

Translating *She King*:

Constructing a discourse for holistic poetic communication

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Through the translations of William Jones and Ezra Pound etc., *She King* or *Poems*, a collection of 305 earliest poems in Chinese history, has been a supermeme in English and American literatures. However, their translations only make an imperfect reflex of the Chinese art due to their neglect of form. This paper attempts to show the importance of form based on the analysis of their translations, arguing what makes a poem a poem is not semantic content alone, hence proposing that constructing a discourse for holistic poetic communication is necessary. In terms of verse, form and content make an inseparable dyad, and the form itself is a sign, signifying the entity of poetry. A good poem satisfies both form and content. Sir John Denham's dictum: "Not Language into Language but Poesie into Poesie" is a basic requirement for verse translation. However, an analysis of Legge's and Pound's rhymed versions shows that translation of "poesie into poesie" is not yet enough. A translation should be faithful in style as well, so "style into style" is another criterion. Still, we have to consider the real value of a classic, hence the criterion of "classic into classic". So besides the consideration of semantic content, poesie into poesie, style into style, and classic into classic are necessary, if not sufficient, conditions for a holistic poetic communication. In verse translation, there are not fixed principles but a very flexible maxim, that is, rendering the original as it is into a foreign language text, that is a translation should be as close as is possible to the original with the consideration of the above criteria, a guarantee of the proposed holistic poetic communication.