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Foreignizing Translation and Chinese

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Abstract

This article explains a new 'foreignizing' approach to translation that was invented in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, especially by Herder and Schleiermacher, and that has since become the predominant approach in translation theory. The article argues that despite the great virtues of this approach, it was based on an unduly narrow restriction to Indo-European languages, which leaves considerable room for further improvement. Greater attention to Hebrew has since made up this deficit to a certain extent. But Chinese holds the potential for even more important refinements of the original theory. The article explains the original theorists' failure to exploit this case in terms of a certain prejudice against Chinese language and culture that had arisen at the time, and for which these theorists were themselves partly responsible. It then tries to show in some detail how deeply enriching for the theory a consideration of Chinese can be.

Keywords

translation – foreignizing – Chinese – Herder – Schleiermacher – Billeter – concepts – grammar – music – script

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries Jean le Rond d'Alembert, Thomas Abbt, and especially Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher invented a new approach to translation that is often today contradistinguished from 'domesticating' translation (paradigmatically represented by the '*belles infidèles*' tradition of translation in France in the 17th and 18th centuries, for example) as 'foreignizing' translation.[1]

This approach subsequently became the predominant approach in translation theory in the 19th and 20th centuries, inspiring many variants. However, its original versions – in particular those of Herder and Schleiermacher – are often considerably better than their later offspring. For example, the well-known translation theory of Walter Benjamin basically just takes over Schleiermacher's approach, but then adds to it the dubious, no doubt religiously inspired, idea that a unique original language implicitly undergirds all translation. And the more recent translation theories of Antoine

1 Cf. Michael N. Forster, *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), ch. 12; "Eine Revolution in der Philosophie der Sprache, der Linguistik, der Hermeneutik und der Übersetzungstheorie im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert: deutsche und französische Beiträge," in *Friedrich Schleiermacher and the Question of Translation*, ed. Larisa Cercel and Adriana Serban (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2015); *Herder's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), ch. 3; and "Les origines de la traduction défamiliarisante chez d'Alembert, Abbt, Herder et Schleiermacher," in *Traduction, Philosophie et Sciences humaines. Actes du congrès mondial de traductologie, Nanterre 2017*, ed. Christian Berner and Tatiana Milliaressi (Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2019).

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Berman and Lawrence Venuti likewise essentially take over the Herder-Schleiermacher approach, but then emphasize as though it were something novel an attractive ethical-political criterion of good translation in the spirit of moral cosmopolitanism that Herder and Schleiermacher had in fact already themselves emphatically included, while, in addition, even more dubiously, attempting (in hasty submission to various forms of twentieth-century skepticism about meaning) to avoid altogether the concept of meaning and the traditional assumption, rightly preserved by Herder and Schleiermacher, that a primary goal of translation, and criterion of its success, lies in rendering the *meaning* of the source text as accurately as possible in the target text.

In this article I would like to do two things. First, I want to sketch the revolutionary foreignizing approach to translation that Herder and Schleiermacher developed – Herder above all in his book *Fragments on Recent German Literature* (1767–1768), then Schleiermacher in his essay "On the Different Methods of Translation" (1813) (arguably the most important work of translation theory ever written). Second, I would then like to consider a language that they neglected when developing their approach but which, it seems to me, complicates it in some important and fruitful ways: Chinese.

1 Foreignizing Translation: The Core Approach

Let us first of all take a look at Herder and Schleiermacher's foreignizing approach to translation, beginning with the core principles that they more or less share in common before then considering a few significant differences between their respective versions of the approach.

Their approach to translation rests on two great breaks with assumptions that were common during the Enlightenment.[2] First, in opposition to a certain dualism concerning the relationship between thought or concept, on the one hand, and language or word, on the other hand, that many Enlightenment thinkers had assumed (e.g., John Locke, David Hume, and Étienne Bonnot de Condillac), they developed a new philosophy of language, anticipating and enabling that of the 20th century, according to which (1) thought is essentially dependent on and bounded by language (i.e., a person can only think if s/he has a language and can only think what s/he is able to express linguistically) and (2) the meaning of a word consists – not in the various sorts of entities, in principle separable from language, with which a long philosophical tradition had equated it, such as eternal and immutable forms (*eidê*/*ideai*) existing detached from this world in a sort of heaven (Plato), the objects referred to (Augustine), or subjective ideas in the minds of individual people (Port Royal, Locke, Hume, Condillac), but – in the word's *usage*, or the rule for its use. They also (3) espoused an additional thesis in this area that was more continuous with the Enlightenment and less anticipative of twentieth-century philosophy of language (but perhaps nonetheless correct): that the sense of a word always essentially depends on certain (perceptual or affective) sensations in the person who uses it (so that the *usage* of the word just mentioned necessarily includes such a component).[3]

Second, contrary to a certain universalism concerning languages and minds that was popular during the Enlightenment, i.e., a principle according to which people's linguistic forms, concepts, beliefs, ethical and aesthetic values, perceptual and affective sensations, literary genres, musical forms (e.g., meters), etc. have always and

2 These two breaks also formed the basis for a new theory of interpretation – or 'hermeneutics' – that they both developed.

3 Their versions of this third thesis included certain refinements that distinguished them from, and arguably made them more plausible than, the versions of Enlightenment predecessors such as Hume, though, such as that there is also a converse dependence of a person's sensations on his/her concepts, and that purely sensuous concepts often undergo a sort of metaphorical extension that turns them into less sensuous ones (e.g., the sensuous 'in' of 'Fido is in his kennel' turns into the less sensuous 'in' of 'Smith is involved in litigation').

everywhere been fundamentally the same, Herder and Schleiermacher espoused an anti-universalism according to which in fact all these phenomena often vary dramatically from one period to another, one culture to another, and even to a certain extent one individual to another within the same period and culture.

Like several of their most important predecessors in Germany, such as Johann August Ernesti and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Herder and Schleiermacher presuppose that the first duty of a good translation is to reproduce the meaning of the source text as faithfully as possible. In addition – again in continuity with certain Germanic predecessors from the period, such as Johann Jakob Breitinger and Johann Jakob Bodmer – they hold that its second duty is to be as faithful as possible to the form of the source text, especially its musical form (insofar as it has one).

The primary source of the originality of Herder and Schleiermacher's approach lies in their anti-universalism, which implies that both of these sorts of faithfulness are often far more difficult to achieve than the Enlightenment had commonly assumed. For it implies that there is often a conceptual and/or musical gulf between the source language and the target language that obstructs semantic and musical faithfulness in translation. The task therefore becomes one of bridging, or at least reducing, this gulf in some way.

How is that achievable? According to Herder and Schleiermacher there are basically only two possible strategies to consider. Herder in the *Fragments* calls them the "conforming [*anpassend*]" strategy and the "lax [*lax*]" strategy. Schleiermacher in his essay characterizes the same distinction a little differently: either the translator brings the reader closer to the author or conversely ("Either the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader towards him or the translator leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the author towards him").[4] That is to say (putting the point a little less metaphorically): either the translator sacrifices the distinctive semantic and musical qualities of the target language in order to stay as faithful as possible to those of the source language or conversely.

Herder and Schleiermacher reject the latter of these two strategies, the lax or author-to-reader strategy. Why? They have several objections to it (the first of which will perhaps by now seem obvious, but the other two somewhat less so): (i) Such a strategy is unfaithful to the meaning and the music of the source text. (ii) By being so it, it is also disrespectful of the author and his culture. (iii) It misses an opportunity to enrich the target language both conceptually and musically by means of the translation.

In addition, Herder and Schleiermacher criticize and reject a certain famous rationalization of this strategy that had often been given by its champions, e.g., by Antoine Le Maistre and John Dryden. According to this rationalization one should translate in such a way that the translation says what the author would have said if he had had as his native language not the one he actually had but instead the target language. Herder and Schleiermacher object that this criterion is implicitly absurd because (given principle (1) of their new philosophy of language together with their anti-universalism) neither the thoughts of the author nor even the author himself (since he is in essential part constituted in his identity by specific thoughts that he has) could survive such an exchange of languages.

Herder and Schleiermacher therefore prefer the other strategy: the conforming strategy, or the strategy of bringing the reader closer to the author. But how can such a strategy actually be implemented? Herder and Schleiermacher's answer to this question has several parts:

(a) The translator must be a real expert in *interpreting* both of the languages involved. For Herder and Schleiermacher this ultimately includes interpreting them in accordance with a sophisticated

4 Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "Ueber die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersetzens," in *Friedrich Schleiermacher's Sämtliche Werke* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1835–), part 3, vol. 2, 218.

new methodology of interpretation, or 'hermeneutics,' that they both develop.

(b) Concerning the central challenge of closing, or at least reducing, the conceptual gulf that often exists between the source language and the target language (a task that might at first sight look simply impossible), Herder and Schleiermacher develop a solution that exploits principle (2) from their philosophy of language, the principle that meaning consists in word usage: the translator should choose the word from the target language that is already closest in meaning to (or equivalently, least discrepant in meaning from) the word in the source language to be translated, and then, in order to eliminate or reduce the disparity in meaning between them that remains, "bend [*biegen*]" its usage in the translation in order to imitate as closely as possible the usage of the source-word. This principle might sound obvious or uncontroversial, but is in fact far from being so. Among other things, it implies that the translator should generally avoid the approach very commonly used by translators of replacing a single word in the source text with *several different* words from the target language depending on the context involved, in favor of instead replacing it by just a *single* word in all contexts (and that he should likewise avoid the almost equally common practice of translating more than one word from the source text by means of a single word from the target language, in favor of instead using different words from the target language in each case). For example, faced with the Homeric color-word '*chlôros*' – a word that Homer sometimes applies to objects that we would call 'green,' such as fresh foliage, but sometimes to objects that we would rather call 'yellow,' such as honey – the translator following this method will avoid the common approach of replacing the word in some contexts by 'green' and in others by 'yellow,' instead replacing it in all contexts by just a single word (say, either 'green' or 'yellow'). As Herder and Schleiermacher conceive this method, it exploits a certain plasticity that every language possesses. It is preferable to the alternative approach of replacing the source word by several target words because the latter approach (e.g., replacing '*chlôros*' sometimes with 'green' and sometimes with 'yellow') (i) gives the reader the false impression that the source text has two concepts in this area, whereas in reality there is only one, and (ii) gives him the false impression that the concept(s) involved here is/are already familiar to him, whereas in reality what is involved is a concept with which he is not yet familiar. It is also superior to another possible method that Herder and Schleiermacher consider and which they sometimes call "paraphrase": a method of attempting to reproduce the extension of the concept involved, and thereby its intension (its meaning), by putting together several words from the target language – for instance, in the case of our example '*chlôros*,' forming the expression 'green or yellow.' Besides the obvious disadvantage of stylistic awkwardness (which would be especially intolerable in the translation of literary texts), this alternative has the even more serious disadvantages that (i) it again gives the reader the false impression that he is dealing with a concept/concepts that is/are already familiar to him, and (ii) it also gives him the false impression that he is dealing with a complex concept, one composed of several discrete components (in the example, a disjunctive concept that combines two color concepts with the concept 'or'), whereas in fact the concept involved is unitary in character. Herder and Schleiermacher are well aware that the method that they recommend seems to have the disadvantage of resulting in strange-sounding sentences, e.g., descriptions of honey as green or of fresh foliage as yellow. But in their opinion this strangeness, first, is the lesser of the evils between which a choice has to be made, and moreover, second, has certain positive advantages, since it not only reminds the reader that such a method is in operation but also alerts him to the specific cases in which it is being used, both of which pieces of information will help him to understand the translation offered.

(c) In addition, Herder and Schleiermacher insist that the translator should stay as faithful as possible to the music of the source text – its rhythms,

rhymes, alliterations, assonances, etc. This musical faithfulness is for them in part a sort of end-in-itself (like semantic faithfulness), but it is also in part an important means to the end of achieving semantic faithfulness. Why? In Herder and Schleiermacher's view there are two main reasons: First, the musical features of a text, such as its rhythm and its rhyme, often bear their own meanings (this point was especially emphasized by Herder and Schleiermacher's fellow translator and translation theorist August Wilhelm Schlegel). Think, for example, of the rhythm- and rhyme-scheme of a 'limerick.' Even in the absence of any accompaniment by words, this scheme conveys such connotations as humor and smuttiness. Second, it is often the case that only the musical features of a text exactly reveal nuances of the affective sentiments presupposed or expressed by the text which (in accordance with principle (3) of Herder and Schleiermacher's philosophy of language) constitute an essential component of the meanings of its words. In this connection, Herder mentions Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and its language of love as an example. Think, for instance, of the famous lines spoken by Juliet to Romeo: "Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow / That I shall say good night till it be morrow." Herder's idea (a plausible one) would be that the musical aspects of these two lines – their rhythm, their rhyme ("sorrow"/"morrow"), their alliteration ("such sweet sorrow"), their anxious repetition ("Good night, good night … good night"), and so on – make an important semantic contribution, an important contribution to conveying the exact meaning of what is expressed.

(d) According to Herder and Schleiermacher, because of all the challenging tasks just sketched, a good translator needs to be not only competent, but a real "artist," or even a "genius."

In Herder and Schleiermacher's view this preferred approach to translation has three important advantages, corresponding to the disadvantages of the alternative approach (among which, once again, the first will perhaps seem obvious, but the other two somewhat less so): (i') This approach makes possible the greatest possible semantic and musical faithfulness to the source text. (ii') It thereby shows respect for the author and his culture. And (iii') it enriches the target language by importing into it new concepts and new musical forms.[5]

2 Some Significant Differences between Herder's and Schleiermacher's Versions of the Foreignizing Approach

That is the core of the foreignizing approach as it was developed more or less in common by Herder and Schleiermacher. But their versions of it also contain several significant disagreements which it is instructive to consider. In my judgment, some of these disagreements are to Herder's advantage, some to Schleiermacher's advantage. Let us consider them in that order.

Herder's and Schleiermacher's versions of the approach differ in two important respects that ultimately seem to Herder's advantage. First, whereas Herder regards the problem of the conceptual gulf that often exists between languages as completely general, applying to every conceptual domain, Schleiermacher (at least in a salient strand of his essay on translation) considers sensuous vocabulary to be an exception; in his view it is really only spiritual [*geistig*] vocabulary of the sort that predominates in philosophy and literature that gives rise to such conceptual variations, whereas more purely sensuous vocabulary does not. Consequently, in his view, texts that only, or at least mainly, use sensuous vocabulary (such as guide books or commercial documents) cause no significant difficulties for a translator, and therefore – in terms of a novel terminological

5 For example, in the late 18th century Heinrich Voss's translations of Homer into German – which were inspired by Herder's call in the *Fragments* for translations of Homer in accordance with the above approach – introduced the hexameter into German, so that it could then also be used for the composition of original poetry in German, such as Voss's own *Luise* and Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*.

distinction that Schleiermacher introduces in this connection – do not really require translation [*übersetzen*] at all, but only a more straightforward sort of interpreting [*dolmetschen*], i.e., a virtually mechanical transference of meaning. In this dispute it seems to me that Herder is correct and Schleiermacher mistaken. Think, for example, of the sensuous word '*Helios*' in ancient Greek. Although this word refers to the same object as our word 'sun,' its meaning is different (in Fregean terms: its reference is the same, but its sense is different), since it implies such features as divinity, intelligence, and purposes, which our word 'sun' definitely does not. Or think again of Homer's color vocabulary in comparison with our own (a case of sensuous vocabulary if ever there was one). The example discussed above, '*chlôros*,' already illustrates the sorts of conceptual discrepancies that exist in this domain. Moreover, there is arguably not even a single color-word in Homer that has exactly the same meaning as a corresponding word from our modern European languages. Even the Homeric words that most closely correspond to our words 'black' and 'white,' namely '*melas*' and '*leukos*' respectively, do not have exactly the same extension as our words, let alone the same intension. For example, '*melas*' applies not only to objects that we would describe as black, but also to ones that we would describe as brown, such as the trunk of a tree; and '*leukos*' applies not only to objects that we would describe as white, but also to ones that we would describe as transparent, such as a wind or the clear water of a stream.[6]

Second, whereas Schleiermacher presents the approach to translation that we have considered as the only acceptable one (at least in his classic essay from 1813; he is a little more flexible in his lectures on Aesthetics from 1825), Herder is much more liberal, allowing (and also himself practicing) other approaches as well when the genre of the text involved or the purpose for which it is being translated justify them, e.g., what he calls imitation [*Nachbildung*] and rejuvenation [*Verjüngung*]. On reflection, this liberalism seems clearly superior to Schleiermacher's inflexibility. For one thing, when Schleiermacher in his essay completely rejects the alternative approach of bringing the author closer to the reader he does so on the basis of a sort of fallacy: he infers from the illegitimacy of the justification of this approach that certain predecessors (e.g., Le Maistre and Dryden) had given – namely, in terms of the criterion of what the author would have said if he had had not the source language as his native language but the target language – to the illegitimacy of the approach itself, whereas of course the illegitimacy of that justification only shows that *one* possible justification of the approach is illegitimate, among any number of others that might be offered instead (analogously, the fact that one mathematician's proof of a theorem turns out to be flawed does not show that the theorem itself is untrue). For another thing, Herder's principle of being flexible in one's approach to translation depending on the genre and the purpose involved seems intrinsically right. Think, for example, of the popular ballads (such as those originally collected by Thomas Percy) that Herder discusses in his famous *Volkslieder* (1774 / 1778–1779), where he argues plausibly that their primarily musical rather than semantic character and the connected fact that they often change their text while conserving their music justify prioritizing their musical form over their semantic content in translation. Or think of a case that Schleiermacher mentions in passing in his essay from 1813: translating ancient comedy. Schleiermacher adduces this case with an implication that it clearly shows the necessity of using the foreignizing approach to translation that he champions. But in truth that very much depends on the purpose of the translation. Certainly, if the purpose is to help students or other readers whose

6 For a helpful general treatment of Homeric color vocabulary, see Eleanor Irwin, *Colour Terms in Greek Poetry* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974). Readers should be warned that the oft-cited book by Brent Berlin and Paul Kay on color terminology is by contrast completely unreliable, at least in this area (cf. Michael N. Forster, "On the Very Idea of Denying the Existence of Radically Different Conceptual Schemes," *Inquiry* 41, no. 2 [1998]: 133–185).

Greek is still weak to understand the Greek text better, then that approach may be reasonable (this is more or less the approach used by Benjamin Bickley Rogers' translations of Aristophanes' comedies in the Loeb series). But if the purpose is to produce a text that can be performed on a modern stage in such a way as to be comprehensible and amusing for a modern audience, then such an approach would be disastrous (Rogers' translations are difficult to read and anything but amusing), whereas an 'imitative' or 'rejuvenating' approach would be much more likely to succeed (as it does, for example, in the case of William Arrowsmith's translation of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, which is loose enough to even include a completely anachronistic reference to telegrams).

However, more often than not Herder and Schleiermacher's differences of opinion on translation instead constitute advantages for Schleiermacher. The following are three examples. First of all, despite making his misguided point about sensuous vocabulary, Schleiermacher generally emphasizes the difficulty of translation even more strongly than Herder had already done, namely, by identifying several further obstacles to completely successful translation; and he also develops more clearly than Herder had done an important and attractive response to this difficulty which promises to cope with it even in its now aggravated form.

The further obstacles in question are these: (i) Schleiermacher – following and extending an insight of Friedrich Schlegel's in his seminal work *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808) – develops the philosophy of language that he basically shares with Herder in a much more *holistic* manner than Herder had done (Herder was in general still wedded to an atomistic picture of words and concepts that had been common during the Enlightenment). According to Schleiermacher, the meaning of a word depends not only on the usage of the word itself but also on the distinctive grammar that underlies and enables its usage (this was Schlegel's theoretical contribution), on a set of more local relationships between related words (what would today be called 'semantic fields'),[7] and, analogously, on a set of relationships between the various different usages of the word itself (e.g., the different usages of 'impression' in 'He made an impression in the clay,' 'My impression is that he is rather conservative,' and 'He made a big impression at the party')[8] – so that a really exact reproduction of the meaning of a word in translation would require reproducing all of these holistic features as well. In this general spirit, Schleiermacher writes in his essay on translation:

> If … in two languages to each word of the one a word of the other corresponded exactly, expressing the same concept in the same degree, if their meanings represented the same relationships and their connections were equivalent, so that the languages were only different for the ear, then in the area of art and science all translation would … be

7 Besides more obvious examples, such as entailments (e.g., 'bachelor' → 'unmarried') and antonyms (e.g., 'up' – 'down'), Schleiermacher in his Dialectics lectures especially emphasizes the relationships between descriptive words in genus-species hierarchies (e.g., the ways in which the word 'blue' essentially relates to the superordinate word 'color,' to the contrasting coordinate words 'red,' 'yellow,' 'green,' etc., and to the subordinate words 'navy blue' and 'sky blue'). For a helpful up-to-date treatment of the theory of 'semantic fields' (which I believe Schleiermacher ultimately inspired), see John Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), vol. 1, chs. 8–9.

8 This is the force of Schleiermacher's doctrine of "the unity of the word-sphere" in his Hermeneutics lectures (cf. Forster, *After Herder*, 366–367). While this doctrine seems to work well for cases of polysemy like 'impression' (or 'realize:' 'His plan was not realized,' 'He realized his assets,' 'He realized he had made a mistake,' etc.), it might seem to run into exceptions in cases of what it is tempting to call *absolute* homonymy (e.g., 'bank' qua financial institution vs. 'bank' qua edge of a river). Qualifying Schleiermacher's doctrine in order to allow for such cases as exceptions would not weaken his overall point very much. But doing so may not in fact be necessary. For a sophisticated case against the conception of absolute homonymy as contrasted with polysemy that tends to support an unqualified form of Schleiermacher's doctrine, see Lyons, *Semantics*, vol. 2, ch. 13.

> purely mechanical … But in fact the situation with all languages that are not so closely related that they can almost be considered different dialects is exactly the opposite one, and the further removed from each other they are in genealogy and in time the more so, that not even a single word in a language has one in the other language that exactly corresponds to it, no inflection [*Beugungsweise*] of the one language comprises exactly the same multiplicity of relationships as any inflection in another language.[9]

(ii) Schleiermacher also recognizes more clearly than Herder had done that the desiderata of semantic faithfulness and musical faithfulness often stand in irreconcilable competition with each other (since, for example, the word in the target language that most exactly reproduces the meaning of a word located at the end of a line in an end-rhymed poem would undermine the rhyme, and conversely the word that would best preserve the rhyme would be semantically inadequate). (iii) Moreover, Schleiermacher adds to semantic and musical faithfulness a third requirement for translation that is similarly attractive: An author will often in one and the same text use old concepts in certain places but new ones in other places, e.g., by coining a new term or employing an old one in a new way (Plato's dialogues, which Schleiermacher himself translated, are an excellent illustration of this point); in translating such texts a good translator should make the difference between the two cases as clear to a modern reader as it would have been to a contemporary of the author. At first sight, this requirement might seem to be just impossibly ambitious. However, Schleiermacher proposes a rather ingenious partial solution to it: in the former cases the translator should use words from the target language that are relatively old, but in the latter cases words from the target language that are relatively new. Nonetheless, Schleiermacher also recognizes that this solution has very severe limitations, so that in the end adding this third desideratum involves a net increase in the difficulty of translation. For one thing, such age-differences in target-language vocabulary will not always be available where they are needed. For another thing, this third desideratum will often stand in irreconcilable competition with the other two desiderata of semantic and musical faithfulness (just as the latter often do with each other), the best word for conveying the conceptual conservatism or novelty in question being inferior to other available words from the target language in terms of semantic accuracy and/or musical suitability. In short, Schleiermacher for several plausible reasons holds that a successful translation is something even more difficult to achieve than Herder had already thought, indeed even to the point of regarding the complete success of a translation as impossible.

However, Schleiermacher not only develops this problem, but he also develops a sort of solution to it that is equally important and convincing (here generalizing a proposal that Herder had already made in connection with certain specific sorts of translations, e.g., translations of Homer into a modern language): Rather than despairing in the face of the impossibility just mentioned, a translator should acknowledge it and respond to it by reconceiving his task as one of striving to achieve as close an approximation as possible to a goal that he knows he will never be able to fully attain.[10]

The second difference between Herder and Schleiermacher that is to the advantage of the latter is as follows. Herder had at points in the *Fragments* worried that the approach to translation that he was advocating would undermine the authentic nature of the target

9 Schleiermacher, "Ueber die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersetzens," 212.

10 Incidentally, this is just one example of a type of position that is also much more broadly characteristic of Schleiermacher's version of German Romanticism (and indeed, of German Romanticism in general), appearing not only in his translation theory as here, but also in his theory of interpretation, or Hermeneutics, and in his theory of knowledge, or Dialectics.

language (in one passage – no doubt betraying his preferences as a Lutheran clergyman – he had enthusiastically compared languages that are uninfluenced by translation, such as ancient Greek, with the purity of a virgin). Schleiermacher in his essay responds to that worry, plausibly, first, that the changes in the target language that the advocated sort of translation effects will often remain confined to the translation itself, and second, that when in certain cases they do migrate into the general language, they will either survive because they are compatible with the language's own nature or else, if they are not compatible with it, soon disappear from the language.

Finally, a third difference between Herder and Schleiermacher that is to the advantage of the latter is the following. Schleiermacher is much more clearly aware than Herder that the foreignizing approach to translation that they both champion presupposes several historically contingent and favorable preconditions if it is to be successful: (i) It presupposes that the culture of the target language is sufficiently interested in foreign languages and cultures so that its readers will tolerate, and take the trouble necessary to understand, the sorts of difficult translations that this approach produces. (ii) It presupposes a certain plasticity or flexibility in the target language (or perhaps more accurately, since Schleiermacher holds that *every* language has such a plasticity: in the attitude of native speakers of the target language towards their own language) – a plasticity that Schleiermacher finds missing at this period in French, but present in German.[11] Finally, (iii) according to Schleiermacher, in order to succeed, the preferred foreignizing approach to translation needs to be practiced consistently and *en masse*. He seems to have two main reasons for this in mind, both of them plausible. First, only if the approach is practiced consistently and *en masse* will readers get used to it, learn to understand it, and accept it as an approach. Second, only if it is practiced consistently and *en masse* will they encounter enough examples of many of the specific words whose usages have been 'bent' in enough different contexts in order to be able to extrapolate from those examples the rules for use in accordance with which they are being employed and hence their meanings (for instance – since the word '*chlôros*' is relatively rare in Homer – enough examples of the translation of the word '*chlôros*' as 'green' in enough different contexts so that they can infer from these examples to the unusual rule for use that is governing the word 'green' in imitation of the one that governs the word '*chlôros*' in the Greek).

3 The Relevance of Chinese for the Theory of Foreignizing Translation

So much by way of a sketch of the theory of foreignizing translation that d'Alembert, Abbt, Herder, and Schleiermacher developed. This theory exercised a powerful and beneficial influence on the development of other translation theories conceived in a similar spirit (e.g., those of August Wilhelm Schlegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Walter Benjamin, Antoine Berman, Lawrence Venuti, and Barbara Cassin). It also exercised a powerful and beneficial

11 Incidentally, although this distinction between French and German might at first sight seem to be merely a nationalistic prejudice – and no doubt does contain at least a grain of (defensive) nationalism, motivated by Napoleon's recent invasion of Germany and the War of Liberation against him that was being fought at the time of the essay's composition (1813) – it arguably contains a large measure of truth. In particular, it reflects a genuine difference in native speakers' attitudes towards their own language between a France that by this period had already long since become centralized both politically and culturally-linguistically (the Académie Française having already been established and begun its homogenizing of the French language in the middle of the 17th century, for example) and a Germany that at the time was still politically and culturally-linguistically fragmented. Even today, native speakers of French tend, in my experience, to get considerably more irritated by deviations from normal linguistic usage than native speakers of German.

influence on translation practice – for instance, on translations by Herder and Schleiermacher themselves (including Herder's *Volkslieder*, especially the sample translations of Shakespeare that he gives there, and Schleiermacher's translations of the Platonic dialogues), Voss (his translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), August Wilhelm Schlegel (especially his translations of Shakespeare's plays and from the Romance languages), Wilhelm von Humboldt (his 1816 translation of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*), and Buber and Rosenzweig (their translation of the Hebrew Bible).

Concerning its influence on other translation theories, as I mentioned previously, some of this influence has taken the form of a repetition of an already excellent theory but with some unfortunate deviations, such as Benjamin's dubious religiously motivated conception of a unique original language undergirding all translation or Berman and Venuti's misguided attempt to recast the theory without using the concept of meaning – so that in these cases Herder and Schleiermacher's original version of the theory is distinctly superior to its descendants. But there have also been some genuine improvements of the theory since their time, and I want to suggest that further ones are possible as well.

As several of the theorists in this tradition themselves imply, in order to be adequate a theory of translation needs to be grounded in relevant experience. Now, the translation theorists in this tradition from the late 18th and early 19th centuries mainly focused in their translation theory and practice on languages drawn from just a single family of languages (among the roughly 300 (!) language families that are currently known to exist), namely, Indo-European languages, such as Sanskrit (Friedrich Schlegel, August Wilhelm Schlegel, and Humboldt), Greek (Herder, Friedrich Schlegel, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Schleiermacher, and Humboldt), Latin (d'Alembert, Abbt, Herder, and August Wilhelm Schlegel), the Romance languages (all of these people, but especially August Wilhelm Schlegel), and English (Herder, Schleiermacher, and August Wilhelm Schlegel). It is therefore not surprising that it has been possible to improve the theory, and that it has the potential to be improved still further, by taking into account *other* language families as well.

The case in which this has happened most impressively so far is Hebrew, a Semitic language. Herder already took Hebrew into account in connection with translation to a certain extent. He could read Hebrew, wrote extensive commentaries on the Old Testament, and formed an intention to translate the work himself (unfortunately never realized). One principle that he championed in this connection was that an adequate translation of the Old Testament would need to do justice (as Luther's prose translation of it had failed to) not only to the semantic content of the work but also to its musical form (especially in the case of the psalms). Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig's translation of the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, from the early 20th century and their related theoretical essays on translation continued this project. They too insisted on the importance of doing justice not only to the work's semantic content but also to its musical form. Moreover, they identified in much more detail what doing this requires – for example, doing justice not only to such relatively obvious musical-formal features as rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, and assonance, but also to certain distinctive pauses and similar formal-musical structures that are rooted in the oral origins of the text as well as to certain distinctive repetitions of key-words [*Leitwörter*] and key-forms that implicitly convey a meaning.[12] Also of some relevance in this connection is the work of the French translator and translation theorist Henri Meschonnic, who pursues a similar approach to the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible.[13]

12 See the two essays by Buber and Rosenzweig reprinted in *Das Problem des Übersetzens*, ed. Hans Joachim Störig (Stuttgart: Henry Goverts Verlag, 1963): Martin Buber, "Zu einer neuen Verdeutschung der Schrift"; Franz Rosenzweig, "Die Schrift und Luther."

13 See esp. Henri Meschonnic, *Les cinq rouleaux* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).

This further development of Herder and Schleiermacher's foreignizing approach in connection with Hebrew and the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, is significant. However, Hebrew is in certain respects rather similar to Indo-European languages – for example, like them, using inflection, and, like them, using an alphabetic-phonetic script. Accordingly, this further development arguably proves to be fairly modest, essentially staying within the bounds of the framework-principle that Herder and Schleiermacher had already established of doing justice not only to semantic content but also to musical form, and merely elaborating on certain details of the latter task. Moreover, while some of the specific features of musical form involved are no doubt distinctive of the Hebrew Bible, it is less clear that they are essentially rooted in the Hebrew language; it could be argued that they might just as well have arisen in an Indo-European language, and indeed that similar musical-formal effects sometimes actually have. In short, this further development of the foreignizing approach is not very radical.

What I would like to suggest (albeit tentatively, given the limitedness of my knowledge of the language in question) is that a further and more dramatic refinement of Herder and Schleiermacher's foreignizing approach can be achieved by considering a language (and family of languages) that they almost completely neglected: *Chinese* (together with the family of languages of which it is the central member). For it seems to me that a consideration of this case has the potential to lead to much more radical extensions of their foreignizing approach, in particular extensions that are more essentially rooted in the very nature of the language involved rather than just in specific uses to which it has contingently been put.

Let me begin my observations here with a few words of explanation of the neglect of this important case by the 18th- and 19th-century theorists in question. In sharp contrast to an older philosophical tradition from the 17th and early 18th centuries that had been strongly and sympathetically interested in Chinese language and culture – Jesuits such as Matteo Ricci, Leibniz, Christian Wolff, Voltaire, et al. – the generation of the German Romantics to which both Herder and Schleiermacher belonged, despite being sincerely and emphatically committed to moral cosmopolitanism, had a rather prejudiced view of Chinese language and culture. Herder seems to have begun this unfortunate trend (perhaps initially as part of his well-known broader reaction against Voltaire, as found especially in *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity* (1774)) – already in the *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772) observing critically at one point that whereas all other languages share a common grammar, Chinese is the one language that has no grammar, and then in *Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Humanity* (1784–1791) going on to severely criticize Chinese politics, society, and culture for such alleged tendencies as despotism, conformism, and a lack of inventiveness. Friedrich Schlegel then continued this sort of negative picture of Chinese language and culture in *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808), in particular distinguishing sharply between "organic" (i.e., inflected) languages, such as the Indo-European languages, and "mechanical" (i.e., uninflected) languages, such as Chinese, and arguing that the former are better vehicles for thought than the latter. Humboldt subsequently took over this position of Schlegel's along with the other main principles of the latter's linguistics (in particular, engaging in a lively controversy about it with the French sinologist Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat in which he tried to sustain the thesis of the inferiority of Chinese as a vehicle for thought against Rémusat's objections to it). Finally, Hegel at the same period championed a similar prejudice against Chinese language and culture, not only echoing the Schlegel-Humboldt position just mentioned, but also arguing that hieroglyphic or ideographic scripts, such as Chinese (and ancient Egyptian), are inferior to scripts that are alphabetical-phonetic (and therefore reflective of the spoken language), such as those used by the Indo-European languages, because of a general superiority of spoken language over written

language, and moreover that Chinese culture is inferior to European culture due to its lack of the subjectivity or individuality and the genuine philosophy that European culture has developed since the Greeks (so that, *summa summarum*, history should be seen as a sort of progress from East to West). This prejudice that the generation of German Romanticism harbored against Chinese language and culture – and despite the various arguments just mentioned, it was hardly more than a prejudice (albeit one that came to serve some very pernicious ideological functions) – appears to have prevented translation theorists from the period, such as Herder and Schleiermacher, from devoting any significant attention to Chinese language and texts. And it seems to me that this led to some significant shortcomings in their theories of translation which we should now try to remedy.

For one thing, when compared to Indo-European languages, Chinese illustrates the sorts of conceptual, grammatical, and musical-formal gulfs with which Herder and Schleiermacher's foreignizing translation theory is centrally concerned in an especially dramatic way – bringing out even more powerfully than comparisons between Indo-European languages alone can do the sort of extreme difficulty, even to the point of impossibility, of reproducing such features in translation that Herder and Schleiermacher already emphasized. Concerning *concepts*, as I have noted, Herder and Schleiermacher regard the discrepancies between the concepts found in different languages as a fundamental problem for translation. Here is a passage on the subject from Schleiermacher's essay, for example:

> If it is true that even in the usage of everyday life there are only a few words in a language to which a word in any other language completely corresponds, so that the latter could be used in all cases where the former could be used and it would always in the same combination bring about the same effect as the former, then this is even more true of all concepts to the extent that they include a philosophical content … Here even more than elsewhere each language, despite variety in contemporary and successive views, contains a single system of concepts within it which, precisely because they are in contact with, combine with, and complement each other in the same language, constitute a single whole whose individual parts have no counterparts in the systems of other languages, hardly excepting God and Being, the original noun and the original verb.[14]

Setting aside the echo of Schleiermacher's dubious distinction between sensuous and spiritual cases in this passage, his claim here is basically that there are profound conceptual discrepancies between languages which pose severe problems for translation, even in the case of such fundamental concepts as God and Being. This claim can already be verified within the realm of the Indo-European languages, for instance by comparing Homeric Greek with modern English: The example of Homeric versus modern color conceptualization that I used earlier is by no means exceptional but rather illustrates the rule across all fields of conceptualization (e.g., not only color, but also physical nature more broadly, the human mind, and morals). And as Schleiermacher implies, even the terms for God and Being do not constitute an exception to the rule: a Homeric *theos* or *daimôn* is not conceptually quite the same thing as a Judeo-Christian *God*; and, as Charles Kahn has plausibly argued, the existential use of the verb 'to be' that is so central to our modern conception of Being does not really emerge in Greek until the 5th century BCE.[15] Nonetheless, a consideration of Chinese permits an even more dramatic illustration of Schleiermacher's point. For, not only do conceptual discrepancies like those that we find in the case of Homeric versus modern color concepts

14 Schleiermacher, "Ueber die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersetzens," 239.

15 Charles H. Kahn, *The Verb 'Be' in Ancient Greek* (Dordrecht/Boston: D. Reidel, 1973).

occur pervasively between ancient Chinese and modern Indo-European languages across a wide range of subject domains,[16] but in addition, the absence of our concepts of God and Being is even more striking in ancient Chinese than in early ancient Greek. In particular, as Yijing Zhang has argued convincingly, the closest counterparts to our term God in traditional Chinese thought, such as the term '*li*,' do not really mean 'God'; and since classical Chinese does not even possess a verb 'to be' that covers the several different functions that this verb covers in Indo-European languages (in particular, those of expressing existence, predication, and identity), here too there is a striking conceptual discrepancy.[17] Concerning *grammar*, the situation regarding the concept of Being just mentioned is already a good example of the sorts of radical discrepancies and difficulties that arise here, since this concept has not only conceptual but also grammatical dimensions. For instance, it functions essentially (either explicitly or implicitly) as part of all predication in Indo-European languages, whereas nothing plays any such role in Chinese. Moreover (as Herder, Schlegel, and Humboldt already saw), unlike Indo-European languages, Chinese contains no inflection to mark such distinctions as those between singular and plural forms of a word, different agents of a verb, different tenses and moods of a verb, or different grammatical cases and the various relationships they connote in nouns, pronouns, and adjectives (the expressive slack being taken up in Chinese mainly by context, word order, and particles).[18] Finally, concerning *musical form*, while certain musical features of Chinese works have fairly close counterparts in Indo-European languages, e.g., rhymes, others do not, e.g., the tones that are an essential part of all spoken Chinese (four in Mandarin, six to nine in Cantonese).[19]

16 This point is somewhat controversial. For example, whereas this is essentially François Jullien's position, by contrast Jean François Billeter in his *Contre François Jullien* (Paris: Éditions Allia, [2006] 2018) argues that Jullien greatly exaggerates the conceptual discrepancies involved. However, it seems to me that Billeter (who, oddly enough, is more usually concerned to stress the deep *differences* between ancient Chinese and modern European languages and the resulting impossibility of translating adequately between them; see especially his *Quatre essais sur la traduction* (Paris: Éditions Allia, [2014] 2018)) argues in this way on the basis of an atavistic adherence to a naïve Enlightenment picture of concepts that (i) sharply separates them from word-usages and (ii) overlooks their essential dependence on a language's grammar, more local relationships between words ('semantic fields'), and the character of individual words' constitutive internal polysemy. In other words, he does it by ignoring roughly two centuries of progress in the philosophy of language and linguistics.

17 Yijing Zhang, "Transcendance conceptuelle, fondement langagier: la notion de substance au prisme du chinois" (forthcoming). Cf. on the latter issue her article in the present volume, "Translating Philosophy From and Into Chinese in the Light of Humboldt's Comparativism." As Zhang points out in this article (in response to Tze-wan Kwan, "On the Fourfold Root of the Notion of 'Being' in Chinese Language and Script," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 44, no. 3–4 [2017]: 212–229), strategies for dealing with the existential, predicative, and identifying functions of the verb 'to be' when translating it into Chinese by using several different Chinese words run into the problem that in Greek it is not only the *differences* between these functions that constitute the meaning of 'to be' but also their *combination in a unity*, as indeed Aristotle already implied (and as Schleiermacher's principle of "the unity of the word-sphere" likewise implies at a more general level).

18 This statement may require a little qualification – e.g., '*wo*' (I/me), '*women*' (we/us), '*ni*' (you, sing.), and '*nimen*' (you, pl.) could be seen as involving a simple sort of inflection – but if so, not much.

19 Tze-wan Kwan, who has great expertise not only as a translator between Chinese and Indo-European languages but also as an author of Chinese poems, has expanded on the musical-formal discrepancies/difficulties that I mention above as follows: "Besides rhymes, which affect only the final syllables of alternate lines, we need to consider the flow of tonality or what the Chinese call '*pingze* 平仄' (level/oblique), which affects all syllables positioned at the 2nd, 4th and 6th place of all lines. Furthermore, the most difficult thing about Chinese poems is the formal requirements related to line-pairs. For poems with four lines or two line-pairs (as in your two examples [see below – M.N.F.]), the formal requirement is relatively simple, but for poems with eight lines or four line-pairs, the central line-pairs (2nd and 3rd pairs) have to be written

But beyond this powerful exacerbation of the sorts of problems to which Herder and Schleiermacher already drew attention, there are also some additional challenges that arise in connection with translating between Chinese and Indo-European languages which have no real counterpart when translating between the latter languages. These additional challenges are especially severe in connection with the translation of poetry (which is arguably no less important for the philosophy of translation than the translation of philosophy).[20] Let me give two specific examples.

First of all, the absence of inflection in Chinese already mentioned opens up possibilities of radical ambiguity which can be, and indeed often are, deliberately exploited by Chinese poetry in various ways. For example, the fact that in Chinese a verb can be expressed without specifying its subject (either by inflection of the verb itself or by adding a noun/pronoun, only the latter of which is even possible in Chinese) can be exploited in poetry to generate a sort of ambiguity that makes a particular subject's experience seamlessly take on a more general significance as well (as we shall see shortly in two poems by Meng Haoran and Su Dongpo) or that accurately conveys the non-self-reflective character of a certain type of experience (as we shall likewise see shortly in the same poem by Meng Haoran).[21] The inflected character of Indo-European languages generally makes it impossible to reproduce such ambiguities and the positive effects that they enable.[22]

Second, the character of Chinese writing is radically different from that of Indo-European writing in two important and interrelated respects. (i) Whereas Indo-European writing is alphabetic-phonetic, i.e., essentially mediated by the spoken language, this is not the case with Chinese writing, which does not essentially work via the spoken language. This situation is difficult for a native speaker of an Indo-European language unfamiliar with Chinese to even imagine. For

in the form of couplets, which requires a balance of syntactic and semantic elements between the first and the second lines of the same line-pair. This is what is known as '*duizhang* 對仗.' Finally, for all poems (no matter with four or eight lines, and all other poems with more than eight lines), all line-pairs have to be linked one after the other (*niandui* 黏對) by observing very strict rules regarding tonality so that the smooth flow of the entire poem can be phonologically guaranteed. All these will sum up to make a foreignizing translation literally impossible." (Private correspondence.).

20 Notice that it would involve a crude fallacy to simply assume that an interest in the philosophy of translation must be exclusively, or even primarily, an interest in the translation of philosophy – a fallacy analogous to that involved in assuming that the philosophy of economics must be exclusively or primarily concerned with the economics of philosophy. Schleiermacher's heavy focus on the translation of philosophy in his practice and theory of translation, the current popularity of Barbara Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004), and François Jullien's similarly popular philosophy-centered work concerning the difficulties of translating between Chinese and Indo-European languages have perhaps in combination with each other tended to encourage this fallacy (though I see no reason to think that Schleiermacher, Cassin, or Jullien are themselves guilty of it). Of course, other reasons besides this fallacy might be given for paying special attention in the philosophy of translation to the translation of philosophy. I shall not attempt to decide the question of their viability here. However, I would at least like to register a degree of skepticism. In particular, it seems worth pointing out that we have already in this article encountered one such further reason which again fails: Schleiermacher's argument that because the translation of sensuous vocabulary is unproblematic, the philosophy of translation should instead focus on spiritual vocabulary, such as occurs most prominently in philosophy (and literature).

21 Cf. *How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology*, ed. Zong-Qi Cai (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 163–164, 255 and Billeter, *Quatre essais sur la traduction*, 18–19.

22 A roughly analogous phenomenon can, though, be found among Indo-European languages by comparing less inflected ones such as English with more inflected ones such as German. For example, whereas a German speaker telling someone that s/he has just visited a friend has to be explicit about the gender of the friend in question ('mein Freund' or 'meine Freundin'), a speaker of English can leave the gender unspecified ('my friend'), thereby achieving a sort of vagueness that can be quite functional (e.g., enabling a sort of discretion) but that is unavailable to the German speaker.

example, Aristotle just automatically, but falsely, assumed the generality of the Indo-European model when he wrote in a famous passage of *De Interpretatione*: "Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words" (16a). It is a symptom of this distinctive feature of Chinese writing that a native speaker of Mandarin and a native speaker of Cantonese who share no common spoken language and therefore cannot understand each other when they speak can nonetheless without any difficulty read and understand the same text, say a newspaper. (ii) Chinese writing has a whole dimension that Indo-European writing altogether lacks (with a few artificially constructed exceptions, e.g., Charles-François Panard's poem written in celebration of wine in the shape of a wine bottle), namely, an ideographic or pictorial dimension.[23] For example, written Chinese includes the following pictorial (albeit now highly stylized) characters:

木 (*mu*)	= tree
人 (*ren*)	= human being
口 (*kou*)	= mouth
日 (*ri*)	= sun
凵 (*qu*, *kan*, or *qian*)	= receptacle
上 (*shang*)	= above
下 (*xia*)	= below
大 (*da*)	= big

Moreover, starting out from the first character, '木,' Chinese forms more complex characters based upon it in the following way:

木 (*mu*)	= tree
林 (*lin*)	= wood(s)
森 (*sen*)	= forest
末 (*mo*)	= treetop
本 (*ben*)	= root

Similarly (to give a slightly more complicated example), starting out from the second character, '人,' Chinese forms more complex characters and words as follows:

人 (*ren*)	= human being
囚 (*qiu*)	= prisoner
从 (*cong*)	= follow
人从 (*ren cong*)	= crowd
大人 (*da ren*)	= adult

This ideographic or pictorial dimension of Chinese writing entails that a Chinese poem (or more exactly, one that was composed late enough not to have originally been purely oral, as is generally the case with the poetry of the *Shijing*, but to have had a written aspect from the start)[24] often has a whole dimension that Indo-European poems lack. Whereas, like an Indo-European poem, the Chinese poem will have both semantic and musical dimensions (for example, Chinese poetry usually includes rhymes), unlike Indo-European poetry, it will often in addition have an important ideographic or pictorial dimension (including the pictorial aspects not only of the individual

23 This is especially true of the very earliest forms of Chinese writing, but it remains true to a considerable extent even today. This ideographic or pictorial dimension of Chinese writing lies behind the high status that calligraphy enjoys among the arts in China and behind calligraphy's close proximity, on the one hand, to the art of poetry, and on the other hand, to the art of painting (the three arts often in China being practiced by one and the same artist, especially in the literati tradition). Cf. Raymond and Margaret Scrogin Chang, *Speaking of Chinese* (New York/London: Norton, 1978), ch. 7, esp. 164–165.

24 Because Chinese characters are in general more clearly pictorial the further back in history one goes (e.g., especially so on bronze vessels and oracle bones from the second millennium BCE), one might have assumed that the pictorial dimension of written poetry would be strongest in the oldest poetry, that of the *Shijing*. However, a preliminary survey of some sample poems from the *Shijing* in comparison with the later poetry to be discussed below suggests to me that this is not in fact the case. The explanation, I think, is that this oldest poetry was in its origins purely oral, only getting written down later. Only in later poetry, which was actually composed in writing, or at least by poets who were familiar with writing, does the pictorial dimension become salient (as we shall see below).

characters themselves but also of their relations to each other within the poem) – a dimension that (like a poem's music) not only constitutes an essential part of the poem's aesthetic quality but also often makes significant semantic contributions, sometimes even including ones that are not communicated by the poem in any other way.

Consequently, in order to be completely successful, a translation of a Chinese poem into an Indo-European language would need to transfer not only the sorts of semantic and musical features that Herder and Schleiermacher already insisted on transferring, but also this pictorial dimension. But how on earth is a translation going to accomplish that? Indo-European writing normally lacks this dimension altogether (and cannot be expected to imitate it to any significant extent by means of such artificial devices as writing a poem about wine in the shape of a wine bottle). So presumably the translator will have to resort to producing analogous effects by means of the semantic and musical resources that *are* available in Indo-European writing (e.g., by finding semantic or musical equivalents for the pictorial aspects of the individual characters and of the relations between them). However, it seems clear that such expedients will never be able to achieve more than meager success. For, (i) the very shift of medium (from the pictorial to the semantic or musical) and the very reduction of the dimensions of the poem from three (musical, semantic, and pictorial) to just two (musical and semantic) will already constitute shortfalls, (ii) the possibility of finding suitable semantic or musical analogues will in general be slight, and moreover, (iii) the search for such analogues will create yet a fourth desideratum for translation often locked in irreconcilable competition with the three other desiderata that Schleiermacher already identified (semantic fidelity, musical fidelity, and concept-vintage fidelity), a competition in which it will inevitably in many cases have to lose out to them.

In order to illustrate these two features of much Chinese poetry and thereby show that the problems just sketched are not merely theoretical but very real in practice, let me consider a couple of examples.[25]

The first example is the poem *Spring Dawn* by Meng Haoran (689–740 CE) (which I give here in traditional script, then in *pinyin*, and then in a rough English translation):

春眠不覺曉
處處聞啼鳥
夜來風雨聲
花落知多少

Chun mian bu jue xiao
chu chu wen ti niao
ye lai feng yu sheng
hua luo zhi duo shao.

Spring sleep, do not feel the dawn.
Everywhere the shriek of birds is heard.
Night comes, sound of wind and rain.
Flowers fall, know how many!

As Jean François Billeter has pointed out, this poem exploits the possibility that is available in Chinese of using verbs (here: '*jue* 覺' and '*wen* 聞') without specifying either through inflection (which is not even possible in Chinese) or through the addition of a subject-word such as a noun or a pronoun (which is possible in Chinese but is not

25 I borrow these two examples from Billeter, *Quatre essais sur la traduction*, 17ff. and 35ff., though in part in order to makes points that he does not himself make. I have substituted for the versions in modern simplified script that Billeter gives versions in traditional script, not only in order to conform with the house rules of this journal but also because, unlike Billeter, I am largely concerned with the visible morphology of the script, and the traditional script is closer to what the poet would himself have used or had in mind. In the *pinyin* versions, like Billeter, I leave out the tone-marks because they are not relevant for the particular points I am concerned to illustrate here, but, unlike him, I always separate syllables. Finally, I have substituted for Billeter's rough French translations rough translations in English (which, although they contain some foreignizing features, make no pretensions to serving as models of good translation).

grammatically required) who is performing the action in question, in order thereby not only to effect a sort of generalization of an individual's experience, but also to capture, indeed with greater phenomenological accuracy than would be possible in an Indo-European language that specified the subject, the experience of a sleeper just waking up and thus becoming cognizant without as yet engaging in any sort of self-reflection or -identification.[26]

The poem also illustrates the second feature that I discussed above (which Billeter does not mention): the role of an ideographic or pictorial dimension in the poem. For in addition to semantic features and musical features (e.g., the end-rhymes), the poem also contains a whole series of characters that achieve their effect in part thanks to their pictorial qualities. For example, in the first line the character '*xiao* 曉' contains the pictorial character for the sun ('*ri* 日'), so that the reader is virtually made to *see* the sun dawning. Similarly, in the second line the repetition in spatial separation from each other of two occurrences of '*chu* 處' (lit. place) conveys the notion of multiple locations (or 'everywhere') in a visual way. Similarly again, in the third line the character for rain, '*yu* 雨,' actually pictures the rain. Similarly yet again, in the last line the double occurrence of the vegetation symbol '艹' as part of the words '*hua* 花' (flower(s)) and '*luo* 落' (fall) pictures both the flowers themselves and their multiplicity. Finally, and again similarly, in the last line the character for many or much, '*duo* 多,' likewise actually pictures multiplicity.

A second poem, besides exploiting the potential in Chinese for leaving the subject unspecified and thereby effecting a sort of generalization from an individual's experience to a more universal experience as the first poem does, also exploits the ideographic or pictorial dimension of Chinese in even more subtle and significant ways than the first poem does. The poem is by Su Dongpo (1037–1101 CE), who is known to have been influenced by Buddhism, and is entitled *Written on a Wall of the Monastery of the Western Forest*:

橫看成岭側成峰
遠近高低各不同
不識庐山真面目
只緣身在此山中

Heng kan cheng ling ce cheng feng
yuan jin gao di ge bu tong
bu shi Lu shan zhen mian mu
zhi yuan shen zai ci shan zhong.

Seen from the front becomes range, from the side becomes peaks,
From far and near tall and low, never the same,
Not know how Lu mountain really appears to the eye,
Only because body here in mountain's middle.

This poem contains at least three sets of pictorial features that play an important role in it both aesthetically and semantically: (i) The first line already includes as a component of the character '*kan* 看' (see) the character for the eye, '*mu* 目,' which then in the third line recurs as part of the character '*mian* 面' (appearance) before eventually emerging by itself at the very end of the same line. Consequently, not only does one at several points in the course of the poem's development actually *see* the human eye with which the poem is concerned, but moreover, as the poem proceeds, this visualized eye increases in salience, initially being only glimpsed but eventually coming into full view. (ii) Similarly, the strongly pictorial character for a mountain, '*shan* 山,' already appears as a component of two words in the first line, '*ling* 岭' (range) and '*feng* 峰' (peaks), so that the reader already from the very first line himself catches a visual glimpse of a mountain, then in the third and fourth lines it reappears as an independent character, thereby (as in the case of the eye) eventually showing the mountain more saliently as a

26 Ibid. 18–19.

complete whole. These two unfolding patterns concerning the eye and the mountain make an important contribution to conveying the subtle, mildly paradoxical idea that the very proximity of the eye and the whole mountain frustrates the eye's clear perception of itself and the mountain by only allowing partial, discrepant glimpses of them (an idea that is also made semantically explicit in the last two lines of the poem). They probably also thereby help to convey, over and above that merely physical-perceptual meaning, a deeper Buddhist meaning for which it serves as a sort of metaphor, namely, the even more subtle, paradoxical idea that the self's very proximity to itself and to reality as a whole frustrates its understanding of both. (iii) Finally, in the second line the characters '*yuan* 遠' (far) and '*jin* 近' (near) both include as a component the radical '辶,' which connotes walking to a location, conveying this idea of walking to a location in a strongly pictorial way. So here the pictorial dimension of the poem serves to communicate in a visual manner something that the poem leaves less explicit at the semantic level, namely, walking from one place to another in the vicinity of the mountain (and at a deeper metaphorical level, seeking for the way, the *dao*).

For reasons that I already mentioned above, it seems clear on reflection that it will not be possible to capture either of these sorts of features of the poems – either the indefiniteness of the subjects of the verbs and the effects that this enables or the pictorial aspects of the characters and the effects that these enable – at all adequately with a translation into an Indo-European language. To this extent, such features, rooted in the distinctive character of the Chinese language as compared to Indo-European languages, considerably exacerbate the difficulty of translation that Herder and Schleiermacher already emphasized in their theories of translation even beyond anything that they themselves envisaged.

These remarks about Hebrew and especially about Chinese might seem at first sight to constitute a severe criticism of Herder and Schleiermacher's theory of translation: Herder and Schleiermacher failed to take into account some quite important challenges for translation, including certain musical-formal features of the Hebrew Bible which Buber and Rosenzweig would later identify and especially the grammatical and pictorial features of Chinese that I have discussed above. However, on further reflection, these remarks rather just constitute an extension of Herder and Schleiermacher's approach, albeit a significant one. For, as we saw, one of their most important concerns and contributions was to multiply and underscore the difficulties of translation, even to the point of demonstrating that it can never be completely successful, and that one should therefore think of it as merely a sort of necessary evil to be pursued in such a way as to bring it as close as possible to a goal that it will never be able to fully attain. The additional difficulties for translation that I have identified here are therefore in a way just further grist for their mill.

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