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<i>Student Name: Feng Yingran 馮穎冉</i>	
<i>Module Code: SICH6011</i>	<i>Student number: 1903354</i>
<i>Module title: Sinological English III</i>	
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A Translation of Four Chinese Shi-Poems

Student name: Feng Yingran SID: 1903354 Date: 28 April 2022

Word count: 2425

Venerable Shengmiao, Miss Deng, good morning. My name is Feng Yingran and I would like to share with you my translation of four Chinese Shi-Poems. The presentation will be divided into five parts.

1. Original text and translation of the *shi*-poem *Chenyi chaoshiyuan*

duchanjing 晨詣超師院讀禪經

1.1 Original text

晨詣超師院讀禪經（柳宗元）	
汲井漱寒齒，清心拂塵服。	道人庭宇靜，苔色連深竹。
閒持貝葉書，步出東齋讀。	日出霧露餘，青松如膏沐。
真源了無取，妄跡世所逐。	澹然離言說，悟悅心自足。
遺言冀可冥，繕性何由熟。	

1.2 Translation

Visiting Transcendent Master Courtyard in the Early Morning to
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Read <i>Channa Sutra</i> (Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元)	
Rinsing my mouth with cold well water, purifying my mind and dust off the clothes. The palm-leaf sutra is leisurely held, I stroll out of the east wing reading. The veritable truth is not adopted by earthly people, yet illusion things are pursued by worldly people. Expecting the truth of Buddhism coincide originally, and how to attain the nature original?	The Buddhist priest's courtyard, how quiet and secluded; the deep of bamboo forest, where green moss reaches. The rest of early morning mist shining, the green pine trees seemed to be bathing. A tranquil mind beyond expression and words, the bliss of comprehending my heart fills.

2. Original text and translation of the *shi*-poem *Xinglunan* 行路難

2.1 Original text

行路難 (李白)	
金樽清酒鬥十千， 玉盤珍羞直萬錢。 停杯投箸不能食， 拔劍四顧心茫然。 欲渡黃河冰塞川， 將登太行雪滿山。	閒來垂釣碧溪上， 忽復乘舟夢日邊。 行路難！行路難！ 多歧路，今安在？ 長風破浪會有時， 直掛雲帆濟滄海。

2.2 Translation

Hard the Way Is (Li Bai 李白)	
Mellow wine in golden goblet, one decalitre cost ten thousand; the delicacies on jade plates, also worthy of a myriad. Stopping drinking, putting down chopsticks, unwilling to taste; pulling out the sword, looking around, at a loss. Wanting to crossing the Yellow River, blocked by ice; wanting to climbing the Mount <i>Tai Hang</i> 太行, covered with storm.	Fishing by the verdurous stream in leisure, later dreaming of boating aside the sun as well. Hard the way is! hard the way is! So many forks on the path, where can I go? Always coming the opportunity of the wind and waves braving, crossing the wide blue sea with the white sail hanging.

3. Original text and translation of the *shi*-poem *Kurexing* 苦熱行

3.1 Original text

苦熱行 (王維)	
赤日滿天地，火雲成山嶽。 草木盡焦卷，川澤皆竭涸。 輕紈覺衣重，密樹苦陰薄。 莞簟不可近，絺綌再三濯。	思出宇宙外，曠然在寥廓。 長風萬里來，江海蕩煩濁。 卻顧身為患，始知心未覺。 忽入甘露門，宛然清涼樂。

3.2 Translation

The Way of Extremely Hot (Wang Wei 王維)
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Broiling sun fills the heaven and earth, rolling volcano is the feeling from the red clouds. All plants are scorched and curled up, and all the streams and marshes are dried up. Heavy is the silk cloth which worn on body, thin are the shades under thick trees. Hard to near the rush and bamboo mats, must wash again and again roughed clothes.	The thoughts roaming far beyond the heavens, wide and expansive in the boundless universe. Swift wind blowing from thousands of miles away, the extremely hot from place-to-place fading away. Looking back on the sufferings of the body, beginning to realize not wake up from the illusions. Suddenly comprehending the nirvana way of extricating, as if the bliss of cool and fresh obtaining.
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4. Original text and translation of the *shi*-poem *Qiuxing bashou* 秋興八首

興八首・其三

4.1 Original text

秋興八首・其三（杜甫）	
千家山郭靜朝暉， 日日江樓坐翠微。 信宿漁人還泛泛， 清秋燕子故飛飛。	匡衡抗疏功名薄， 劉向傳經心事違。 同學少年多不賤， 五陵衣馬自輕肥。

4.2 Translation

Eight Poems in Association of Autumn The Third (Du Fu 杜甫)
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Thousands of mountain villages immersing in morning sunlight quietly, surrounded by the green mountains on river towers day after day. Staying Fishermen still drifting and drifting on the river, yet chilly autumn swallows still flying and flying as usual.	Imitating Kuang heng 匡衡 submitting memorial , which made me losing official rank; imitating Liu Xiang 劉向 passing on Classics, my heart misgave my wishes backfire. Most of the contemporaries are now in high positions, of course living the life with light fur and well-fed horses.
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5. Commentary

The first poem was written when the poet was demoted to Yong Zhou 永州.¹ The whole poem embodies the state of mind which the poet studying Buddha. In the title of the poem, the poet expresses his admiration for the monk with the word *Chaoshi* 超師. *Chaoshi* 超師 means transcendent master. Combined with the writing background of the poet, it is not difficult to know that this refers to The abbot of Long Xing 龍興 Temple at that time, Zhong Xun 重巽, ‘He was the disciple of Zhan Ran 湛然, the ninth ancestor of the Tian Tai Sect.’² Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 said that he was the best person in the south of Chu to sermonize.

The poem describes a scene in which the poet goes to a Buddhist priest's courtyard in the morning to read Buddhist sutras, then the translation is in the present tense. The word *Chan* 禪 in the title should be translated as *Channa*, this is from Sanskrit. The other word zen could also be used to translate *Chan* 禪, but this being

¹ Translated by myself, Zhou Xiaotian 周嘯天, *Tang Poetry appreciation Dictionary Supplement* 唐詩鑒賞辭典補編 (Chengdu: Sichuan Literature and Art Publishing House, 1990), p527

² Sun Changwu 孫昌武, ‘Liu Zongyuan and Buddhism’, *Literary Heritage*, 03 (2015), pp73-81.

Japanese spelling, therefore, we do not use this means of expression, just use *Channa* to translate it.

Literal translation of some individual words is adopted. In the second stanza, for example, the *beiyeshu* 貝葉書 refers to Buddhist sutras. ‘Pattra, palm leaves used as paper in writing Buddhist sutras in ancient India.’³ Although it can be translated directly into Buddhist sutras, it does not follow the original text relatively. Therefore, I referred to the translation of *Beiye jing* 《貝葉經》, that is ‘palm-leaf manuscript’⁴. Similarly, in the translation of this verse, the word order was adjusted to make the preceding and following rhythmic. In this way, the two stanzas end with ‘holding’ and ‘reading’ respectively. The word *Yiyan* 遺言 in fourth stanza means ancient teachings, In the context of this poem it is not difficult to know that it refers to the truth of Buddhist sutras. Then translated in this way. In addition, the translation of the fourth stanza uses questions. This more reflects the poet's uncertain of returning to the nature, but also leaves the space for readers to think. In the translation of the fifth stanza, the word *Daoren* 道人 refer to the transcendent master Zhong Xun 重巽, then added Buddhist in front of priest to translate more accurate. Moreover, the poet uses *gaomu* 膏沐, means bathing, to describe the state of the green pines in the morning. which is a figurative figure of speech that makes people feel as if they can see the scene described by the poet at that time.

The whole poem shows that although the poet is in a frustrated situation of being relegated, he is not negative and pessimistic, but can re-comprehend the *Channa*

³ Translated by myself, Zhou Xiaotian 周嘯天, *Tang Poetry appreciation Dictionary Supplement* 唐詩鑒賞辭典補編, p527

⁴ Sah, Anupam. Palm Leaf Manuscripts of the World: Material, Technology and Conservation[J]. Studies in Conservation, 2002(47):15-24.

meaning from Buddhism. Therefore, the feeling of the whole poem is very clean and peaceful, revealing the poet's high perception of Buddha Dharma.

The second is a poem written by Li Bai 李白 when he left Chang An 長安 in the third year of Tian Bao 天寶.⁵ Li Bai 李白 originally had high political ideals and aspirations, but when he arrived in Chang An 長安, he was not appreciated by Emperor Xuan Zong 玄宗, and was slandered and excluded by the powerful officials, then he had to leave Chang An 長安. At this time, friends came to give Li Bai 李白 a fancy farewell dinner.

The first stanza of the poem directly reflects the value of mellow wine and delicacies with the number. Therefore, the translation still retains this kind of digital description. That is ‘ten thousand’ and ‘a myriad’ in translation. The poem cites many allusions. The first stanza of the poem cite the verse in other poem, That is Cao Zhi 曹植 *Mingdupian* 《名都篇》, ‘returning ping le guan 平樂觀 hold a sumptuous feast , one hodful of mellow wine worth ten thousand 歸來宴平樂，美酒斗十千’. Similarly, the fourth stanza of the poem cite two allusions. The first one is the story of Jiang Ziya 姜子牙. It is recorded in *Lu Shi Chunqiu* 《呂氏春秋》 that Jiang Ziya 姜子牙 was fishing in Pan 磻 Creek when he lived in seclusion. He met King Wen of Zhou and was put into an important position by him.⁶ The second story is about Yi Yin 伊尹. It is recorded in *Songshu furuizhi* 《宋書·符瑞志》 that before Yi Yin 伊尹 was appointed by Shang Tang 商湯, he dreamed of sailing around the sun and

⁵ Translated by myself, Xiao Difei 蕭滌非, *Tang Poetry Appreciation Dictionary of Phrases* 唐詩鑒賞辭典 (Shanghai: Shanghai Dictionary of Phrases Press, 1999),p209

⁶ Wang Chen 王晨, ‘On the Number of Allusions in Li Bai’s Three “Hardship is The Way”’, *Masterpiece Appreciation*, 02 (2022),pp113-115.

the moon in a boat.⁷ The poet used these two allusions to show that he was also eager to be reused by the imperial court to realize his political ambition.

The translation of the poem uses the present tense. There are many transitions of action in this poem, then it is also necessary to highlight the description of these movements. For example, A set of action as *Ting* 停, *Tou* 投, *Ba* 拔 and *Gu* 顧 in second stanza describes the poet's inner depression, so that even in the presence of delicious wine and food, he did not want to taste at all. Then the highlight of translation is these actions. In addition, in the third stanza, natural scenes reflect the poet's realistic situation. *Se* 塞 and *man* 滿 are the key words that the poet wants to express, then the two words are mentioned at the beginning of the stanza in the translation. This can express the poet's feelings more clearly. The same treatment is also reflected in the last stanza of the poem. *Hui* 會 and *Ji* 濟 are the key points that the poet wants to express. In this verse, the poet changes the gloomy feeling before and returns to the bright style. This stanza is very famous, which embodies the poet's infinite longing and yearning for the future.

The third poem focuses on the conditions of the extreme heat of summer. The first two stanzas of the poem vividly depict the scene under the broiling summer day. In the original poem, that is, red clouds in the sky looked like mountains. However, using 'rolling volcano' to express would be more vividly, there is not only contains the heavy of the mountain, but also express the extremely hot in summer. What is more, this also leads naturally to the next stanza, making the scene that Plants, trees, and lakes curled up and dried up under the heat of the sun more reasonable. Then the

⁷ Wang Chen 王晨, 'On the Number of Allusions in Li Bai's Three "Hardship is The Way"', Masterpiece Appreciation, 02 (2022), pp113-115.

latter two stanzas described the people's life scenes. In such hot weather, the poet uses the words *Zhong* 重 and *Bo* 薄 to describe how people really feel. Therefore, such feelings will be put at the beginning of the sentence in translation, so that readers can feel the feeling of poet at that time. That is 'Heavy are the silk clothes which worn on bodies, thin are the shades that feeling under thick trees.'

In the second half of the poem, however, the poet changes his writing style. The former description of the external hot weather is transformed into the poet's inner world. Although the body is suffering from the heat, the poet's mind is far beyond the universe. At this time, it seemed that a gust of wind from thousands of miles away. This is a metaphorical writing technique there is no such wind at that time. It is a subtle way of saying that the mind is naturally unaffected by the weather. In general, *Jianghai* 江海 refer to the river and sea, but there is also another interpretation in dictionary, which means everywhere. In this context maybe the later expression more accurate. The wind would not only blow the river and sea, but every place of the summer, and this explanation is more in line with the poet's state of mind at the same time. And the poet finally feels the burden of his body, then he knows he has not realized the truth yet. In the end, after realizing the nirvana way, the calm mind naturally feels the cooling happiness.

The last stanza originally intended to be translated in free translation, free oneself from worldly worries, but later I felt that such translation was not quite appropriate for the original expression. Although this will make the translation more understandable, it will not be very faithful to the original translation and appear less elegant. This is because the word *Ganlu Men* 甘露門 is a Buddhist term, which

refers to the supreme Nirvana method of transcending life and death. Therefore, translating it as ‘Suddenly comprehending the nirvana way of extricating.’

The fourth poem is the third of eight poems by Du Fu 杜甫. ‘This set of poems was written by Du Fu 杜甫 when he was 55 years old and living in Kui zhou 夔州.’⁸ At this time, the Tang Dynasty lasted eight years of the An 安 and Shi 史 Rebellion ended, and the vassal towns established their own armies in their own areas, and the Tang Dynasty could not return to its former glory. The poet had no guarantee of life in Chengdu, then he went down the river and stayed in Kui zhou 夔州. The poet was not in a good situation at that time, he felt depressed even when he saw the beautiful scenery.

In the first and second stanza of the poem, the scenery is beautiful, with green mountains surrounding the mountain city, fishermen boating on the water, and swallows flying in the sky. However, the poet uses the words RiRi 日日, Hai 還, Gu 故 to show that he just be fed up with these beautiful scenes. Therefore, the translation needs to convey this feeling, so that the reader will wonder why the poet is so depressed, leading to the following verses. Then the translation uses these words ‘day and day’ ‘still’ ‘as usual’. Next, the poet quotes two allusions. The first one is Kuang Heng 匡衡, who lived during the period of Emperor Yuan of the Han Dynasty. He was an allegiant man who always spoke the emperor’s mistakes to him, but the emperor would not blame him, but appreciated his actions. Eventually his official position got higher and higher. The second story is about Liu Xiang 劉向,

⁸ Translated by myself, Xiao Difei 蕭滌非, *Tang Poetry Appreciation Dictionary of Phrases* 唐詩鑒賞辭典 (Shanghai: Shanghai Dictionary of Phrases Press, 1999), p513

who lived in the period of Emperor Xuan of the Han Dynasty. He was a great scholar of the Han Dynasty. The poet compared the deeds of the two men with his own, he wanted to emulate Kuang Heng 匡衡 but relegated by the ruler, then he wanted to emulate Liu Xiang 劉向 but also difficult to achieve the wish. Half of his life had passed, and the poet felt that he had accomplished nothing. Therefore, he was not in the mood to enjoy the beautiful scenery.

In the last stanza of the poem, the poet recalls the current situation of his contemporaries, who are not as poor as he is, but live a comfortable life in Wu ling 五陵 district. The Wu ling 五陵 area was where the dignitaries of that era lived, and the poet used this area to refer to their high status. The original poem uses words like Yima 衣馬 and Qingfei 輕肥 to describe the rich lives of those people. This is an allusion from *the Analects of Confucius* to vividly depict the state of abundance in rich. That is ‘drive stout and strong horses, wear soft and warm furred robe. 乘肥馬, 衣輕裘.’⁹ Then the translation also retains the expression form of the original and does not translate directly into luxurious life.

Therefore, the translation retains the writing style of the original poem so that readers can understand the image of the poem more vividly. Because they were good at ingratiating themselves with their superiors, they were able to get high positions and lead a prosperous life, while poets were faithful and fell into this situation. However, the poet does not envy the life of those people, because they do not stick to their conscience, then he uses the word Zi 自 to express the poet's

⁹ Translated by myself, Heyan 何晏, Xingbing 邢昺, *Lunyu Zhushu* 論語註疏 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), p79

feeling. Let those people live the rich lives they seek, and I will remain the original intention and my conscience.¹⁰

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¹⁰ Bu Chunkai 卜春凱, 'The Structural Implication of Du Fu's "Eight Poems in Association of Autumn"', *Masterpiece Appreciation*, 06 (2020), pp110-111.

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