



Crossing the Boundaries: Integrating Poetry Writing with Translation Practice

Xia Fang

Yangzhou University

pennyfangxia@gmail.com

Abstract: *How is poetry translation essentially different from poetry writing? Poetry writing pertains primarily to the acquisition of a main skills set, for instance the mastery of poetic forms and of literary devices. At the writing level, how does translation correlate with poetry writing? On the one hand, poetry translation predominantly grapples with losses and gains due to incongruities and constraints rooted in poetic forms. Either choosing to comply with or digressing from a certain poetic form remains a constant issue that poetry translation incontrovertibly addresses; the outcome of such often involving rewriting. On the other hand, the practice of poetry translation as a linguistic activity becomes infused into even smaller details of poetry, thus making itself an imitable, yet creative act. In this essay, I want to pursue the following lesser-explored questions: What is the delineation between translation and creative works? How and when does a translator-writer deviate from the original text and assert a certain degree of expressiveness? Along the same line, how does deviation from translation facilitate the translator-writer's growth in creative writing? To answer these questions, I intend to firstly review the concept of poetry translation as a form of creative writing. This scrutiny then draws some insights from empirical evidence observed from 'Trans-creative writing'. It is hoped that this experimental method can provide more solid evidence for translation as a creative writing pedagogy.*

Keywords: *poetry writing, literary translation, creativity, trans-creative writing*

Introduction

Literary translation and creative writing are generally considered two distinct practices, with one restricted by a source text and the other enjoying more freedom of expression, albeit within the limits of particular genres and forms. The two practices generally feature in separate research fields or disciplines, one more closely allied with linguistics and the other with the creative arts. As such, they are rarely studied or utilized together, due to different ontologies and distinct

approaches to method separating the respective disciplines. Translation is often considered a restrictive practice and is regulated by widely held principles, such as faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance. Of all the principles proposed, arguably the most important factor is to remain faithful to the original text. As such, many research issues in translation have revolved around the dichotomy of concepts, such as source text and target text, the source language and target language. Despite numerous theoretical approaches or phases undertaken in translation studies, including the linguistic approach, the descriptive approach, the cultural turn and polysystemic approach, the focus of the translation studies research has not extended beyond the boundaries of the source text and target text.

Despite this, the practice of translation is far from being mechanical, rather it is an activity rich in creativity, a factor also featured in creative writing. However, the concept of creativity possesses a different contextual meaning in creative writing, most conspicuously with fewer restrictions compared to translation practice. In other words, creativity in creative writing is less restrictive than in translation, as the latter is essentially a derivative of an original text. Inevitably, translation is also a form of writing or rewriting as result of the need to deal with differences between languages and cultures. In this sense, in this essay translation is fundamentally considered a form of writing or writing practice that can be designed as a pedagogical method in creative writing education.

Marty Rutherford discusses how to teach poetry writing through incorporating the practice of translation. Rutherford designs workshop in which poems first being translated can later be inspirationally utilized as models for the participants' own creative work. According to Rutherford, literary translation is fundamental to the program because it challenges students to think about the power of words, meaning, culture and context. Students involved learn that the syntax, grammar, vocabulary, rhythm, nuances and colloquialisms of both source and target language are vital components of a good translation. The process of learning these components of translation simultaneously heightens participants' sensitivity to language use and meaning (208). Rutherford's design of the workshop fully makes use of the synergy between translation and writing and both activities are well connected through workshops and lessons; however, they are mainly targeted at pupils. Teaching materials are well chosen, and each step is delicately designed to take into account the pupil's ability, however literary translation is utilized in a traditional sense to acquire knowledge of poetic forms and the nuances of language use. The link between literary translation and poetry writing is studied through an analysis of students' work who have closely followed the instructions of the workshop facilitator in terms of translating and writing.

How this approach may be applied in the setting of a university is yet to be further researched. Firmer evidence relating to the combination of two practices in educational settings needs to be gathered and evaluated in order to deepen our understanding of the mechanism between the two practices. Philosophical and systematic understanding of the potential link between translation and

creative writing is beneficial for the construction of creative writing pedagogy. In this article, I will argue that the core to understanding the relation between the two practices lies in deciphering the issue of creativity inherent in each: how has creativity been discussed in the field of translation? Is creativity transferable from the act of translation to creative writing? On the basis of the above pursuit, I intend to formulate translation as a creative writing pedagogy and substantiate it with empirical evidence. Unlike Rutherford's scaffold steps, I advocate for the use of a new form of literary apprenticeship which is featured by a hierarchical network of professionals and students, small group collaboration and the use of synergy between translation and creative writing. It is hoped that this study can shed insights into creative writing education at universities, particularly for bilinguals or multilinguals.

Authorship and autonomy: conventional distinctions between author and translator

David Morley (*Cambridge Introduction*) discusses the specific uses and effectiveness of translation for writers when they encounter writer's block. What is valued here is the "otherness of the process." Morley states "this is not translation strictly; it is about taking the work of others and possessing it for yourself: otherness-translation" (72). The writer's main purpose in translation is different from that of the translator. He/she aims to own the process through a range of means which all contain translational elements, for instance "adaptation, version, imitation, artistic theft, plagiarism" (Morley 73). The creative writer's way of addressing translation can be best demonstrated in the analogy made by Morley: "if artistic creation is a mirror to nature, then variation is a mirror on a mirror" (73). For creative writers, what they can gain from translation are text-bound inspirations. The writer's challenge in the practice of translation is concerned with "possession," rather than being faithful to the original text. On this issue, Jeremy Munday, as a scholar of translation studies, strongly disagrees with Morley's perspective. Generally, creative writing scholars tend to minimize or disregard the dichotomy of literal and free, foreignization and domestication. Instead, they approach this issue in a broader cross-cultural literary context with a postmodern eye, as is reinforced by Eugenia Loffredo and Manuela Perteghella who contend that the established perception of "original" writing and "derivative" writing is only a matter of cultural construct and it has become increasingly contested since the arrival of the postmodern era (qtd. in O'Sullivan "Creativity," 43).

In Loffredo and Perteghella's sense, the boundaries between translation and original writing are largely blurred. Does this mean the identity of translatorship overlaps with that of authorship? Much of the literature on creativity in translation has steered clear of the topic of authorship. O'Sullivan raises questions regarding the viability and ethics of creativity in translation, particularly those aspects which have previously been taken for granted, for instance greater freedom and entitlement has generally been given to the author-translator, that is, self-translation in which the author enjoys the liberty to alter parts of the original text as he/she sees appropriate. In contrast to the freedom

exercised by the author-translator, Scott asserts that “we are confronted by a tangle of controversy when it comes to identifying and locating creativity in the conduct of the translator-translator” (qtd. in O’Sullivan “Creativity,” 45). The translator’s responsibility is strictly regulated through his/her adherence to the source text. O’Sullivan underlines the limits of creativity in the field of translation: If the translator exceeds the boundaries, the concept of translation may change accordingly.

Despite uncrossable boundaries between translator and author, and translation and creative writing, as discussed by some scholars (Bassnett “When Is a Translation,” *The Translator as Writer*, “The Self-Translator as Rewriter”; Pym; Jansen), the distinction between a translator and an author is not always clear-cut in every situation. By questioning if the translator seeks emancipation and subsequently to claim authorship and ownership, Jansen cites a survey conducted on translator practitioners. Despite the rare occurrences of “authorial interference” and “collaborative control,” through which the author has power over the text and may involve in the process of translation under the condition that the author also understands the target language sufficiently, generally, the translator can conduct this act independently (Jansen 680). Yet, in the creativity enjoyed by the translator, he/she may still use his/her right in a justifiable manner rather than going beyond the limits and doing what an author is entitled to do. Jansen believes that translation and creative writing “represent different kinds of creative efforts, commitment and achievement” (680). Thus, unlike the creative writer, the translator is nevertheless restricted by the source text. With these views of boundaries in mind, I am interested in exploring the following questions: Is creativity transferable from translation to writing? Does translation possess potential implications for following writing activities?

Translation and transferability: flexibility in poetry translation

In this section, attention will be paid to poetry translation’s potential in creative writing education. Unlike other genres, the translation of poetry requires greater flexibility and creativity because of the nature of the particular texts. In poetry translation, the most frequently discussed issues are concerned with maintaining or reproducing the form, the sound and the content of the original poem in the target language. Given that poetry is a highly compact and aesthetic form, Robert Frost stated that “poetry is what gets lost in translation” (qtd. in Robinson 23). Nevertheless, Susan Bassnett (“When Is a Translator”) critiques Frost’s partiality in aggrandizing the “tangible and inef-fable” aspects of poetry which denies the possibility of transference between languages despite the fact that poetry is above all composed in language (57). Bassnett explicitly attributes the difficulty of translating poetry to inherent cultural differences, the density of its form making itself “cultural capital” of one literary system (58). Bassnett subscribes to the view that these cultural differences are closely connected with the uniqueness of the poetics formulated in the source literary culture.

It is undeniable that translation can only partially recreate certain features of the original poem due to the density of poetic forms. Based on English translations of *Catullus' Poem 64* rendered by different translators, Lefevere (*Translation History Culture*) catalogues seven different strategies, these being phonemic translation, literal translation, metrical translation, poetry into prose, rhymed translation, blank verse translation and interpretation. Each method focuses on recreating certain aspects of poetry. He believes that none of these strategies could sufficiently preserve all features of poetry, and that “in establishing a set of methodological criteria to follow, the translator has focused on some elements at the expense of others” (84). It can thus be inferred that literary features and devices, exhibited and employed in a poem, engender the constraints that a translator is required to deal with. Whatever translation methods are adopted, the translator has to first break the constraints of the original poem, be they linguistic constraint, stylistic constraint, or literary constraint. It is these very challenges of poetry translation that engender a greater degree of flexibility and creativity.

Using a different system of categorization, James Holmes proposes his own four strategies that can be utilized when analyzing poetry translation, including “mimetic form,” “analogical form,” “content derivative” (or organic form) and “deviant or extraneous form,” with various gradations of affinity with the form and content properties of poetry (qtd. in Bassnett “When Is a Translator,” 62-63). The last two strategies deviate from the original poem in either form, content, or both aspects. The fourth strategy, as a more extreme case, can be perceived to be more of a literary creation, echoing terms like ‘transcreation’ and ‘reincarnation’. This strategy, with its relatively greater extent of deviation from the original text, is the actual method practiced by prestigious poets Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot and Haroldo De Campos (Ray). Similar to the methods of ‘transcreation’ and ‘reincarnation’, the fourth strategy aims to recast the source text in the target language in totally different ways. These range of strategies demonstrate a deviation from original text and culture to target text and culture, and even beyond that.

In this sense, the concept of translation becomes rewriting, maybe even serving a different purpose—creative writing. In the context of creative writing, the role of translation has been reoriented to serve a different purpose (Morley *Cambridge Introduction*; Bernstein; Loffredo and Perteghella *Translation and Creativity*; “Literary Translation”). Focusing on the potential of *intra*lingual translation for the writing of poetry, Bernstein, in “Wreading Experiment,”¹ proposes a list of experimental writing exercises/strategies, some of which are adapted from translation, namely homolinguistic translation, dialect & idiolect, homophonic translation, lexical translation and computer-aided translation. Taking homolinguistic translation for instance, the practitioner is expected to rephrase an English poem in the same language by replacing it word for word or phrase for phrase, or to adapt the poem into a different genre. Due to their intrinsically transformative nature, the previously mentioned

1 <http://writing.upenn.edu/bernstein/wreading-experiments.html>

translations are approached by Bernstein as “deformative criticism.” In using such translations as a writing exercise, the newly created text uses new phrases or is recast in a different genre, although it has similar meaning to the original text. As such, translation, as a writing experiment, thus becomes a channel through which the text undergoes changes via either very subtle or more conspicuous linguistic transference. Bernstein has experimentally and ingeniously exploited the deformative nature of translation to inspire creative writing. Whenever *interlingual* translation is taken for granted in creative writing studies, it is *intralingual* translation that draws our attention to the creative dimension of language, which can be manipulated for creative writing.

This innovative and experimental way of using translation for the purpose of creative writing is reviewed rather differently by translation scholars (Munday; O’Sullivan “Playing With(out)”). Jeremy Munday strongly disagrees with such an approach and criticizes the “experimental practice” suggested by Thelma Field as missing the point in “acknowledging the understanding of the original, appreciating its cultural difference and striving creatively to represent or re-create that difference in the target context” (248). It is observable that scholars of translation studies are more concerned with the translator’s role as a mediator in communicating the cultural context, rather than his/her right to diverge without constraint from the source text and the resulting effects. In this sense, the translator’s responsibilities are strictly confined within the boundaries of translation. Examples of creative translation are examined for the express purpose regarding how the source text is represented in the target text. Any discussion disregarding the source text or erasing its existence can be deemed as deviating from the intended nature of translation studies. Unconventionally, Field proposed “experimental practice,” resonating with Bernstein’s writing experiments, tend to manipulate and appropriate the source text to claim *ownership* and form a unique *voice* of the creative writer. With sharp observation, Munday has underlined how creativity has been attached with different connotations in the field of creative writing and translation respectively.

Considering the fact that creative writers will, more often than not, rewrite when translating, whether for necessity or creative license, I am interested in exploring how the translator negotiates authorship and translatorship when rewriting. How has rewriting, as demonstrated by Lefevere (1992b), been perceived differently from being a general practice versus a concept? Lefevere, in *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, unpacks the dynamics of poetics, ideology and patronage, as well as their influences on a particular literary system. The trajectory of literary translation is thus alternatively reconsidered, in relation to its close relationship with the dynamics of literature and their interaction with one another. Lefevere (*Translation, Rewriting*) explains how rewriting plays a role in changing the literary system, saying that

rewritings, mainly translations, deeply affect the interpenetration of literary systems, not just by projecting the image of one write or work in another literature or by failing to do so, but also by introducing new devices into the inventory component of a poetics and paving the way to changes in its functional component (38).

The act of rewriting comes into play when the translator selects which works to translate, thus modulating what will be introduced to the literary system of the target language. This will then either enrich or change the literary system by means of the newly introduced imagery or new literary devices. Ultimately, the translator has the autonomy to either include or omit such imagery, essentially altering the literary system based partly on personal preference. Methodologically, Both Lefevere's "Rewriting" and Bernstein's "Wreading experiment" feature a certain degree of unfaithfulness and deformation, but with totally diverging functions. Lefevere's "Rewriting" is focused on the purpose of asserting or proclaiming the poetics of the target language or culture, whereas in the "Wreading experiment" linguistic discrepancies are exploited as a source of creativity for creative writing. Lefevere's rewriting highlights the influence of the poetics and ideology in literary translation. Poetics has become a core factor of the translator's choice/voice, underpinning a series of theories that emerge in a larger context, such as transcreation, reincarnation and modernist translation (Ray; Venuti *The Translator's Invisibility*; "Introduction"; Katan). Munday believes that a translator's creativity is an integration of target language-oriented poetics and translator-specific preference based on each individual experience. In my following analysis, I will focus on how each translation responds differently when recreating the poetics and the insights they may give into the practitioner's creativity.

Due to the nature and marginality of poetry translation, a perspective releasing it from the need to place emphasis on the communicative function should be advocated (Venuti "Introduction"). Modernist translation, a still marginal method demonstrated in Venuti's *Translator's Invisibility*, is closely linked with the modernism evolving in American and British literary culture (Venuti *The Translator's Invisibility* 164). It is a strategy adopted by some translators to resist the so-called transparency and invisibility of themselves, in line with the foreignization proposed by Venuti. In Venuti's claim, Modernism advocates "the 'independence' of the translated text, demanding that it be judged on its 'own' terms... accepting the 'responsibility' of distinguishing itself in the literary terms of that language" (188). The nature of Modernist translation proves to be the "appropriation of foreign texts" in order to assert the "cultural autonomy of the translated text," as well as "aesthetic independence" (191). This method aims "not merely to make a cultural difference at home, but to signal the difference of the foreign text" (192). In Modernist translation, translators begin to gain autonomy that allows them the right to rewrite and appropriate, depending on the context, for instance, Ezra Pound's translation and sound-based (homophonic) translation of Celia and Louis

Zukofsky of Catullus. Categorized as the representative case of Modernist translation, Pound's use of archaism is deemed as being the innovation of modernist poetics and a deviation from existing literary values. In modernist translation, the central and recurrent topic had begun to drift away from the dichotomy of "faithful" and "free," and to instead approach literature in translation slightly differently to legitimize a certain amount of autonomy and self-containment. As aforementioned, this autonomy is largely where the focus of this essay lies. With a certain amount of appropriation, translation encapsulates the mixing of fidelity and appropriation.

By the same token, Heraldo de Campos, a Portuguese-language poet and translator, whose translation is labelled as "transcreation," has foregrounded the development of literary modernism avant-garde (315). His approach is proposed also as a way of resisting against the cultural colonization and hegemony. H. Campos believes that transcreation is "re-creation," through translating the work he recreates an original work in his/her own right, which involves certain amount of innovativeness (315). This form of translation is in line with the development of modernism. In this trend or turn towards the modern literary poetics, the concept of translation is reshaped and appropriated in the service of modernism avant-garde. The primary concern of fidelity is sacrificed to advocate certain poetics, thus enabling the development of literature. Regarding rewriting and recreation, Sun Yifeng corrects the existing misunderstanding about rewriting, in which it is often confused with recreation without constraints, stating that rewriting is always regulated and restricted by a source text, "translation can be viewed as a regulatory process of rewriting, which does not mean the total erasure of the author by systematically blocking his/her stylistic signature" (212).

In the field of translation, particularly poetry translation, it is undeniable that not all practitioners are themselves translators. Some assume the dual role of translator-poets as well, and their works have drawn an increasing amount of attention in the literary field due in part to their unique characteristics which tend to be the amalgamation of translation and rewriting. The aforementioned modernist translation and transcreation are such cases in point. The translator-poets are inclined to be more unshackled in rewriting and creating, compared with professional translators. For instance, Mohit K. Ray conducts a case analysis of poet Tagore, who translates his own poems from Bengali into English. In the examples specified therein, the lengthy and emotive poems, originally written in Bengali, are condensed and transformed into short and precise poems in English which contain only a few lines. Ray labels such translation as reincarnation or transcreation. Both the form and content of the original poem have been totally transformed, yet translational elements are still traceable in the self-translated poems. Ray raised the potential controversy consequently engendered which is, whether the source language poem should be regarded as the original or the "prototype" (251). However, self-translation is an exceptional case

This poem consists of only four Chinese characters, 兵 (bing) referring to soldiers, 乒 (ping) and 乓 (pong) representing soldiers who have lost a leg on the battlefield, and finally 丘 (qiu), which embodies small hills, connoting the tombs where dead soldiers were buried. In one of the poem's English counterparts, it is left untranslated but is annotated with the author's notes interpreting the word play at work and the aesthetic message therein. Even the author Chen Li himself admits that this poem is difficult to translate. However, there are two more English versions of it available on the internet. One was rendered by Bohdan Piasecki, another by Cosima Bruno. The following version is Bohdan's, with only a few lines quoted here.

A man A man A man A man A man A man A man A man A man A man [...]
 ...
 Ah men Ah men Ah men Ah men Ah men Ah men Ah men Ah [...]
 ...
 Amen

The four Chinese characters are creatively substituted with words and phrases that have strong contextualized cultural connotations; 兵 (literally meaning the soldier), is replaced by 'A man'. The translation's first stanza is only composed of repetition of the phrase "A man", shaped like a square matrix of soldiers arranged in a neat and disciplined manner. In the second stanza, the original 乒 and 乓 are respectively substituted for 'Ah man' and 'Ah men', expressing the exclamation towards the sacrificed soldiers on the battlefield. The word arrangement is no longer neat, instead using an untidy layout to display the chaotic scene where soldiers' dead bodies are scattered here and there, singularly or in cluster. In the last stanza, '丘' (literally meaning grave), is rendered as 'Amen' which is also shaped as a square matrix of 'Amen', the concluding word in Christian prayers.

Below is Cosima Bruno's translation of the poem, with a few lines quoted here.

tum tum tum tum tum tum tum tum tum tum tum
 ...
BOM TT BOO tbomb TOoOMB tou **TUM BOM TUM**
 ...
TOMB TOMB [...]

In the above version, several onomatopoeic words are used, such as bom and tum etc., with lines of duplication forming into stanzas. A square matrix of 'bom' in the first stanza and a square matrix of 'tom' in the second stanza can represent two armies confronting each other on the battlefield. The capitalization of the words at the end of each stanza can be interpreted as the intensified sound of gunfire on the battlefield. In the third stanza, different permutations of letter combinations, as presented in the form of capitalization, decapitalization or in bold letters, are the result of bom and tum clashing

together which produce a variety of possibilities of formation of words. At connotative level, this linguistic device demonstrates a scene/sense of chaos during the crossfire. In the last stanza, the different permutation of letters scattered out of order become ‘TOMB’, the cluster of which gradually fades away, implying, as interpreted by Chen Li, that the death of the soldiers will be forgotten. Both translations can be regarded as imitations rather than translations, which attempt to recreate the ‘structural motif’ of the original poem, in sacrifice of the original literal meaning conveyed (Lee 83). Evidently, both translators have employed a greater amount of creativity in their translations.

Translation as a workshop pedagogy: towards a new paradigm of literary apprenticeship

In view of the above-mentioned forms of rewriting in translation, creativity is both homogeneous and heterogeneous. This feature makes it possible for application in the teaching of creative writing. In this section, I will review previous research regarding the combination of the two practices in classrooms or other educational settings.

It is contended that translation has played a significant role in an individual’s personal growth in literature. The same idea has been demonstrated by Fiona J. Doloughan through the lens of literature and literary history, and she highlights that “literature in English is increasingly being produced by bilingual and multilingual, rather than monolingual, writers” (4). Literature is produced and enriched by writers as much as by translators. In other words, writing and translation provide mutual nourishment for each other: “writing in English has benefited from interaction with other languages and cultures” through the introduction of a vast array of literature in translation (8). It is this state of inter-dependence that makes translation a more realistic and valid approach to be shaped as a form of creative writing pedagogy.

At a practical level, translation workshops, as a world-wide practice and signature pedagogy, have been used to facilitate literary collaboration among writers of different nations. The practice of translation in general has been featured in workshops and summer programs, or offered as a program at universities. Possessing multiple purposes, literary translation can be, on the one hand, designed as a training approach to cultivate the linguistic sensitivity and skills of professional translators; it can be, on the other hand, juxtaposed with creative writing in an integral sense, being employed to inspire the writing of poetry. Consequently and indirectly, the practice of translation helps revitalize the composition of literature. One such organization, Literature Across Frontiers [<https://www.lit-across-frontiers.org/resources/training-and-development-for-literary-translation/>], is dedicated to providing training and development in literary translation. A variety of other organizations have been established to facilitate literary translation and communication across European countries and other parts of the world as well, so as to break down language barriers, such as the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) and the International Center for Writing and Translation, all aimed at promoting and supporting literary translation.

Association of Stories in Macau (ASM) is a local publisher based in Macao SAR China, dedicated to publishing creative works in a variety of genres, including poetry, short stories and translations, and literary translation accounts for a large proportion of the publications thus far. The majority of its publications come from the production of students who enrolled in creative writing courses at University of Macau. At these classes, the students were taught to write stories and haikus, and were directed to produce publishable work with editing help from the professor. This non-profitable organization is largely based on the dynamic community formed of creative writing students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The majority of the creative practice took place in creative writing classes. In addition, workshops on poetry translation were actively organized via “Literary Salon,” an event offering a platform for the students to read and share their creative works. Literary translation projects in collaboration with the chief editor of ASM, was conducted in the form of face-to-face literary mentorship, and ultimately aimed for publication.

To better explain the mechanism regarding how translation can be integrated with creative writing practice, I need to firstly provide the reader with a brief historical survey of the subject of creative writing and how it has emerged and evolved as a college course in educational institutions. D.G. Myers traces the origin of creative writing by focusing on its correlation with English composition, which dates back as far as the 1880s when English composition courses being taught in American colleges were primarily aimed at teaching the students to “apply the rules of grammar. the principles of order and style learned in his reading of the classical authors” (37). Writing as such focuses on “correctness, neatness, promptness, accuracy, and completeness of treatment” (37), the drawback of which is that creative ideas and imagination become less important compared with the primal goal of avoiding errors. A new English composition that appeared later emphasized “expression rather than correctness as the final cause” (38), which included changes in its teaching focus, such as “correctness and assigned themes were accordingly de-emphasized; what was encouraged was original work” (38). This new composition course was the prototype of the creative writing course, as it began to value self-expression much more than the correct use of language. Self-expression is the main characteristic of the new paradigm-creative writing, a course emerged in educational institutions.

The synergy between translation and writing has begun to be utilized in specific creative writing workshop, in which the practice of translation has been incorporated and adapted to serve the ultimate goal of creative writing.

To integrate translation with creative writing in practical terms, Trans-creative writing is examined in this study based on production from a translation interest group. Here, the interface between translation and writing is fully utilized for creative purposes. The practice of literary translation helps the individual translator-poet acquire knowledge which is essential for poetic composition, such as

the grasp of poetic features. Hence, regarding the incremental role translation has played in shaping and facilitating one's literary growth, the practice should be re-evaluated, not purely as a linguistic practice, but as a form of literary apprenticeship closely relating to creative writing.

The role of practicing translation has effectively served as “literary apprenticeship.” Dawson demonstrates the notion of “literary apprenticeship” when discussing the establishment of workshop as “merely a formalization of writers’ groups or of individual mentoring relationships which have developed between famous writers” (48). Workshops are the contexts where literary apprenticeship, one of the widely accepted underlying principles of creative writing teaching, is forged. A workshop creates a space where a community of writers could gather and through which the experienced writers give advice to the younger (83). In this study, literary apprenticeship was demonstrated by means of a translation project, which was conducted in collaboration with a literary community composed of a hierarchy of veteran poets, novice translators and more experienced translators. During the process, the majority of time was spent working with the experienced poets on poetry translation. The term “literary apprenticeship” is focused on utilizing the practice of literary translation, and facilitating a network of social dialogues which involves people of both the veteran and the novice (a concept that reflects the inner mechanism of workshop), ultimately aiming at enhancing individual literary growth in poetry writing.

Project: Flowers, Seasons and Festivals

My research subjects are students enrolled in a Creative Writing course at the University of Macau, based in Macao SAR China. The ethnography of the class is made up roughly half from different provinces of mainland China, the other half being formed of the local residents or, in some cases, recent immigrants from mainland China (mainly Guangdong Province). Students coming from Guangdong province (including Macao) speak Mandarin and Cantonese as their first language. Students from other parts of China speak Mandarin as their first language. English is all the students’ second language.

This translation & writing project involves undergraduate students taking creative writing courses during different academic semesters. Projects are carried out as either in-class or extra-curricular activities. The participants of the creative writing-based project are either students en masse or a select group of students who signed up voluntarily. In the spring semester of 2014/15, a group of six students participated in this project, which was designed primarily to improve their language proficiency through the practice of translation. The basic procedures of conducting this project were thus: students undertook translation individually, then discussed their translations and revised and refined them with the aid of their peers, working collaboratively towards a translation version. Following this, their collaborative translation was edited by the teacher. Finally, they then wrote individual responses to the poems they have translated, as a follow-up task.

Below is a Chinese poem, followed by an English translation completed by the group of students.

黄海棠
金·蔡松年
轻如红豆排冰雪，一拂新鹅色更奇。
不觉浓阴破明玉，有情谁解赏离枝。

Yellow crabapple blossoms

snowy white and shiny as yew blossom
bright yellow makes it even more unique
as leaves grow into shade, blooms fade away
is there a sentimental heart showing
mercy on the fallen petal

After drawing comparisons of several translation versions, the group came up with a new version as a result of a collaborative effort.

Yellow blossoms of the crabapple

white as snow
as shining as the yew
and yellow
leaves grow to shade
blooms fade
the sentimental heart must pity
petals fallen here

It is an edited version in which the poem is refined to be more succinct. The imagery contained therein stands out more distinctive by virtue of the conciseness of the language. It is advantageous to have a native editor who is able to use his poetic license to refine imagery and do away with redundancy, ultimately aiming at creating an English poem in its own right.

The practice of poetry translation and the veteran poet's editing have collectively raised the students' awareness about the conciseness of the language and the importance of imagery. Literary apprenticeship incorporates the practice of translation, as well as corrections or comments provided by the facilitator, the latter constituting a fundamental component of the apprenticeship. Dialogues are facilitated between poets and students, and participants and the text. Meanwhile professionalization of the undertaking can be achieved through the absorption of the canonical works when translating. The Classical Chinese poetry translation project, leaning on Chinese students' previous

education in classical Chinese, thus establishes itself as a somewhat familiar concept. Following from this, the project has gone further to help shape the students' somewhat undisciplined understanding of poetic composition. This is facilitated by the practice of translation and the students' follow-up writing responses to the translated poems.

In this project, the participants engaged in practice-based translation and writing activities without being given any specific instructions like those traditional translation trainings do, nor have they been informed on requirements on the translation methods being used in this project. Instead, they are encouraged to rely on their knowledge of translation to undertake such activity and were given poems to translate weekly without receiving any critical feedback. I believe that dialogues autonomously occurred on various levels. Hanna, an exchange student from Sweden, shared her reflections on the translation process. Unlike other Chinese members, who translated from Chinese to English, she had to wait until the Chinese poems had been first translated into English by the Chinese students. Following this, she only began translating the English into Swedish. Hanna's reflections focus on the linguistic aspect, with regards to her difficulties finding corresponding words for particular phrases. During such process, she encountered phrases or lines that did not make sense to her. This was likely due to the cultural differences and poetic discrepancies. Classical Chinese poetry is rich in imagery, which might be different from Swedish literature. Ultimately, Hanna also acknowledged that the strategy she adopted to address this issue she encountered is to translate the meaning, rather than sticking to the words.

Upon completion of a translation, the students then write responses to the poem they have translated. The response below is authored by student Lex. In the beginning, the students were unfamiliar with the concept of response in the creative writing context. Consequently, the writing process involves some degree of experiment and quest for their own voice. Clive Scott discusses the selfhood of the translator by saying 'the ST (source text) is an occasion, an invitation, a provocation, for the TT (target text) to reflect on language, not on its efficacy as a translational medium, but on its properties as a psychophysiological material' (37). Scott sees the source text as an emotional trigger of the translator-writer's own creative work.

Mosquitoes

mosquitoes appear, whe' it's getting warm.
 you annoying mosquitoes,
 disturb me and give me bites.
 it seems like providence that the temperature falls
 overnight,
 so that I can live my happy life without you temporarily.

The poem below is a response written by student Mel. Until this point this group has translated several Classical Chinese poems and the recurrent themes have started to settle in the translator's mind. In the process of translating, the members of the group are constantly exposed to flower-themed poems which are explored from different writing perspectives. For instance, the following is a flower-themed poem, titled "Lauding the orchid": white petal tinged with yellow/fragrant though no nise is near/how delicate the stamen is/how everywhere the scent. The recurring motif began to influence the translator's writing as is shown in the below response.

In my hometown

osmanthus fragrans
a melancholy girl
collects sunshine by day
hangs stars at night
she decorates dreams from mountains to sea
from village to grassland
her every step a kiss
just like the kisses every time
why not let the breeze
bear off her fragrance
in the still of the night
her scent will remain

In the poem above, the imagery of a flower is associated with a girl. The transition from "osmanthus fragrans" to the "melancholy girl" flows well. In the remaining part of the poem, the student creates a narrative about this girl for whom he is full of affection. It is notable that the imagery and fragrance of flower existing in the translated poem is transferred to the student's poem, in which his dream about love and a loved one is embodied in the imagery of a girl. Below is a response poem authored by student Kevin whose poem unanimously dwells on the same theme. Kevin's response is largely influenced by the translated poem below.

Peach blossoms

plant the peach in spring drizzle
it blooms in the morning breeze
a year later, fresh blossoms flourish
my yard as red as wished

Evidently, the student situates himself/herself in the environment of the poem being translated and uses that as a starting point for his own poem. Senses of smell, touch and sight are fully maneuvered to express his inner feelings and affections.

Peach blossom

alone under a peach tree
I think of my love
her smile as sweet as the fragrance
her cheek as pink as the petal
the breeze has borne her away
if only
I can run fast enough to catch the wind
then I may be able to chase her

It is observed that the multifaceted dialogues have been made from the following perspectives: between the translator himself/herself and others (the editor and other translators), the past and the present and translation and writing, all of which facilitate creative writing skill acquisition and the boost of self-growth and self-expression.

In this project, translation serves as an experiment used to bridge two languages and cultures. Firstly, by translating classical Chinese poems into English and then proceeding to write English responses, the practitioners engaged in a writing experiment, which essentially resembles the innovative strategies proposed by Bernstein and Smith in their respective research. Further on, the malleable distance generated by the antiquity of the classical Chinese in contrast with its modern counterpart is another factor that the practitioners invariably deal with. In other words, certain features of language have become considerably outdated, thus less commonly seen, due to the ever-changing nature of language. However, the said distance, at times being the cause of misunderstanding and therefore mistranslation, can be favorable for the creative writer as well, as it creates a liminal space, enabling dialogues to be opened between the past and the present, English and Chinese, and two different cultures. Multifold dialogues are the prerequisite for creativity.

In my research, translation is designed as a supplementary component of creative writing classes, in which the majority of translation tasks are conducted outside of the class in an independent style. This research has examined the connection between the two practices through works produced by the participants. Trans-creative writing practice exercised in the collective project is analyzed. In the group project, students were engaged in translating Classical Chinese poetry through collaboration and then in writing their own response poem independently.

The creative potential in translation is reified through inspirations gained from translation. For instance, particular imagery or fragmentary words and phrases that left impressions on the translator as a result of this practice. When the practitioner moves to the phase of creative writing, the constrained nature of translation that previously imposed on the practitioner is channeled by his/her desire to exercise poetic/creative license. Translation forms an enclosure within which the translator employs his/her bilingual ability to create a satisfying end product in the target language. When the translator breaks free of the enclosure, they gain a certain degree of freedom in expressing ideas that are not restricted by the original text. From the perspective of the translator, they tend to break free of the enclosure due to various considerations. As discussed by Marjorie Perloff, the language of poetry should be “finding one’s voice” or “capturing breath” (34). I argue that the interface between translation and writing accommodates greater creativity that partly allows the translator-poet to exercise poetic/creative license, as influenced by the restrained nature of translation as well. Harold Bloom, in *The Anxiety of Influence*, describes modern poetry’s engagement with its predecessors. Translation, dominated by interlingual translation, entails the influence from and the engagement with literature of other languages and cultures. In addition, the dual identity of the translator-poet places himself/herself in the position of needing to negotiate the dynamics formed between translation, the text and the writing. In this sense, a creative continuum is formed between translation and writing.

In Trans-creative writing, the first half of the subject as a whole is translation, representing an expanded concept of translation, in which there exists a continuum of translation practices from the most faithful to the freest. Specific examples include mistranslation, self-translation and open response, in which the translator tends to deviate from the original text rather than strictly stick to it. Based on the argument previously developed in my article titled “translation as creative writing practice” (Fang 162), I further propose in this essay that in Trans-creative writing, there exists a trans-creative space, founded on the translation-creative writing continuum, wherein lies the contrasting demand of fidelity and creativity. On the one hand, due to the derivative nature of translation, the translator benefits from the inspiration procured from it, which can be transferred over to the writing process. On the other hand, the translator-writer is involuntarily granted freedom of expression and can deviate to various extents in his/her own writing. This trans-creative space creates an opportunity for the practitioner to negotiate between the Self and the Other, and between the demand of self-expression and the alignment with specific literary works. The practice of translation then enables the practitioner to be informed with literary knowledge in terms of its content and poetic forms.

Trans-creative writing should not be misunderstood as being a breach of writing ethics or an example of plagiarism. It is based on the absorption of poetic features through the practice of translation, and then becomes a form of writing combining the poet’s own personal experience and textual influences from prior texts (translated texts). However, the translator-writer deviates from the

translated text in various aspects, such as subject, motif, setting and atmosphere, setting out on a path of finding one's own voice. It ultimately advocates the writer's self-expression and personal growth through the practice of writing. Unlike translation which is essentially derivative to the original text, Trans-creative writing is a form of writing that incorporates influences from both texts and real-life experiences. With this in mind, the cathartic and aesthetic functions, which are generally regarded as fundamental functions of creative writing, can be achieved through this practice.

Concluding Remarks: 'unworkshopping' for self-knowledge and self-expression

Supported with empirical evidence from the translation-writing project "Flowers, Seasons and Festivals," this study relies on the inner links between the two practices from the vantage point of creative writing and attempts to examine the creative implications of translation in its practical sense. Translation serves as a dialogue created between the translator and the original author. As this experimental method of Trans-creative writing combines both translation and creative writing, the practitioners are led down the pedagogical track of translating and writing, which ultimately serves to hone their writing skills and second language proficiency. The accomplishment of second language proficiency is realized through the practice of writing in combination with translation. Translation becomes an empowering tool and mechanism for the learning of creative writing. Instead of hindering creativity and originality, translation becomes productive and encourages self-expression.

The connection between translation and creative writing can be established with empirical evidence supported with project-based research which are both situational based and individualized, in reference to Harper's (Companion to Creative Writing; Creative Writing Studies) theories on situational knowledge and the later emerging "unworkshop." Harper (Companion to Creative Writing) views creative writing as being primarily a "human action" (105). Creative writing research, practice-based research in particular, continues to generate knowledge through focusing on "how it negotiates between our personal and public human worlds" (103). By means of "situational understanding and knowledge," Harper underlines the significance of individual cases of creative writing practice which take into consideration the dynamics of various individualized situations and are generally applicable to a wider scope. This concept is further developed by Harper (Creative Writing Studies) through the concept of "unworkshop," which offers a destructive construct of the conventional concept of "workshop." This practice normally occurs in an unconventional context, or a community, where the students achieve their learning goals through the application of knowledge gleaned from various fields of study. In the form of literary apprenticeship designed in this essay, the project has also achieved effects of the so-called situational learning or "unworkshop" proposed by Harper. Through this loose structured form of learning featured by a hierarchical network of professionals and students, small group collaboration and the use of synergy between translation and creative writing, the students are given more freedom in expressing and exploiting their creativity.

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