A Theoretical Analysis of Chinese and Foreign Prosody Comparisons—Case Studies of English, French, German, Japanese, and Russian Poetry*

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This article provides a comparative analysis of both the Chinese and foreign prosody and explores varied linguistic features of prosody and its significant enlightenment to Chinese poetic development. Jakobson deemed “selection” and “combination” as two basic methods of languages and selected combination through stressed syllabus and poetic combination, meter, syntax, repeated rhyme, etc., to highlight textual linkage. Generated prosody emphasizes cognition of artistic regularities of poetic language forms, stressing the interrelation between prosody forms and linguistic formations. An important aspect of this paper is an analysis of whether alternatives and enduring rhyme schemes are suitable in Chinese. Due to varied linguistic natures, none of the stresses and the enclosing rhyme scheme in English and German, the yin and yang end rhyme in French, the five-seven-character that pays the most attention to the sound-number regularity in Japanese, or the alphabetic writing and the complex tone in Russian can be correctly translated into Chinese. So only by respecting the features of each language can we give fully play to linguistic functions and values.

Keywords: theoretical principle, analysis, prosody

The prosody of both the east and the west has a long history. This article provides a comparative analysis of both the Chinese and foreign prosody and explores varied linguistic features of prosody and its significant enlightenment to Chinese poetic development.

“Selection” and “Combination” and Generated Prosody

In 2007, LI Xing-zhong of Washington University in the USA pointed out that, in his *Linguistics and Poetics*, R. Jakobson, a pioneer of literary linguistics, advocated that “selection” and “combination” are two basic methods of languages. “Selection” is based on similarity, dissimilarity, and polysemy, while “combination” on harmonious linkage of textual finishes. Citing poems as examples, he stated that in relation to the phenomenon of linkage, “the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection to the axis of combination”. “The combination of stressed syllables and stressed syllabus harmony, the harmony and combination of verse lines, meter repetition, syntax repetition, rhyme repetition, etc. are all embodiment of selection and combination, which highlights textual linkages” (LI, 2007, p. 157). Citing

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Shakespeare's 18th Sonnet, he pointed out that flexible applications of rhymes can intensify textual linkages. In the poem, the 14 lines end with "day? / temperate: / May, / date. / shines, / dimmed. / declines, / untrimmed. / fade, / ow'st / shade, / grow'st. / see, and / thee.", namely, the four-end rhymes of "abab cdcd efef gg", which has marked linkage functions.

Over recent years, the most significant result of the research on rule and forms of classical poetic composition has been generated prosody: M. Halle and S. J. Keyser proposed first in 1971 that...generated prosody stresses cognition of artistic regularities of linguistic forms of poetry, on the interrelation between poetic forms and linguistic forms. Scholars of generated prosody maintain that speech sounds, syllables, stresses, vocabulary, phrases, phrasal types, sentences, sentence types, various element borders, and the internal regularities constituting these forms are all linguistic forms, while rhymes, verses, number of verse syllables, arrangements of stressed and non-stressed syllables, and long and short pauses in verses, and the internal regularities constituting these forms are all literary forms. The task of prosody is to research and reveal the interactive regularities of various linguistic forms and literary forms. ...It focuses on answering such questions: What are the forms that dictate the linguistic forms of poetry of specific poets or specific traditions? What regularities do these forms have? What rules and forms of classical poetic composition, verses, and prosody do poets apply? That verses have then never applied? Why not? Why do some arrangements of verses sound pleasant or awkward? Why do some verses sound simple or complex?... Most of these questions have been answered since the birth of generated prosody. However, there is some debate about the two big issues, and they are awaiting further research. ...First, what is metricality (LI, 2007, pp. 165-166); the second controversy is whether poetic foot exists (LI, 2007, p. 169).

WANG Li's Analysis of Chinese Prosody

Before clarifying the prosody completed by the international circle of poetics, we need to know about the research results of prosody by our own Chinese people. In 1944, WANG Li offered the course of "Versification" to senior students of the Southwest Associated University in Kunming ("I interpreted 'versification' as 'grammar of poetry' which therefore includes prosody of poetry"). At the end of the course, from August 1, 1945 to April 28, 1946, I wrote Chapter I of Modern Style Poetry, Chapter II of Ancient Style Poetry, and Chapter V of Free Verse and European Verse. Later on, I added two chapters on Ci (a type of classical Chinese poetry, originating in the Tang Dynasty and fully developed in the Song Dynasty) and Qu (a type of verse for singing, which emerged in the Southern Song and Jin Dynasties and became popular in the Yuan Dynasty). YE Sheng-tao thought it inappropriate to use the term "Versification", so it was changed to "Chinese Prosody" and again to "Prosody in the Chinese Language" before the book was sent to press. "The so-called prosody is roughly equivalent to versification in English and стихосложение in Russian, ...'Biography of Zhong Hao in the Book of the Later Han': 'Hao became a hermit in the Mishan Mountain and taught prosody to around 1000 disciples'. DU Fu wrote a poem: A Public Question to Prosody. It was the origin of the term 'Prosody'" (WANG, 1957, Preface). In the preface of the first edition dated five days after the Spring Festival in 1957, the author stated, "It was an old manuscript written 10 years ago and the author only made some slight revisions before it was printed again" (WANG, 1957, Preface). At the same time, the author thanked four professors, FENG Zhi, PU Jiang-qing, BIAN Zhi-lin, and LIANG Zong-dai, for benefiting from their opinions of enlightenments (WANG, 1979).

The book was published by the New Knowledge Publishing House in 1958. After that, the 6th issue of

1959 of *Reading* (a journal) carried an article by JIN Lian-cheng entitled “Criticizing the Bourgeois Academic Ideology in ‘Prosody in the Chinese Language’”, claiming that it had “obviously advocated the bourgeois ideas of extolling foreign works while ignoring Chinese ones”. It criticized Chapter V by stating that it “showed it in a more barefaced manner and the whole chapter is about almost all meters of western poetry. Mr. Wang Li is always trying to place the western hat on the head of China...”. Under the circumstances, when it was published by the Shanghai Education Publishing House in 1962, the book had deleted Chapter V (“Free Verse and European Verse”), which was restored in 1979 when the book was republished. Some of the critics reacted with dismay,

The 1962 revision deleted the most valuable Chapter V of “Free Verse and European Verse”. (It is Chapter V that laid a solid foundation for composing Chinese verses.) It is one of the most deplorable losses in the evolution history of the modern Chinese poetry. (SANG, 2000, pp. 9-10)

WANG Li’s *Prosody in the Chinese Language* (revised and enlarged edition) (1st edition by the New Knowledge in 1958, 1st new edition in 1962, and 2nd edition in 1979) first describes the strict tonal pattern and rhyme scheme for the Chinese poetry of eight lines: level/oblique tones, antithesis, number of characters, and rhyme use.

Level/oblique tones and antithesis are the most exquisite things in modern style poetry, and they cannot be completely ignored even in ancient style poetry. It seems that everything is liberalized in new poetry, but, as far as Chinese is concerned, it is impossible to do without level/oblique tones as long as character pronunciation exists. More monosyllabic characters make it easier to form neat antithesis. New poetry is free from the restrictions, but many poets still use them flexibly. (WANG, 1979, pp. 5-6)

Modern style poetry likes the level tone as the rhyme, because the level tone is a prolonged sound, suitable for singing in a lengthened manner. It is just like English poetry where there are more descending-ascending meters than ascending-descending ones. There are more short-long meters than long-short meters in Greek and Latin poems. In English poetry or Latin and Greek poetry, some of the poems adopt the ascending-descending meters or the long-short meters, but they like to end the poem with a stressed or a prolonged sound, which is termed “catalectic”, probably to make it sung more easily in a lengthened manner. If modern new poetry uses level/oblique tones, naturally, it has to align it with the actual speech in modern times. (WANG, 1979, p. 7)

“Rhyme is universal in human poetry; ... level/oblique tones and antithesis are the features of the Chinese poetry” (WANG, 1979, p. 11).

There is only one syllable in each Chinese character, so the number of characters in a Chinese poem is the same as the number of syllables in a Chinese poem. Put it commonly, the Chinese poetry started with four-character lines and five-character lines and evolved into seven-character lines. Although a Chinese poem has as few as two-character lines and as many as 11-character lines, some less than four-character lines or more than seven-character lines merely have them inserted into a poem of four-character, five-character or seven-character lines, and it is not allowed to have two-character or three-character lines or nine-character or 11-character lines in the entire poem. Only the ballad in the Han Dynasty use three-character lines all through, such as Suburban Sacrifice Songs. (WANG, 1979, p. 11)

The real seven-character poetry (like the common form of seven-character poems in the Tang Dynasty) originated in the Northern and Southern Dynasties in around A.D. 5th century. ...In western poetry, a line has 8–12 syllables in general, while in Chinese poetry, a line has 4–7 characters. In comparison, it seems that western poems have longer “breath” than Chinese poems, but it is just the opposite in Chinese poems. Assuming one rhyme as a line, Chinese poems with the rhyme every other line indicates 14 syllables in the seven-character poetry, so the “breath” in the seven-character poetry is longer than the 12-syllabus western poetry. (WANG, 1979, p. 17)

About rhyming:

Modern style poetry is quite rigorous in rhyming, which shall be used from the beginning to the end regardless of Jueju (a poem of four lines), Lvshi (a poem of eight lines with a strict tonal pattern and rhyme scheme) or Pailv (each line containing five characters), and there shall be no interchangeable rhymes in it. ...Deviation of rhymes is a big taboo in modern style poetry, so poets would rather have obscure rhymes than rhyme deviation. (WANG, 1979, p. 44)

“Modern style poetry takes the level rhyme as a role model while the oblique rhyme is very rare. The oblique rhyme sounds like Gufeng (a kind of poetry popular in the Han Dynasty)” (WANG, 1979, p. 50).

Conclusions: (I) There shall be no interchangeable rhymes in modern style poetry, and only the beginning of the line may have a similar rhyme. Modern poets deny anyone who uses interchangeable rhymes in composition of Lvshi on the ground that it does not conform to the meter used by the poets in the Tang and Song Dynasties. (II) In case of any similar rhyme at the beginning of the line, it shall be restricted only to the similar rhymes listed in this section of the book. (WANG, 1979, p. 71)

“The principle of the level/oblique tones in modern style poetry only requires no-monotony” (WANG, 1979, p. 73). “The rhythm of modern style poetry takes two syllables as a beat and the last syllabus as an independent beat. The time taken by a level tone is roughly twice as long as an oblique tone” (WANG, 1979, p. 75). Regarding antithesis: “Antithesis is indispensable in a Lvshi (a poem of eight lines)... The antithesis in a Lvshi is used at the chin-couplet and the neck-couplet, which refer to the 3rd/4th and the 5th/6th lines...” (WANG, 1979, p. 142). “If there is only one antithesis in a poem, it shall be used at the neck-couplet, when the chin-couplet is free from antithesis” (WANG, 1979, p. 143). “Modern style poetry relies on antitheses as a soil, and there are more real inversions in poetry than in prose, and they are used more conveniently” (WANG, 1979, p. 255). “There are omissions in prose, but there are more omission in modern style poetry”. “One of the taboos in modern style poetry is avoidance of words” (WANG, 1979, p. 257).

Chapter V of “Free Verse and European Verse” was the first elaboration on the metrical pattern of the neo-poetry with a lot of examples in modern China (WANG, 1979). Including free verse, there is one beat in each of the length and the foot of the verse; the rhyme (usual rhyme, depleted rhyme, rich rhyme, and yin/yang rhyme) and the rhyme position (coupling rhyme, cross rhyme, holding rhyme, miscellaneous writing, and refrain) each take two beats; the sonnet (originated in Italy) is divided into three stanzas of segment, number of sounds and rhyme formula (the formal and the variant). New topic so fresh paragraph? Next, we will discuss WANG Li’s contributions in terms verse length, foot composition, type of rhymes, rhyme positions, and the sonnet form from the perspective of the definition of free verse.

The first step is to define the free verse: “The free verse close to the Western poetry is called vernacular poetry, and the poetry imitating the Western counterpart meters is called Europeanized poetry”. “In a nutshell, all the poems beyond the traditional metrical poetry are free verses”. The characteristics of the free verse are: First, there are no requirements for tones; second, the number of syllables or feet vary; and third, the number of lines varies from line to line. Free verses are divided into blank verses, mixed verses and verses with varied lengths (WANG, 1979). It should be noted here that the Chinese verses have more level tones. Complying with the regularities, it is prone to stiffness; breaking the regularities, it is prone to looseness.

The second step is to determine the length of the lines in the verse. Western poems,

Take tidy numbers of syllables as the principle... there are the same numbers of syllables in each line... the syllables in each line must be an even number; otherwise it will be deemed as variations. In terms of the length of the verse lines, i.e.,

the number of words in each line, Western poetry has rules on fixed number of words, as the Chinese five-character, seven-character, four-character and six-character poems. The Western poetry starts with two words, while the Chinese poetry starts with four characters in ancient times and five characters in modern times. The ancient poetry has nine characters in a line at most, because seldom does it use function words, unlike folk songs that use lining characters. (WANG, 1979, p. 834)

WANG Li pointed out that “one sentence covers two lines or multiple lines” (WANG, 1979, p. 848). “The method of multiple lines is the most salient feature of Europeanized poems” (WANG, 1979, p. 851). In fact, Chinese ancient poetry, and Chinese ci, in particular, have multiple lines, relatively less, though.

The third step is the foot constitution. In Greek and Latin, “a long tone in combination with one or two short tones...constitutes a unit of rhythm, called a foot... Further, several feet constitute a poetic line, called the meter” (WANG, 1979, p. 852). Based the stress and non-stress regularities, English poetry is divided into iambic, anapestic, trochaic, and dactyl laws, while Chinese verse is based on level/oblique tones. The issue of which is more critical to Chinese poetry-length, stress or non-stress, or level/oblique tones-remains controversial. The New Moon School was the first to introduce the law of trochees but it has not been popularized yet. LUO Nian-sheng holds that the length of Chinese characters is an important factor as well, and he recommends the use of the Russian syllabic stress in parallel with the foot. In Chinese rhythms, WU Min-jie maintains that the Chinese characters are unique in their sounds, rhythms and tones in sounds, and they are of the most cultural feature and connotation, so they should be adopted appropriately.

The fourth step concerns rhyme structures, which consist of common rhyme, poor rhyme, rich rhyme, and yin/yang rhyme. In English, “Though the sounds are the same, the letters are different or rather different, called ear rhyme; those with the same letters but different or rather different sounds are called the eye rhyme” (WANG, 1979, p. 871). Chinese is a non-alphabetic language with neither of the two phenomena. There are three kinds of yin/yang rhymes in Chinese, English and French, and they must be explicitly clarified.

The fifth step is about the rhyme position. There are rhymes with cross rhymes, aabb, which are divided into the western double cross (alternate) abab and the Chinese single-cross rhyme. “Double-cross is the norm of the western poetry” (WANG, 1979, p. 895). English Poetry “Heroic Quatrain” is a four-line poem of iambic pentameter (heroic iambic pentameter). Single Cross is “rhyme in even lines but no rhyme in odd lines” (WANG, 1979, p. 898). “Chinese quatrains are very much like Western four lines with single cross” (WANG, 1979, p. 899). Another type of rhyming is the enclosed rhyme scheme, abba, which is purely a Western form, while the sonnet is the norm. However, there will be an adaptive period before China accepts it. This point will be explained below, using poems by LIANG Zong-dai and SUN Da-yu as instances.

The sixth step is the sonnet form. (The sonnet, a poem of 14 lines, originated in Italy.) There are segments, numbers of syllables, and rhyming schemes (formal and variant). There are four types of segments (stanzas): 4 + 4 + 3 + 3 (Italy and France), 8 + 6 (England), 4 + 4 + 6, 14. The numbers of syllables are divided into three categories: The French School is most likely to use the 12-syllable “Alexander style”; the British, heroic iambic pentameter; others, 11, 9, 8, 7, 6, and 5 syllables, all acceptable. However, and numbers of syllables must be the same in all the lines with rigorous metrical laws. The rhyme schemes are divided into formal and variant. In the formal style, the first eight lines are all abba abba, but the last six lines are subject to the French School and the English School. The French School is further divided into the inheritance of Italy, ccd eed and the French own poetry, ccd ede. The English School is divided into the Milton scheme, cde cde, and the Keats scheme, cdc dcd.

The variants are divided into three small variants with 19 types and big variant with 20 types of cross rhyming and four types of following rhyming (with rhyming words and rhyming schemes all changed). Regarding the rhyming schemes, in addition to the Italian style, there are also the Shakespearean style, abab cdcd efef gg, the Spencer style, abab bcbc cdcd, and the Sidney style, abab abab cdcd ee.

WANG Li summed up that the reasons why the sonnet has the strictest metrical regularities lie in the following features: constant 14 lines; neat number of syllables or feet with extremely rare irregularities; neat rhyme schemes, particularly in formal sonnets. From this perspective, the sonnet can be deemed as the Western “verses” with a strict tonal pattern and rhyme scheme. Some of the Chinese poets tend to attach increasing importance to metrical rules in poetry, and the most convenient way is to imitate the West. Pure imitation is not the solution, so we “should absorb the advantages of Western verse styles and establish our new poetry laws in combination with characteristics of the Chinese language” (WANG, 2007, p. 950).

WANG Li’s 14-line rhyme schemes include Italian, English, and French rhyme styles, but there is an “Onegin Stanza” invented by a Russian poet Pushkin, abab cdcd efef gg, with two groups of cross rhymes, one group of hold rhymes and one group of coupling rhymes (DUAN, 1991; ZHANG, 1986).

Statistics on the new metrical verses cited in Chapter Five, “Vernacular Poetry and Europeanized Poetry”: 92 new metrical poems appearing 130 times. FENG Zhi’s 28 poems appear most, totaling 47 times, using at least 20 different 14-line styles and their variants, which is really amazing. Among them, the 7th poem is cited four times; the 1st, 2nd, 15th, and 19th poems are cited three times each; the 3rd, 9th, 10th, 13th, 21st, 24th, 26th, and “To the Heart of Autumn” are cited twice each; the 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th, 11th, 12th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 20th, 22nd, 23rd, 25th, and 27th poems are cited once each. FENG Zhi is followed by BIAN Zhi-lin, whose 27 poems are cited 42 times. “Naughty”, “White Shells”, and “Watch” are cited three times each; “Water”, “Travel Afar”, “Night Wind”, “Untitled III”, “Lamp Worm”, “Collection of Comforting Letters”, the 2nd, 5th, 11th and 16th poems are cited twice each; “Lonely”, “A Long-distance Road”, “Distance Organization”, “Dressing Table”, “Laugh at Work”, “Length”, “Dusk”, “Record”, “Watch”, “Cart”, “Collection of Comforting Letters”, the 4th, 6th, 7th, 14th, and 20th are cited once each. WEN Yi-duo ranks third, with seven poems cited: “Confession”, “Sin”, “Tiananmen”, “Fleet-footed Runner”, “Discovery”, “Swear by Pointing to the Sun”, and “Forget Her”. The next is LIANG Zong-dai, with six poems cited nine times. The “Sonnet” 1st is cited three times; 2nd, twice; 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th, once. Then it is GUO Mo-ruo with three poems, “Flood Era”, “Ode to the Sun”, and “The Bottle”; ZHU Xiang with three poems, “Cat Mandate”, “Reply to a Dream” and “Return of a Native”; XU Zhi-mo with two poems, “He Was Afraid to Say” and “Moaning”; XU Yu-nuo with two poems, “Missing” and “A Little Verse”; YU Geng-yu with two poems, “Shadow” and “Wandering Spring”; LU Xun with one poem, “Him” cited twice; TIAN Han’s “Under the Moon in the Spring Month”, CHENG Fang-wu’s “Quiet Night”, LIU Meng-wei’s “To Someone”, ZHU Da-nan’s “Dismissing Guests”, LIU Fu’s “How Can I Stop Missing Him”, LIU Da-bai’s “Love”, JIAN Xian-ai’s “Tour Longtan on a Raining Morning”, BING Xin’s “A Tiring Journey”, ZUO Shun-sheng’s “Nanjing”, CHENG Kan’s “Uptown”, and DAI Wang-shu’s “Sonnet”.

In particular, FENG Zhi and BIAN Zhi-lin were the most prominent representatives of sonnets in China. WANG Li’s study laid a solid theoretical foundation for the metrical poetry in the modern Chinese language.

Table 1

Citation Times of Modern Chinese Poets and Poems in WANG Li's Chinese Prosody

Poet	Poem	Site
FENG Zhi	28	47
BIAN Zhi-lin	27	42
WEN Yi-duo	7	7
LIANG Zong-dai	6	9
GUO Mo-ruo	3	3
ZHU Xiang	3	3
XU Zhi-mo	2	2
XU Yu-nuo	2	2
YU Geng-yu	2	2
LU Xun	1	2
TIAN Han	1	1
CHENG Fang-wu	1	1
LIU Meng-wei	1	1
ZHU Da-nan	1	1
LIU Fu	1	1
LIU Da-bai	1	1
JIAN Xian-ai	1	1
BING Xin	1	1
ZUO Shun-sheng	1	1
CHENG Kan	1	1
DAI Wang-shu	1	1

Cross Rhyme and Hold Rhyme in Chinese and German Poetry

There were few cross rhymes or hold rhymes in ancient China. ZHAO Yuan-ren presented a few examples in the early new poetry in his *New Poetry Rhyme in the Chinese National Tones (Attached the Level Water Rhyme)*. There had never been any cross rhymes every other line before the Europeanized impact in China, but there were quite a few in the new poetry after that. For instance:

我跑到松林里来散步，   天
 头沐着朝阳，   地
 脚下濯着清露——   天
 冷暖温凉，   地
 一样是自然生趣   天
 (沫若在时事新报)
 我在这海岸上跑去跑来，   ○
 我真快畅。   天
 工人！我的恩人！   地
 我感谢你得深深，   地
 同那海心一样   天
 (沫若在时事新报)¹

¹ ZHAO, Y. R. (1923). *New poetry rhyme in the Chinese national tones (Attached the level water rhyme)*. Beijing: Commercial Press. (An undated book, Preface dated April 15, 1922, collected from ZHU Zi-qing's Study Outline of Chinese New Literature, pp. 22-26.)

There were debates about in the poetry realm whether the authentic hold rhyme in the sonnet was suitable to China.

In the 2nd issue of the *Poetry* published on April 20, 1931, LIANG Zong-dai pointed out in his “Theories on Poetry”, an open letter to XU Zhi-mo,

As for the question on syllables in the new poetry, though it is too soft and fragile, I would like to make some remarks, because it is simply half of the life of the new poetry.

...However, there is a preliminary question: a thorough understanding of the Chinese characters and the musicality of the vernacular characters. Because each nation’s language has its own special character of musicality, English and French are completely different, deviating from their natures, and there is nothing you can do about it even if you have the capacity beyond mankind. (LIANG, 1931, p. 8)

Regarding the poems carried in the *Poetry*, allow me to venture a word, it is an art that enables us to surprisingly admire the poets at most.

Let us read the 1st stanza of the “Farewell”. (LIANG, 1931, p. 2)

天地竟然老朽得这么不堪！
我怕世界就要吐出他最后
一口气息。无怪老天要破旧，
唉，白云收尽了向来的灿烂。

There are about 30 characters before the character “堪” and the term “灿烂”，which loses harmony and function completely. How can we say that it provokes endless ripples at the bottom spring of our heart? What is more, there is non-coordination between the level tone and the oblique tone. There are only 10 level tones out of the 44 characters (one of the big defects of the vernacular is too many characters with oblique tones).

“堪” and “灿烂” separated by more than 30 characters, simply lost the bottom and that should function, how can also provoke endless ripples in the bottom of our hearts in the spring? Also, not too *ze* the co-ordination, 44th word level tone which is only ten words (vernacular bottom a big drawback is that the word oblique tones too).

LIANG Zong-dai applied the standards for the Chinese classical poetry to gauge SUN Da-yu’s sonnets, questioning the rhyme of “堪” and “灿烂” with about 30 characters in between, which loses harmony and function. There is no explanation of losing harmony and function. Now that he knew that SUN Da-yu “changed the simple Chinese characters into endless sonnets”, the beginning four lines are clearly the abba style rhyme schemes, with the rhyme A being “堪” and “烂”，and the rhyme of B being “后” and “旧”，which is rigorous and standard rhyming, completely different from the ancient Chinese near-style poems of abab rhyming or abbb rhyming in the couplets. The second is that “even the level tones and the oblique tones are not coordinated”. SUN Da-yu applied the Anglo-American way of metrical poetry, which uses stress and non-stress instead of the traditional Chinese level/oblique tones as the metrical method, so is it to constrain somebody to do things that are beyond his power? I can only say that LIANG Zong-dai had benefited from the yin/yang mutual rhyming of the traditional Chinese poetry and French poetry, and the German eight-line poem, “Wanderer’s Night Song” by poet Goethe, whom he respected, is also abababba, which he probably thought would not conform to the Chinese people’s habit. So he translated two versions:

一切的峰顶 / 无声 / 一切的树尖 / 全不见 / 丝儿风影。 / 小鸟们在林间梦深 / 少待呵，俄顷 / 你快也安静。(《流浪者之夜歌》，LIANG, 1931)

一切的峰顶 / 沉静, / 一切的树尖 / 全不见 / 丝儿风影。 / 小鸟们在林间无声。 / 等着罢: 俄顷 / 你也要安静。(Retranslated by LIANG Zong-dai, 1936)

The rhyming schemes are all aabbaaaa, which fails to reflect the rhymes of the original poem.

The original German of Goethe's "Wanderer's Night Song" is like this:

Wanderes Nachtlid
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)
Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.

It can be seen that its meter is "trochaic", i.e., the law of stress and non-stress. Its rhyme is: *eln, u, eln, u; auch, lde, lde, auch*, with the rhyme scheme of the first four lines being abab in the cross rhyme, and the following four lines being abba in the hold rhyme.

The poem has several translated versions by a number of renowned scholars:

一切的山之顶 / 沉静, / 一切的树梢 / 全不见 / 些儿风影; / 小鸟们在林中无声。 / 少时顷, 你快, / 快也安静。(aabcaada, 《浪游人的夜歌》, translated by GUO Mo-ruo)

暮霭落峰巅 / 无声, / 在树杪枝间 / 不闻 / 半丝轻风; / 鸟雀皆已展翼埋头, / 不多时, 你亦将神游 / 睡梦之中。(abacdbdb, 《夜游》, translated by ZHU Xiang)

一切山峰上 / 是寂静, / 一切树杪中 / 感不到 / 些微的风; / 森林中众鸟无音。 / 等着罢, 你不久 / 也将得着安宁。(baacaada, 《游行者之夜歌》, translated by ZONG Bai-hua)

群峰 / 一片沉寂, / 树梢 / 微风敛迹, / 林中 / 栖鸟缄默。 / 稍待 / 你也安息。(abbacdb, 《游子夜歌》, translated by QIAN Chun-qi)

一切峰顶的上空 / 静寂, / 一切的树梢中 / 你几乎觉察不到 / 一些声气; / 鸟儿们静默在林里。 / 且等候, 你也快要 / 去休息。(abacbbcb, 《漫游者的夜歌》, translated by FENG Zhi)

微风收木末 / 群动息山头 / 鸟眠静不噪 / 我亦欲归休 (baca, 《有喻》, translated by QIAN Zhong-shu)

In order to better convey the poetic meanings, none of the the translated versions by renowned scholars conveys the original phonology.

Rhyming Schemes of French, Japanese, and Russian Poetry

LIANG Zong-dai translated "In Prison" by French poet Verlaine:

天空, 它横在屋顶上, / 多静, 多青! / 一棵树, 在那屋顶上 / 欣欣向荣。// 一座钟, 向晴碧的天 / 悠悠地响, / 一只鸟, 在绿的树尖 / 幽幽地唱。// 上帝呵! 这才是生命, / 清静, 单纯。/ 一片和平声浪, 隐隐 / 起自诚心。// 你怎样, 啊, 你在这里 / 终日涕零—/ 你怎样, 说呀, 消磨去 / 你底青春? (ababdcdefghbif)

DAI Wang-shu translated it into 《瓦上长天》:

瓦上长天 / 柔复青! / 瓦上高树 / 摇娉婷。// 天上鸣铃 / 幽复清。/ 林间小鸟 / 啼怨声。// 帝啊, 上界生涯 / 温复淳。/ 低城飘下 / 太平音。// 一来何事 / 泪飘零, / 如何消尽 / 好青春? (bacaadaefgahaia)

Verlaine's original poem is like this:

Verlaine: Le ciel est par-dessus le toit
 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?

It can be seen that the poem adopts a typical cross rhyme, one masculine, and one feminine. The first two sections have the masculine rhyme *oit*, while the final two sections have the feminine rhyme *la*. The feminine rhyme all ends in a mute *e*. The clarion masculine rhyme *oit* and the mute feminine rhyme *e* are used alternately, with the masculine rhyme for the masculine rhyme and the feminine rhyme for the feminine rhyme. The rhyming scheme in each stanza is alternately masculine/feminine. In no case can it be translated into Chinese. It can be deemed in terms of musicality as inseparable from French poetry.

Although Japanese and Chinese are inextricably linked, it is equally difficult to translate them accurately into each other. In the No. 1 issue of the *Creation Weekly* published on May 13, 1923, CHENG Fang-wu pointed out in his "Defensive War of Poetry"² that ZHOU Zuo-ren translated some famous lines in "Banana" into "Ancient pond—the sound of a frog jumping into water". He also pointed out that there is a sigh word *ah* below the ancient pond in the original poem, which is the lifeline of the original, but he lost it in translation. Ancient pool *ah* in Japanese is *Furuike-ya* in with five sounds in the relationship of two-two-one. When translated into two Chinese characters *gu chi*, the original musical effect is all lost; the frog translated with a character "qing" is like adding a leg to a snake. Haiku is praised for its simplicity or roughness, so adding a character "qing" will not add any emotions to the whole poem. However, it loses the merit of roughness. The character "li" after water is another leg to the snake, losing all the beauty of dim flavor in the original. He believed that since Haiku can imply an atmosphere beyond language by using the foot relations, it would be better to retain the original foot meter in the translated version. He then translated as "苍寂古池呀, 小蛙儿蓦地跳入, 池水的声音" to retain the two-two-one, three-two-two-two-one-two metrical feet relations. However, he admitted that he adds some unhelpful legs to the snake.

Due to different natures of languages, it is difficult to convert the stressed accents and the hold rhymes in English and German into Chinese in a way that retains beauty, and there is no way to translate French masculine and feminine end rhymes into Chinese. When translating into Chinese the five-character and the seven-character poetry, to which Japanese attach the most importance, we are bound to increase or decrease words. Some people noted the problems in introducing Russian poetry written in Pinyin words and with polyphonic properties a long time ago.

"On Writing Poetry" in the book of *Poetry* first published in early May 1944 by HUANG Yao-mian pointed out that whether free verses should have "laws on separate lines or other rules" is to adapt to emotional fluctuations, so when reading them, we will natural adjust the gaps between their phonetic lengths subject to slow, fast, high, and low tones, so that each line will still maintains the poetic syllable balance, but now some

² Quoted from YANG Kuang-han and LIU Fu-chun. (1985). *On Modern Chinese Poetry (Book I)* (pp. 76-77).

poets seem not to understand these obvious the truth. He cited Maheukowski's "I / am a citizen / of the Soviet Union!" as an example. Due to the use of polyphony in Russian, there will be natural pauses when we read it line by line, but when we read the Chinese translation of it, it becomes "I / am China's / people!", which sounds very weird. So he pointed out, "We do not have to wear a suit and go to the country to be proud of ourselves before the rural people. What we should learn from Maheukowski is revolutionary spirit and work enthusiasm". From another perspective, that it is difficult to translate Russian versification to Chinese promoted even more the development of China's free verses.

In the history of modern Chinese poetry, the three most influential advocates of free verse were GUO Mo-ruo, DAI Wang-shu, and AI Qing. GUO Mo-ruo emulated German poems in his early years, writing Western poems by applying cross rhymes and hold rhymes, and later on he learned from Whitman, abandoning neat rhythm schemes and advocating free verses. DAI Wang-shu wrote a sonorous poem of "Rainy Alley" in his early years, but he gave up neat versification and championed free verses after he went to France as an international student. As an international student in France, AI Qing was mostly influenced by Belgian poet Verhaeren, who wrote also in French. Later on, he strongly advocated "Prose Beauty of Poetry", which was surely associated with the revolutionary spirit, but there is no doubt that it was considerably related to the fact that the musicality of the French poetry cannot be converted into Chinese.

FENG Zhi and LIANG Zong-dai, who valued tonality most, emulated the tonalities of various sonnets in German; BIAN Zhi-lin referred to various tonalities of English poetry; the New Moon School, especially WEN Yi-duo, XU Zhi-mo, and ZHU Xiang, emulated English poetry's stress and non-stress tonality. However, none of them succeeded in drawing attention from mass readers as much as the free versification did.

Enlightenment of the Comparative Study of Chinese and Foreign Languages

In the *Comparative Study of Chinese and Foreign Languages in the 20th Century*, linguists conducted a special study of the topic and pointed out that there were at least the following comparative differences between Chinese and other languages in pronunciation:

The first is Chinese-English phonetic comparison: There are differences in pronunciation phonetics and articulation methods. In the composition of the phonemic system, there are more vowels in English than in Chinese, and there are vowels and consonants in one language but missing in the other. In pronunciation flows and phonetic variations, English has a wide variety of forms, but Chinese only possesses continuous tones, which is characteristic of Chinese. In terms of syllable contrast, there are more single-consonant syllables, phonemes, varied consonant clusters in English than in Chinese; Chinese has definitely more open syllables, while English has just as many closed syllables; there are more restrictions to Chinese phoneme combinations. For instance, *z*, *s*, *sh*, *zh*, *g*, *k*, and *h* cannot be juxtaposed with *i* and *ü* as well as with sounds beginning with these two vowels; English, on the other hand, is flexible with no restriction to juxtapose vowels and consonants. In the aspect of the pitch system, Chinese is a tonal language, with pitch reflected in pitch change of the word, while English is a language of intonation, with pitch reflected in phrases and sentences. The tone in Chinese is a tonal part of the word and decides the meaning of the word, while English pitch changes are subject to their positions in sentences. Regarding the pitch change, the tone at the end of a sentence in Chinese is reflected in the last word of the sentence, while in English, it is reflected by the last stressed syllable. As for the contrast of stresses, in English, the most important is the high pitch, followed by sound length, sound intensity, and sound quality, while in Chinese, the most important is the sound length, followed by pitch, sound intensity, and sound

quality. In English, a weak syllable can occur in any syllable, while a weak syllable in Chinese cannot be the first syllable. English determines the stressed syllable first, while Chinese determines the weak syllables first. As far as rhythm is concerned, firstly, there are differences in rhythm unit. The Chinese rhythm unit is composed of two to three independent semantic syllables, which is in line with the smallest semantic unit, while the English rhythm unit is composed of evenly-distributed stressed sounds, and there are generally two non-stressed sound between two stressed ones. Secondly, there are differences in standards for calculated rhythmic beats. Chinese is syllable timing while English is accented timing. Scholars have noted in particular that the near-style poetry and *ci* that appeared after the Tang Dynasty of China reflects features of syllable timing, explicit rhythm, exquisite tone combination, and phonological harmony (XU & ZHANG, 2006, pp. 39-44).

The second is Chinese-Japanese phonetic comparison. Put simply, the sense of beauty in Chinese is summarized as bold and flowing accomplished at a stretch, while that of Japanese as rhythm of aesthetics pauses (XU & ZHANG, 2006, pp. 139-142).

The third is Chinese-German phonetic comparison. Some Chinese and German vowels and consonants are identical in phonemes, but there are some completely different vowel phonemes and consonant phonemes between them. Each Chinese syllable has tones divided into five special non-sound phonemes: yin level tone, yang level tone, rising tone, falling tone, and soft tone. There is no tone in German, but there is a contrast between long sounds and short sounds, and these long sounds and short sounds plus stressed sounds constitute unique non-accented sound phonemes. There is no restriction to composition of syllables of phonemes in German, while Chinese syllables are composed of initials, finals, and tones, which is more complex. The stressed syllable in German usually falls on the first syllable or the root syllable, and the accent of a single-syllable word falls almost all on the first syllable, which further weakens the unstressed ending syllable, so German sounds more strengthened (XU & ZHANG, 2006, pp. 156-157).

The fourth is Chinese-French phonetic comparison. The Chinese melody is reflected in tones, while that of French uses phrases or clauses as carriers conveyed in intonations. Chinese tones have the function of distinguishing meanings, while there is no tone in French. The distinguishing function of French intonations is richer than Chinese tones (XU & ZHANG, 2006, pp. 176-177).

ZHAO Zhen-jiang's wrote the *Introduction to Spain and Spanish-American Poetry* and commented that most of today's poets are no longer comply with these Spanish poetry metrics (la métrica), but their works of the so-called free verse poetry are inextricably connected with classical poetry.

They may not pay attention to metrics (la medida o el metro) or rhyme (la rima), but they attach more importance to rhythm (el ritmo), which result in harmony and musicality in poems.

As far as rhyme is concerned, Chinese poetry is much richer than its Spanish counterpart, because Spanish has only five vowels (simple or compound vowels), but in terms of rhythm, Spanish poetry seems stronger than its Chinese counterpart, because Chinese characters are monosyllabic, and the vast majority of words have only two syllables. However, Spanish words vary in the number of syllables, and the accent falls on different syllables, which renders Spanish sentence a stronger sense of rhythm. Nevertheless, the rhythms of Chinese poetry are related to the changes and combinations of the four tones, which is non-existent in Spanish.

Poetic prosody was not invented by anyone, but was summarized based on accumulations and summaries of numerous poets in long creative writing practice. As long as poets continue with their writing practice, poetic prosody will continue to evolve.

One thing should be noted that there is no contrary between classical poetry and modern free versification in the West, and they evolve along the same strain. Many famous contemporary poets have written sonnets, which is the most

convincing explanation. (ZHAO, 2002, pp. 64-65)

Through the comparisons between Chinese and foreign languages, we know that we must respect the unique characteristics of each language in order to give full play to the role and value of the language.

According to the characteristics of the Chinese language, since ancient times, the smallest basic structural unit, “syllable”, in Chinese has been composed of three parts, “consonant + vowel + tone”, which determines the three elements in the Chinese poetic metrics: tone, rhythm and rhyme.

No matter how big the Chinese poetic metrics changes, it must be equipped with the main themes of Chinese rhythm, i.e., the sound of rhythm, the level/oblique law and the sound law (or the law of length). Although the versification formats vary through different ages, the law on their combinations remains unchanged. (WU, 2001, p. 207)

The Chinese new poetry has developed for a century, but its poetic metrics has never been unified, because of “neglect of Chinese phonetic characteristics” as linguists noted (WU, 2001, p. 266). In terms of the law of rhyme, it is true that we cannot and need not follow the rigorous rhyming schemes of the near-style poetry, but we may replace the old rhyming schemes with new ones, and “relax rhyming to a wider range, use similar rhymes, regardless of the level/oblique tones” (WU, 2001, p. 279). About the level/oblique law, it is true that we do not have to be strict with the level/oblique tones as in the near-style poetry, but we may carry out,

Dual combination of the four tones in Mandarin. Of the four tones, the yin level tone and the yang level tone are high tones regarded as the level tone; the rising tone and the falling tone are low tones deemed as the oblique tone. That will turn the four tones in Mandarin into two high-low opposing tones, which can form a combination of opposing and unifying rhythm cycle. (WU, 2001, p. 280)

Regarding the law of sound rhythm,

As for the length of a poetic line, based on experiments, it is contended that 7 ± 2 syllables are preferably appropriate, because the block span of human memory generally contains about seven units. The new poetry should stick to the five-seven character mainly, and lengthened sentences can be broken down to several lines. (WU, 2001, p. 279)

By that, we can establish “a kind of new poetic law in line with contemporary phonological systems” (WU, 2001, p. 267) in order to enable Chinese poetry to leave fine works to generations to come.

Numerous cases have told us that Chinese modern poetry not only needs foreign nutrients, but also cannot ignore the characteristics of the Chinese language itself. We must respect the characteristics of the Chinese language and give full play to the characteristics of Chinese phonology in order to really promote healthy development of Chinese Poetry.

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