

Every Translation Exists for A Unique Reason

Module code : SICH5007

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Date : 7th May2024

Titile-鹿柴

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(text)

輞川圖

鹿柴

空山不見人，
但聞人語響；
返景入深林，
復照青苔上。

The poem is by Wang Wei (c. 700–761), known in his lifetime as a wealthy Buddhist painter and calligrapher, and to later generations as a master poet in an age of masters. the Tang Dynasty. The quatrain is from a series of twenty poems on various sights near the Wang (no relation) River. The poems were written as part of a massive horizontal landscape scroll, a genre he invented. The painting was copied (translated) for centuries. The original is lost, and the earliest surviving copy comes from the 17th century: Wang's landscape after 900 years of transformation.

In classical Chinese, each character (ideogram) represents a word of a single syllable. Few of the characters are, as is commonly thought, entirely **representational**. But some of the basic vocabulary is indeed **pictographic**, and with those few hundred characters one can play the game of pretending to read Chinese.

象形

Reading the poem left to right, top to bottom, the second character in line 1 is apparently a *mountain*; the last character in the same line a *person*—both are stylizations that evolved from more literal representations. Character 4 in line 1 was a **favorite of Ezra Pound's: what he interpreted as an eye on legs**; that is, the eye in **motion**, to see. Character 5 in line 3 is two trees, *forest*. Spatial relationships are concretely portrayed in character 3 of line 3, to enter, and character 5 of line 4, above or on (top of).

More typical of Chinese is character 2 of line 4, to shine, which contains an image of the sun in the upper left and of



- 9th: **The Deer Enclosure**- C.J. Chen & Michael Bullock, 1960
- 12th: **Deer Fence** -Burton Watson, 1971
- 13th: **Deer Enclosure** -Wai-lim Yip, 1972
- 17th: **Deer Enclosure** -Francois Cheng, 1977 (was wirtten in French)

- ‘empty mountain/hills’
- ‘lonely/solitary mountain/hills’

Deer Forest Hermitage

Through the deep wood, the slanting sunlight
 Casts motley patterns on the jade-green mosses.
 No glimpse of man in this lonely mountain,
 Yet faint voices drift on the air.

—Chang Yin-nan & Lewis C. Walmsley, 1958

Chang and Walmsley published the first book-length translation of Wang Wei in English, but unfortunately their work bore little resemblance to the original.

In this poem, the couplets are reversed for no reason. The voices are *faint* and *drift on the air*. The mountain is *lonely* (surely a Western conceit, that empty = lonely!) but it's a decorator's delight: the moss is as green as jade and the sunlight *casts motley patterns*.

It is a classic example of the translator attempting to "improve" the original. Such cases are not uncommon, and are the product of a translator's unspoken contempt for the foreign poet. It never occurs to Chang and Walmsley that Wang could have written the equivalent of *casts motley patterns on the jade-green mosses* had he wanted to. He didn't.

In its way a spiritual exercise, translation is dependent on the dissolution of the translator's ego: an absolute humility toward the text. A bad translation is the insistent voice of the translator—that is, when one sees no poet and hears only the translator speaking.

‘I meet no one, I hear only the echo of human voices’ -9th

‘And yet I think I hear a voice?’ -5th

(character-by-character
translation)

Empty	mountain(s) hill(s)	(negative)	to see	person people
But	to hear	person people	words conversation	sound to echo
To return	bright(ness) shadow(s)*	to enter	deep	forest
To return Again	to shine to reflect	green blue black	moss lichen	above on (top of) top

I have presented only those definitions that are possible for this text. There are others.

A single character may be noun, verb, and adjective. It may even have contradictory readings: character 2 of line 3 is either *jing* (brightness) or *ying* (shadow). Again, context is all. Of particular difficulty to the Western translator is the absence of tense in Chinese verbs: in the poem, what is happening has happened and will happen. Similarly, nouns have no number: rose is a rose is all roses.

Contrary to the evidence of most translations, the first-person singular rarely appears in Chinese poetry. By eliminating the controlling individual mind of the poet, the experience becomes both universal and immediate to the reader.

The title of the poem, *Lu zhai*, is a place-name, something like *Deer Grove*, which I take from a map of Illinois. It probably alludes to the Deer Park in Sarnath, where the Gautama Buddha preached his first sermon. 佈道

The first two lines are fairly straightforward. The second couplet has, as we shall see, quite a few possible readings, all of them equally "correct."

Third and Fourth Lines

M O
O U
U N
N T
T

‘The reflected sunlight pierces the deep forest’ -10th

‘Deep in the seclusion of the woods, Stray shafts of the
sun pick out the green moss.’ -18th

The Deer Park

An empty hill, and no one in sight
 But I hear the echo of voices.
 The slanting sun at evening penetrates the deep woods
 And shines reflected on the blue lichens.

—Soame Jenyns, 1944

Dull, but fairly direct, Jenyns' only additions are the inevitable *I* and the explanatory *slanting sun at evening*. He is the only translator to prefer lichen to moss, though in plural form the word is particularly ugly.

In the fourth line *zhao* becomes both *shines reflected*, rather than one or the other, but he is still in the "reflected" trap: from what is the sun reflected?

Chinese poetry was based on the precise observation of the physical world. Jenyns and other translators come from a tradition where the notion of verifying a poetic image would be silly, where the word "poetic" itself is synonymous with "dreamy."

He might have squeaked by had he written *And shines reflected by the blue lichens*—accurate to nature, if not to Wang. But Jenyns—at the time Assistant Keeper of the Department of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum, scribbling through the Blitz—was so far removed from the poem's experience that he found it necessary to add the following footnote to line 2: "The woods are so thick that woodcutters and herdsmen are hidden."



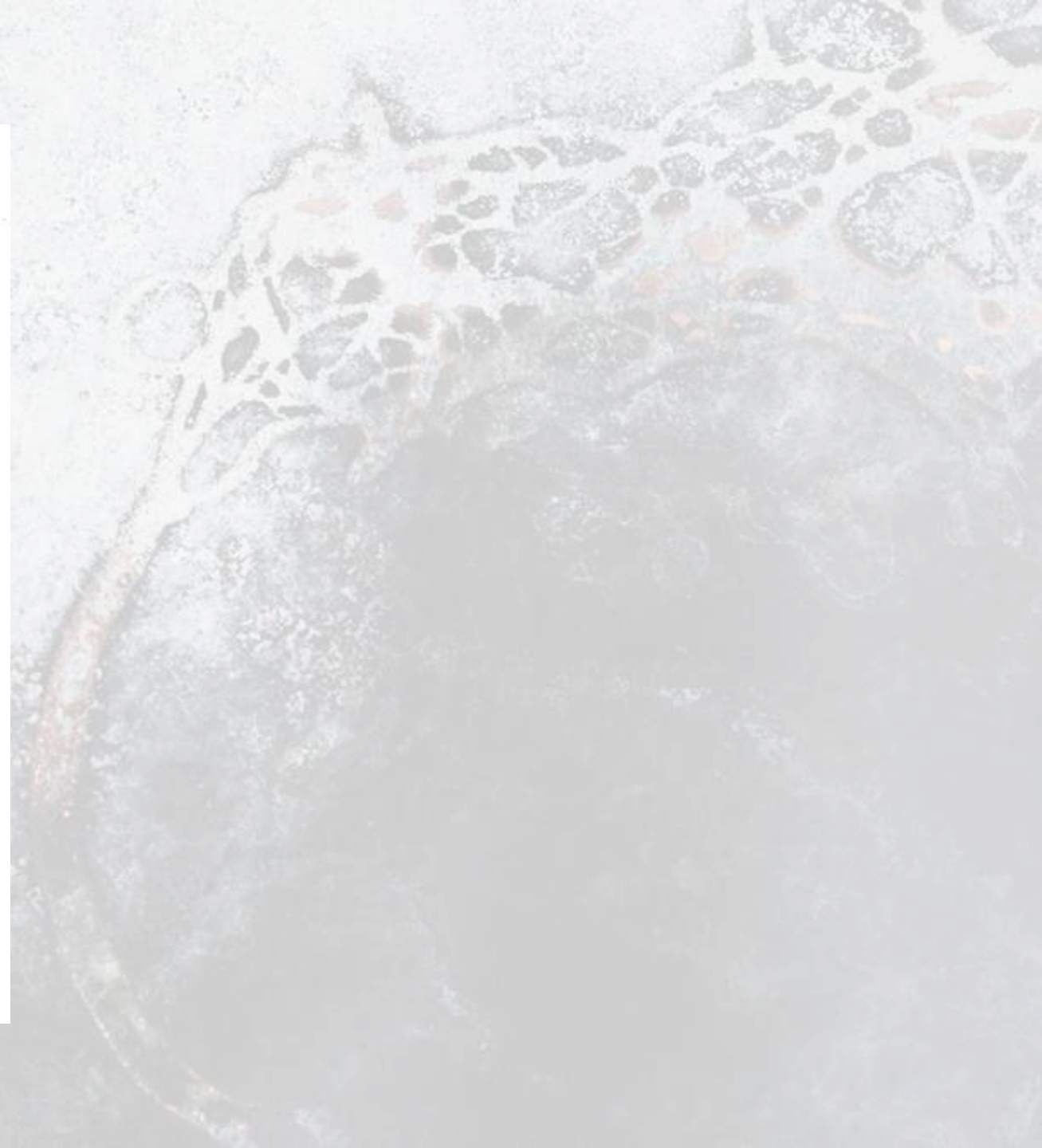


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Deer Fence

Empty hills, no one in sight,
only the sound of someone talking;
late sunlight enters the deep wood,
shining over the green moss again.

—Burton Watson, 1971



8

Deer Forest Hermitage

Through the deep wood, the slanting sunlight
Casts motley patterns on the jade-green mosses.
No glimpse of man in this lonely mountain,
Yet faint voices drift on the air.

—Chang Yin-nan & Lewis C. Walmsley, 1958

Empty mountains:

no one to be seen.

Yet—hear—

human sounds and echoes.

Returning sunlight

enters the dark woods;

Again shining

on the green moss, above.

—Gary Snyder, 1978



The background is an abstract, textured composition of various shades of teal and blue. It features thick, expressive brushstrokes and swirling patterns that create a sense of movement and depth. The colors range from a deep, dark blue to a lighter, almost white teal, with the white text providing a sharp contrast.

THANK YOU FOR
LISTENING.

If Philosophy Won't Diversify, Lets Call It **What It Really Is**

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The New York Times | <https://nyti.ms/24JZPJv>

THE STONE

If Philosophy Won't Diversify, Let's Call It What It Really Is

By Jay L. Garfield and Bryan W. Van Norden

May 11, 2016

The vast majority of philosophy departments in the United States offer courses only on philosophy derived from Europe and the English-speaking world. For example, of the 118 doctoral programs in philosophy in the United States and Canada, only 10 percent have a specialist in Chinese philosophy as part of their regular faculty. Most philosophy departments also offer no courses on Africana, Indian, Islamic, Jewish, Latin American, Native American or other non-European traditions. Indeed, of the top 50 philosophy doctoral programs in the English-speaking world, only 15 percent have any regular faculty members who teach any non-Western philosophy.

why he wants to discuss this problem
why it should be taken seriously

The New York Times | <https://nyti.ms/24JZPJv>

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Given the importance of non-European traditions in both the history of world philosophy and in the contemporary world, and given the increasing numbers of students in our colleges and universities from non-European backgrounds, this is astonishing. No other humanities discipline demonstrates this systematic neglect of most of the civilizations in its domain. The present situation is hard to justify morally, politically, epistemically or as good educational and research training practice.

Efforts :
convince + endeavor

What has happened :
the progress has been minimal

Suggestion

Instead, we ask those who sincerely believe that it does make sense to organize our discipline entirely around European and American figures and texts to pursue this agenda with honesty and openness. We therefore suggest that any department that regularly offers courses only on Western philosophy should rename itself “Department of European and American Philosophy”. This simple change would make the domain and mission of these departments clear, and would signal their true intellectual commitments to students and colleagues. We see no justification for resisting this minor rebranding (though we welcome opposing views in the comments section to this article), particularly for those who endorse, implicitly or explicitly, this Eurocentric orientation.

Some of our colleagues defend this orientation on the grounds that non-European philosophy belongs only in “area studies” departments, like Asian Studies, African Studies or Latin American Studies. We ask that those who hold this view be consistent, and locate their own departments in “area studies” as well, in this case, Anglo-European Philosophical Studies.



Rename :

- We should be honest. Face reality and call departments of European-American Philosophy what they really are.

Differences :

- **Title**
- **Provoke**
- **Subject**
- **Vocabulary**
- **Logic**
- **Content**



The background is an abstract composition of teal and blue tones, featuring thick, expressive brushstrokes that create a sense of movement and texture. The colors range from light, airy blues to deep, saturated teals, with some areas appearing more saturated than others. The overall effect is artistic and modern.

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