzes:

> When the cultures are related but the languages are quite different, the translator is called upon to make a good many formal shifts in the translation. However, the cultural similarities in such instances usually provide a series of parallelisms of content that make the translation proportionately much less difficult than when both languages and cultures are disparate. In fact, differences between cultures cause many more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure. (2004, 130)

According to the renowned American Bible translation practitioner and theorist,

> definitions of proper translating are almost as numerous and varied as the persons who have undertaken to discuss the subject…. Moreover, live languages are constantly changing and stylistic preferences undergo continual modification. Thus a translation acceptable in one period is often quite unacceptable at a later time. (Nida 2004, 131)

Thus, by providing the literary "*mutopia*" – a moving world in which language and literary appreciation also evolves – with a whole new perspective on the critique of Dai's Chinese translation of Verlaine's French poems, the author of the present research hopes that the Chinese readership may further explore and enjoy the semantic profundity as well as artistic perfection of Verlaine's unique *tours de force* and that the contemplations on the pursuit of optimal fidelity in literary rendition may help point out a potential golden mean for poetic translation where the most disputed and contested domesticating and foreignizing strategies are to be flexibly and appropriately resorted to.

2. Conventional canonization of Dai's poetic translation of Verlaine

The Chinese literary world and its characters portrayed by Dai Wang-Shu are reputed for being tinged and tinted with a melancholic disposition. It is therefore quite understandable and logical for Dai to find an inviting, if not irresistible, psychological and poetic echo in Paul Verlaine's troubled life as an outcast outsider to the mainstream society of 19th century France.[2] In a like manner, Dai as a young man is pent-up with unsuccessful amorous pursuits (Yang 2003, 112–115), which leads the poet to direct emotion and feelings onto his poetic lines. His bosom seems to be filled with grudge and emotional failures throughout the eventful yet short-lived course of his life. He needs to vent his inner disturbances but it is embarrassing for him to appeal to a literal or realistic account for his failures in the real life (Yang 2003, 112–115). Thus, it is of irresistible alluring charm for the poet to indulge himself in Verlaine's hazy, misty tone of melancholy and disconsolateness, to roam endlessly amidst or between the French poet's private, obscure, and whispering symbolist lines.

In his Preface to *The Anthology of Dai Wang-Shu's Poetic Translation*, Shi Chih-Tsun (施蟄存), a classmate and bosom friend of Dai himself, contends that there exists a striking parallel between Dai's Chinese translation of foreign poems and his literary creation of Chinese new poems (Shi 1983, 1). He entered Aurora University (震旦大學) in the fall of 1925 and started learning the French language as a beginner there. Then, he went on to read representative poems of such famous French poets as Victor Hugo, Alphonse de Lamartine, Alfred de Musset, and the like under the instruction and direction of a French Catholic father (Shi 1983, 1). Both Chinese ancient literary tradition and French Romantic poetry exerted great influence on Dai as a young poet at the turn of a whole new poetic era in the Shanghai of 1920s. In consequence, the young French learner and Chinese poet engaged himself in translating French poems and writing Chinese new poems simultaneously (Shi 1983, 1). Throughout his life, Dai has translated some sixty French poems by eleven French poets. In his early years as a French-Chinese translator, his favorite French poet was Verlaine; in his later years, he was particularly attracted by Jammes (Mo 1989, 152). In the long run, as a result of long-term immersion, imitation, as well as nurturing of Verlaine's symbolist poetic style, Dai as a poet and translator seems to find a total identification between his French-Chinese poetic translation and his own creation of Chinese new poetry. Judging from both style and flavor, Dai's Chinese translations of Verlaine's "il pleure dans mon coeur" and "le ciel est par-dessus le toit" can almost be said to be cut from the same cloth as his own Chinese poetic writing (Wang 2003, 90).

Evidently, Dai absorbs the literary essence of French symbolism through Verlaine, and then he manages to transplant what he has learned from the French literary soil onto the poetic tradition of Chinese literature (Pei 2003, 57). In short, while accepting the influence of French symbolism, Dai as a translator also attempts to tinge Verlaine's poems with a Chinese literary savor, or to assimilate, if not acculturate, them into classic Chinese expression, with his unique and idiosyncratic mastery of French-Chinese translation.

In other words, as a translator, Dai grasps so well both Verlaine's imagery and what the French poet wants to express in his poetry that he seems to "re-write" the French symbolist's poems in classical poetic Chinese that caters to both rhythm and rhyme. In consequence, Dai's Chinese translations of Verlaine's poems appear to be an occasional integration of French symbolism and Chinese literary tradition, as if there existed a sudden correspondence between the soul of the French poet and that of the Chinese translator. A linguistic convertor

who is not provided with such a literary mastery as Dai possesses seems unable to achieve what the poet translator has displayed in the field of translation. In his *A Poet Walking Out of the Rainy Alley: A Critical Biography of Dai Wang-Shu* (《雨巷中走出的詩人——戴望舒論傳》), Wang Wen-Pin (王文彬) thus analyzes Dai's translation of Verlaine:

> Dai translates Verlaine's poem "il pleure dans mon coeur" into "淚珠飄落縈心曲" in the Chinese language. In Verlaine's original French poem, an identical vowel sound appears in such words as "pleure," "coeure," "langueur," and "s'écœure." The identical vowel appears time and again across the lines and throughout the stanzas, which brings forth an exaggerated melancholic atmosphere that blends the tone and the mood with perfect and natural harmony. Dai in his unique Chinese rendition resorts to a certain *ci* (詞) tune of the Sung Dynasty called "*Pu Sa Man*" (菩薩蠻). The translator applies the form and structure of such a *ci* poem to render the first and second halves of Verlaine's original French poem. Once translated by Dai, Verlaine's French poem has been transformed into something abounding in classical Chinese elements and rhythms. (Wang 2003, 90)

According to Wang Wen-Pin, a celebrated literary critic and biographer of Dai Wangshu (1990), if we Chinese readers are not aware of the fact that these Chinese poems are translated from Verlaine's original French works, we may tend to believe that these Chinese translations are actually Dai's own Chinese literary creation, for his Chinese renditions are most of the time full of authentic ancient Chinese flavor which is almost without any traces of linguistic embarrassment or unnaturalness that seems to inevitably characterize any piece of translated poetic work. According to Pien Chih-Lin (卞之琳), a renowned Chinese literary critic, Verlaine is particularly attractive to Dai Wang-Shu mainly because "the French symbolist poet's genial as well as implicit character happens to be in perfect accordance with the major, mainstream tradition of ancient Chinese literature" (1981, 22). The critic, furthermore, contends that "Dai as a Chinese modernist poet, tends to place more importance to the inheritance of Chinese ancient poetry rather than to the absorption or transplanting of Western poetic convention" (Pien 1981, 3).

As a literary critic, Pien Chih-Lin seems entitled to be deemed a true knower of Dai Wang-Shu the poet and translator. In the following analysis, I will take Verlaine's famous poem, "Il pleure dans mon cœur," as an example to showcase two different Chinese translations done by two renowned scholars of French-Chinese translation, in which the one tends to adhere to Venuti's foreignization strategy whereas the other is engrossed in his attempt to bringing the literary translation of the target language into full paly.

« Il pleure dans mon cœur » (Paul Verlaine)

Il pleure dans mon cœur
Comme il pleut sur la ville;
Quelle est cette langueur
Qui pénètre mon cœur ?
Ô bruit doux de la pluie
Par terre et sur les toits !
Pour un cœur qui s'ennuie
Ô le chant de la pluie !
Il pleure sans raison
Dans ce cœur qui s'écœure.
Quoi ! nulle trahison ?
Ce deuil est sans raison.

C'est bien la pire peine
De ne savoir pourquoi
Sans amour et sans haine
Mon cœur a tant de peine!
(Verlaine 2005, 192)

〈淚水落在我的心中〉 (程曾厚 譯)
淚水落在我的心中，
如同雨水落在城裡。
不知道有什麼苦痛
深深刺入我的心中？
啊！淅淅瀝瀝的雨聲，
屋頂上有，地上也有！
百無聊賴的心未曾
啊！聽過動聽的雨聲！
淚水落下，卻無原因，
落進我沉重的心中。
怎麼？難道無人變心？
這份傷心，並無原因。
最令人難受的悲哀，
是說不清為了什麼，
既沒有恨，也沒有愛，
我心中充滿了悲哀。
(Cheng Tseng-Hou 2001, 204)

〈淚珠飄落縈心曲〉 (戴望舒 譯)
淚珠飄落縈心曲，
迷茫如雨蒙華屋；
何事又離愁，
凝思憂復憂。
霏霏窗外雨，
滴滴淋街宇；
似為我憂心，
低吟淒楚聲。
淚珠飄落知何以？
憂思宛轉凝胸際：
嫌厭未曾裁，
心煩無故來。
沉沉多**怨慮**，
不識愁何處；
無愛亦無憎，
微心爭不寧？
(Dai 2003b, 219, 220)

With the two Chinese translations laid out in parallel, we as readers can easily grasp their difference on the whole: Dai translates the French poem with Chinese poetic lines of either five or seven characters, appealing to the traditional poetic structure of "*Pu Sa Man*" (菩薩蠻), the name of the tune to which a *ci* poem of the Sung Dynasty used to be composed. That is to say, instead of busying himself with French-Chinese lingual translation at the very departure, Dai buries himself in finding a bird's eye view over and through the history of Chinese literature, and then manages to re-appropriate certain cultural, literary heritage in such a meandering history so as to render the original flavor and charm of Verlaine's French modernist poem in the Chinese language across the estranging seas that seem to unfailingly separate the East from the West, and vice versa (Tseng and Wu 2003, 192). In contrast to Dai's poetic undertaking, Cheng Tseng-Hou tends to locate alternative translation practices which make it possible to "counter the strategy of fluency, aiming to communicate linguistic and cultural difference instead of removing them" (Venuti 1995, i). He as a translator thus takes effort to faithfully retain the original semantic message of Verlaine's French symbolist poem that boasts a unique lingering musicality (White 1992, 128) and makes an attempt to echo its original rhyming pattern in the target language. However, the translator's linguistic register, at least for such a line as "屋頂上有，地上也有！", seems to fall into the style of contemporary vernacular prose Chinese, which is not totally in accordance with Verlaine's original subtle, delicate as well as exquisite poetic latitude that partly characterizes the essence of French symbolism.

Strategically, Cheng's faithful syntactical representation appeals to the foreignization perspective which may help "establish an alternative tradition" in which "translation can be studied and practiced as a locus of difference" (Venuti 1995, i). Yet, if we put Dai's domesticating and Cheng's foreignizing translations of Verlaine's second stanza side by side, we can soon make out their essential distinction in terms of poetic disposition in the target language. The former's translation goes as follows: "霏霏窗外雨，/ 滴滴淋街宇；/ 似為我憂心，/ 低吟淒楚聲。" The latter's rendition reads: "啊！淅淅瀝瀝的雨聲，/ 屋頂上有，地上也有！/ 百無聊賴的心未曾 / 啊！聽過動聽的雨聲！"

As elucidated in his article, entitled "There Is No Such a Thing as Perfect Equivalence in Translation: Get to Know Some Obstacles on the Road of Literary Translation" (譯無全功——認識文學翻譯的幾個路障), Yu Kwang-Chung strongly contends that:

> … poetic lines feature themselves in a highly condensed and refined style. Every inch of land is worth an ounce of gold. So a translator ought to make greatest effort to save every single word that can be saved. (Yu 2016, 6)

Accordingly, once we try to narrow our comparison down to their translations of the second line of the second stanza of the poem, we cannot fail to notice the merit achieved in the highly literary style of Dai's version. The former's translation goes: "滴滴淋街宇" whereas the latter's rendition reads "屋頂上有，地上也有！" It seems, therefore, evident and creditable to sate that Dai as a Chinese translator succeeds in avoiding a prose-like style in translating the poetic quality or essence of Verlaine's celebrated symbolist poem, « Il pleure dans mon cœur ». It is no wonder that "Dai, who pioneered in early Chinese modernist poetry, was considered to be a talented poet and translator in the world of modern Chinese literature" (Yang 2003, 112).

3. On the pursuit of optimal fidelity in literary rendition

On the other hand, if we apply the standard of fidelity in literary translation to examining the chronological aspect of Dai's Chinese translation, we may find that Dai's version is not at all perfectly truthful to Verlaine's modernist poetic style which appeals to something much more colloquial and up-to-date as far as linguistic register or literary characteristic is concerned. Paul Verlaine was born in 1844 and died in 1896. He used the language of his time, that is, the French around the end of the 19th century, namely *fin de siècle* French that largely features Decadentism, in a novel, modernist, and symbolist manner in his poetic creation. The *ci* poem of "*Pu Sa Man*," nevertheless, dates back to the Sung Dynasty that ranges from 960 to 1279. As one can easily see, the chronological gap between the French symbolist movement and Dai's ancient Chinese style amounts to almost one thousand years. Therefore, in his analysis of Dai's applying classical *ci* tune, "*Pu Sa Man*," as the poetic form in translating Verlaine's "Il pleure dans mon Coeur," Peng Jian-hua points out that:

> Although the translator achieved a better musicality in the target language than do most Chinese translations of the poem, the subtle emotional nuances hidden in the original French poem, once filtered by the Chinese classical literary frame, has become obscure to the reader. (Peng 2014, 62)

In a like manner, in his analysis of Dai's translation of Verlaine's another reputed poem, Mo Yu points out that "In light of language style, Verlaine's 'Le ciel est par-dessus le toit' is very colloquial and quotidian, which seems to prove that Dai has invested too much literary effort in his Chinese rendition of this poem" (Mo 1988, 97).

Evidently, a poetry translator is always caught in a double bind "between maintaining the prosodic structure and preserving the exact meaning" of the original poem (Chang 2009, 122). The inevitable result seems to be doomed: There is no such thing as perfect equivalence in translation, as reiterated by Yu Kwang-Chung, let alone in literary translation (2016, 2–6). In his discussion on the Chinese translations of Shakespeare's works, Perng Ching-Hsi contends that "It is reasonable for the readers of our time to expect a brand new translation (for the complete works of Shakespeare)" (1999, 151). For the renowned scholar of literary translation in Taiwan,

> The task of translation features itself in temporariness. Recent academic studies on an original work or on its author, changeable literary tastes and critical tendencies or even a deeper understanding of a given work may all result in the inevitable need of a new translation. (Perng 1990, 5, 6)

The author of the present study, therefore, takes the liberty to make a bold attempt, that is, to take the chronological dimension of poetic language itself into consideration and then proposes the following Chinese translation of Verlaine's "Il pleure dans mon Coeur," a translation that takes efforts to attend to both original regular rhyming pattern and linguistic/lexical register that falls mainly in the scope of vernacular yet literary style.

〈淚雨心田〉 (吳敏華 譯)

心田淚雨滴滴，
如滿城的細雨。
什麼樣的萎靡，
刺穿了我心底？
啊！聽聽那冷雨——
覆大地蓋屋脊；

為我心愁悠悠，
雨聲如歌不肯休！
無端的濛濛淚雨，
落在多惱的心裡。
什麼？無人負你——
無緣無故的哀淒！
無端無的的淚雨，
惱人至深的悲曲；
無愛無恨在心田，
滿腔但覺苦無邊。

(Wu Min-Hua 2017, 20)

Now, let us move forward to discuss Dai's famous Chinese translation of Verlaine's another famous poem, "Le ciel est par-dessus le toit." In his *A Critical Biography of Dai Wang-Shu*, Chen Bing-Ying, again, commends Dai's Chinese translation for its outstanding peculiar refinedness and delicacy, contending that:

> Through the delicately carved Chinese characters and well-wrought sentences in Dai's Chinese translation of Verlaine's French poem, we feel that Dai as a young poet has found his true inner voice in the sentimental yet beautiful poetic lines of the foreign symbolist master.… The Chinese poet must feel excited while translating these lively and delicate French lines. (Chen 1993, 224).

By the same token, in *An Appreciative Dictionary of Famous Foreign Poems*, the editor Zhou Ning claims that he has deliberately compared Dai's translation of Verlaine's "Le ciel est par-dessus le toit" with those done by other Chinese translators, finding that Dai's translation prevails over others by his successful representation of Verlaine's original peculiar musicality that lingers nostalgically and melancholically in the ears of the French reader. He thus explains:

> The poetry of Verlaine as a French symbolist poet features in its dense musicality, in which lies almost all the charm of lots of his little poems. Relatively speaking, China witnesses more Chinese translations of Verlaine's poems than those of other foreign poets. Some Chinese translations of Verlaine are superb as far as poetic ambience is concerned (the so-called ambience in Chinese poetics regards by and large the spatial dimension that a poem arouses in the reader). However, there are few Chinese translations that manage to convey and represent the original musical aspects of Verlaine's French poems. Perhaps, it is due to the natural restraint of language itself that those aspects cannot be fully achieved and rendered across the boundary of language by means of any human efforts. I have personally compared several Chinese translations and the original French poem, finding at last that Dai's translation entitled "瓦上長天" remains the one that is the most successful in rendering the musical essence of Verlaine's original French poem. (Sun and Zhou 1989, 345)

In the original French poem, "Le ciel est par-dessus le toit," Verlaine appeals to a colloquial, natural and above all dialogical style, as if he were talking to his inner self or his past life. Through a little square window view seen and heard from the inside of his prison in Belgium: blue roof tiles of the city and the blue sky above it, tall trees and argentine bells, the lasting quietness of heaven and the ceaseless liveliness of the most ordinary everyday mundane world that lies as a panoramic stretch in the outside and that goes on and on, the poet unveils

the realistic human world that he sees through his prison window at the very moment with a melancholic tenderness that is tinged and tinted with appalling sudden regretfulness and profound confession. Although the poet expresses what he sees, hears and thinks in contemporary colloquial French, he manages to compose his colloquial poem with perfectly natural rhyming pattern across the stanzas, which seems to make the images in the eyes interact with the music in the ears and tinge the poem with deep melancholy and damp sentimentalism. Ordinary translators tend to either ignore the significance of rhyming patterns in the original poem or to do without paying sufficient attention to render such a demanding literary aspect in their Chinese translations. Hence, Dai can be said to have set a good model for literary translators to emulate through his well-wrought translation of this subtle and delicate French poem in the Chinese language, as proposed by the literary critic Chen Bing-Ying in *A Critical Biography of Dai Wang-Shu* (1993, 240). Verlaine's original French poem reads as follows:

« Le ciel est par-dessus le toit » (Paul Verlaine)

Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit,
Si bleu, si calme !
Un arbre, par-dessus le toit,
Berce sa palme.
La cloche, dans le ciel qu'on voit,
Doucement tinte.
Un oiseau sur l'arbre qu'on voit
Chante sa plainte.
Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, la vie est là,
Simple et tranquille.
Cette paisible rumeur-là,
Vient de la ville.
Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voilà
pleurant sans cesse,
Dis, qu'as-tu fait, toi que voilà,
De ta jeunesse ?

(Verlaine 2005, 172)

Beneath comes the celebrated translation carried out by Dai's Chinese pen which has been accredited by a whole school of literary critics on poetic rendition:

〈瓦上長天〉 (戴望舒 譯)

瓦上長天
柔復青！
瓦上高樹
搖娉婷。
天上鳴鈴
幽復清。

樹間小鳥
啼怨聲。
帝啊，上界生涯
温復淳。
低城飄下
太平音。
——你来何事
淚飄零，
如何消盡
好青春？

(Dai 2003a, 217, 218)

It goes without saying that poetic translation is full of flexibility and its translator is therefore endowed with certain level of liberty so far as translation methods or strategies are concerned. If a translator holds an ultimate goal to guide the target language readers to better experience adequate contextual effect and ultimately search for optimal relevance, then, "[f]rom the relevance-theoretic perspective, translators are free to add or omit certain lines, to change rhymes or rhetorical devices" (Wu and Chen 2012, 123). Although such a greatly liberal attitude regarding translation is not always embraced by translation scholars, relative adaptability or artful flexibility is seldom totally denied by its practitioners, especially in the field of literary translation. For instance, Xu Yuanchong, a reputed Chinese translator and translation scholar who translates Chinese rhymed classics into well-rhymed English as well as French, once proposes six flexible arguments regarding poetic translation with different focus in the target language and its readership:

(1) Translation as an art of identification (譯者一也)
(2) Translation as an art of recreation (譯者藝也)
(3) Translation as an art of innovation (譯者異也)
(4) Translation as an art of imitation (譯者依也)
(5) Translation as an art of delighting (譯者怡也)
(6) Translation as an art of rendition (譯者易也) (Xu 1998, 275–316)

In other words, the so-called "poetic license" falls not only in the hand of an adept poet him- or herself, but it, to some extent, falls in the adroit hand of a poetic translator as well. Dai, in his translation of Verlaine's "Le ciel est par-dessus le toit," adopts a classical Chinese poetic style with a specific attention to render Verlaine's succinct lingual style as well as his natural rhyming pattern. As a matter of fact, Dai's translation strategy may derive from his particular rendition esthetics, which may be not yet thoroughly revealed to the reader. In his article, titled "Fragmentary Notes of my Poetics," Dai contends that the notion of untranslatability of poetry is a common mistake. Only bad poetry gets totally lost once translated in the target language, because there is in reality nothing truly poetic in the original so-called poetry. It is in its very origin nothing but showy jumbling of letters and sounds, nothing but verbal dregs and lees. The value of genuine poetry remains in the translation of any kind of language for good, and such a value can never be damaged by any regional disparity or temporal gorge (Dai 2003c, 388, 389). The poet-translator's self-confidence and self-assurance

in poetic translation may stem from his masterly appropriation or re-appropriation of the literary conventions that the target language literature boasts. This literary appropriation in the task of translation is also seen in other translators. For instance, in "Translating without a Source Text: A Case Study on Liang Tsung-Tai's Baudelaire," Ma Yiu-Man points out that: If we open up the "black box" of translation and probe into it, we sometimes can find that in the translation of a single poem itself lies a complicated process of selecting and choosing, which might derive from a hidden project embraced by the translator himself (Ma 2001, 181).

Such a potential strategic manipulation involved or implied in the translation process by a skillful translator in the target language is critically examined by Lawrence Venuti:

> In current practices, a translation of a novel can and must communicate the basic elements of narrative form that structure the foreign-language text. But it is still not true that these elements are free from variation. Any language use is likely to vary the standard dialect by sampling a diversity of substandard or minor formations: regional or group dialects, jargons, clichés and slogans, stylistic innovations, archaisms, neologisms. Jean-Jacques Lecercle calls these variations the "remainder" because they exceed communication of a univocal meaning and instead draw attention to the conditions of the communicative act, conditions that are in the first instance linguistic and cultural, but that ultimately embrace social and political factors (Lecercle 1990). The remainder in literary text is much more complicated, of course, usually a sedimentation of formal elements and generic discourse, past as well as present (Jameson 1981, 140, 141).
>
> Any communication through translating, then, will involve the release of a domestic remainder, especially in the case of literature. The foreign text is rewritten in domestic dialects and discourses, registers and styles, and this results in the production of textual effects that signify only in the history of the domestic language and culture. The translator may produce these effects to communicate the foreign text, trying to invent domestic analogs for foreign forms and themes. But the result will always go beyond any communication to release target-oriented possibilities of meaning. (Venuti 2004, 470, 471)

The argument of the present research lies in that Dai takes too much liberty in the use of the literary remainder as elucidated above by adopting the *ci* form and generic style of the Sung Dynasty in his translation of Verlaine. Although Dai's Chinese translation of Verlaine's "Le ciel est par-dessus le toit" appears to have won unanimous acclaim from all scholars or critics of French-Chinese translation in the Chinese-speaking world, his over-succinct and over-classical style seems to leave out certain critical semantic elements of the poem, which almost leads the reader to a status of interpretative impasse and causes possible misunderstandings of the poem in the reader. For instance, Dai's translation of the third stanza (帝啊，上界生涯 / 温復淳。/ 低城飄下 / 太平音。) appeals on the whole to an accentuated and highlighted emphasis on religious significance between the lines, but in fact the French poet in this every stanza is talking about and pondering over the simple yet unattainable – and therefore regretfully tantalizing – life and its liveliness outside the prison wall that is so close at hand to the poet but is at that very moment made so far away from the prisoner by his wrongful conduct in his evil-haunting past. In short, the poet mainly describes the simple quotidian happiness that has been made a tantalizer by his unexpected imprisonment, which itself derives from a long story of homosexual turbulence with Arthur Rimbaud and of marital betrayal against his newly wed wife.

In a like manner, Dai's Chinese translation of Verlaine's last stanza of the poem (——你来何事 / 淚飄零，/ 如何消盡 / 好青春？) has two latent language problems as far as faithful semantic rendition is concerned. For one thing, Dai's fist two lines (——你来何事 / 淚飄零)

cannot faithfully reflect Verlaine's French "perfect tense" or "compound past" (*passé composé* in French: Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voilà / pleurant sans cesse). For another, Dai's last two lines (如何消盡 / 好青春？) seem to raise a question in or about the future by the poet himself. But in reality, Verlaine's last two lines of the poem (Dis, qu'as-tu fait, toi que voilà, / De ta jeunesse ?) adopt and apply, again, French "perfect tense" or "compound past" (*passé composé* in French). In consequence, Dai's Chinese translation of the final stanza tends to be misleading or confusing as far as a faithful rendition of the grammatical tense of the poem is concerned, which at the same time inevitably results in the lack, if not twist, of semantic clarity of Verlaine's original French symbolist poem. Therefore, the author of the present study cannot help but make a bold attempt to render the Verlainean imagery and musicality, including the long plus short syntactic structure and the well-arranged rhyming pattern that runs across all the stanzas, hidden in Verlaine's well-wrought urn of French symbolism.

〈瓦上天藍〉 (吳敏華 譯)

瓦上長天華蓋，
蔚藍恬靜；
瓦上一樹藹藹，
婆娑娉婷。
碧雲天底轟晚鐘，
柔聲噹噹；
綠樹梢頭立孤鴻，
怨歌逐漾。
我主啊！生命在此悠揚，
既樸素又安祥。
那隱隱的熙熙攘攘，
豈非紅塵的圖像。
你啊！你因何緣故，
淚下如霧？
你說：何以青春的況味，
徒剩悵然與追悔？

(Wu Min-Hua 2017, 21)

Obviously, the above Chinese translation does not succeed in totally representing Verlaine's original "abab" rhyming pattern that runs across all the stanzas throughout the poem. Although the translator manages to retain the "abab" rhyming pattern in translating the first two stanzas, he then resorts to the translator's license of flexibility to deal with the last two ones where he adopts a new "aaaa" and "aabb" rhyming pattern for the third and forth stanzas. Why is such a translator's license appealed to? In Perng Ching-Hsi's comparative study on the Chinese translations of Shakespeare's sonnets, he particularly commends Liang Tsung-Tai's rendition for the rare merits achieved by his multilingual pen: clarity, intelligibility, elegance and naturalness. Perng even goes on to elaborate on the importance of being natural in the target text, which is, according to his analysis, hardly achieved by most Chinese translators of Shakespeare's sonnets (Perng 1984, 123–126). In stark contrast to the translation principle proposed by Perng, Dai's translation of Verlaine's "le ciel est par-dessus le tois," as demonstrated in the foregoing

analysis, is devoid of the important merit of clarity as far as semantic communication is concerned, which is perhaps due to his adamant pursuit of identical rhyming pattern from the very beginning across the stanzas down the last line of the poem, that is to say, due to his overwhelming appropriation of the Chinese classic tradition as his literary remainder.

4. Conclusion

According to the classification of James S. Holmes, if a translator adopts an "analogical form" (類似形式) strategy, he or she has to find an analogical form in the literary tradition of the target language to achieve an equivalent function that has been achieved in the source language whereas if a translator resorts to a "mimetic form" (模擬形式) strategy, he or she has to represent the particular form of the original text in the target language by means of imitating the original form (Holmes1970, 95, 96). The former strategy is similar to "domestication-oriented" translation method whereas the latter approach is close to "foreignization-oriented" rendition approach if we borrow the terms and concepts proposed by Lawrence Venuti to shed light on the distinction between the two strategies proposed by Holmes. If a translator is caught up in the double-bind between "domestication" and "foreignization" while cultivating the beautiful garden of literary translation, what can he or she resort to in the long run? At such a critical moment, the words of an old sailor who has seen the ocean of English-Chinese and Chinese-English literary translations may lend us a timely hand:

> As a translator, I have always observed a principle: Translating the original meaning instead of translating the original words. If a translator attends solely to the words used in the source language in spite of the original meaning hidden behind the words, he or she may tend to end up with a translation that is literal, stiff, or even dead. Of course, an ideal translation not only renders the original meaning, but it renders the original words as well. If that cannot be achieved and the original words cannot be construed in the target language, one can but translate the original meaning regardless of the words that appear on the surface of the source text. (Yu 1983, 95)

In Shan Te-hsing's interview, entitled "Interviewing Professor Yu Kwang-Chung: All Aspects about Translation," as a seasoned translator and translation veteran scholar, Yu reiterates his thought-arousing guideline for those who aim at pursuing the art known as "performing without a stage": There should exist a golden mean between literal translation and literary translation, between word-for-word translation and sense-for-sense translation, between excessive *translationese* and zealous target language orientedness, that is to say, between sheer foreignization and completely uncontaminated domestication (Shan 2013, 183). In other words, there should exist among all the theories of translation neither extreme foreignization nor excessive domestication, for both are productive of both virtue and fault: the former may contribute to enriching the literary form of the target language with potential embarrassing unintelligibility whereas the latter may help bring forth highly intelligible translation in spite of possible literary interchanges or interactions between different conventions of diverse literatures and cultures. If we apply Yu's "golden mean" perspective to examining the Chinese translation of Verlaine's peculiar French symbolist poems, we may find that Cheng Tseng-Hou's syntactically foreignized Chinese line ("屋頂上有，地上也有！)" leans toward a literal rendition that is more or less tinged and tinted with a prosaic effect, which may be derived from the strategy of extreme foreignization, whereas Dai's deliberately naturalized classic stanzas (帝啊，上界生涯 / 温復淳。/ 低城飄下 / 太平音。/ ——你来何事 / 淚飄零，/ 如何消盡 / 好青春？), though largely in accordance with ancient

Chinese poetic tradition so far as rhythm and rhyme are concerned, inadvertently prove to reveal an underlying semantic distortion or twist in poetic semantic signification suffered by an excessively domesticated translation in the target language. Both cases speak volume for the importance of Yu Kwang-Chung's "golden mean" philosophizings in literary translation, philosophizings that ring with Jonh Dryden's earnest and tireless admonitions of "steering betwixt two extremes" (2002, 174), with Matthew Arnold's most urgent appeal to reproduce nothing peculiar or idiosyncratic but the "*general* effect" (original emphasis) in the target language (2002, 254), and with Eugene Nida's advocating "a translation from culture to culture," in which the task of the translator is to cling to the original spirit of the poem and take every effort to clothe it in language and figures entirely free from awkwardness of speech and obscurity of picture (2004, 131).

Notes

1. When the author of the article cites a Chinese passage hereinafter in the research, he does the English translation or paraphrasing by himself for the convenience of English reading.
2. Paul Verlaine once lived a disturbing bisexual life in Brussels, capital of Belgium, where his wife had but to learn to suffer and endure her husband's abnormal behavior. « [E]lle [Mathilde, femme de Verlaine] continue à s'illusionner sur Verlaine, à s'aveugler sur ses désirs homosexuels » (Buisine 1995, 215). Verlaine was imprisoned because of harming Arthur Rimbaud, his homosexual lover, with a gun shot. His poems written in prison, such as "Le ciel est par-dessus le toit," revealed the poet's heart of repentance and his eager wish for evasion from the immured existence in the prison and from his wrongful, troubled youth full of regrets. « Un carré de ciel bleu, quelques feuillages et plus loin les toits d'ardoise ou de tuile, ces images de la liberté à portée de sa vue le font pleurer sur sa jeunesse gâchée » (Petitfils 1981, 193; Sabourdy 2005, 188–200).

> [L]e regard du « prisonnier de la chair » se tourne volontiers vers le haut afin d'échapper aux affres de la pesanteur. En prison déjà, le regard s'évade par-dessus les murs, et le ciel, l'arbre, la cloche et l'oiseau, tous symboles célestes, montrent la direction d'un envol possible. La paisible simplicité de l'ambiance n'a certes aucun rapport avec l'âpreté des conquêtes spirituelles, mais elle évoque cependant en sourdine une aspiration vers un au-delà de la prison du moi passé. (Viegnes 1998, 113)

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