



Translation and Time: Exploring the Temporal Dimension of Cross-cultural Transfer

Presentation Details

Title of Paper:

“Had we but world enough, and time” — Spatiotemporal Specificity in English Translations of Chinese *Ci* Poetry

Abstract:

Andrew Marvell is right. We cannot have “world enough, and time”. Not only do “our minutes hasten to their end”, but also we are imprisoned in every “here and now” that marches forwards “in sequent toil”. Traditionally, lyric poetry has long been regarded as the genre that strives to be “essentially atemporal” and “spatially dislocated” (Cameron 212-213), wherein “the human being becomes a set of warring passions independent of time and space” (Vendler 5). Classical Chinese lyric, with its renowned lack of linguistic indicators of time and space, seems to be particularly suitable for freeing the lyric persona from spatiotemporal constraints.

However, in many English translations of Chinese *ci* poetry, the lyric persona appears to be temporally and spatially positioned again in that due to the translator’s involvement, the persona’s *hic et nunc* situation has been foregrounded, which moves a translated *ci* poem towards a personal evocation of a specific experience at a particular time and space. My paper attends to this type of the translator’s textual involvement with a focus on cases where the lyric persona is temporalized by linguistic indicators of space, as well as spatialized by linguistic representations of time. It will draw on analytical concepts from cognitive narratology, aesthetic illusion and reading psychology to demonstrate why these translational shifts would make a translated *ci* poem more narrative than the original and what they could tell us about the translator’s immersive presence as a participatory reader.

Author's Biography:

ZHOU Min is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Translation, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. She holds an M.Phil in translation studies with concentration on the Chinese translation of Shakespeare's sonnets. Her doctoral dissertation focuses on the English translation of classical Chinese song lyrics, or the classical Chinese *Ci* poetry. Her research interests include poetry translation, translation criticism, narrativity in lyric and lyric translation, and cognitive narratology in translation studies.