

## Methodology qua Methodology: Decoding Catford's Translation Shifts in Xu Yuanchong's Renditions of *Shijing* (*The Book of Songs*)

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### Abstract

This study pursues dual objectives: addressing critical gaps in both the application of Catford's translation shifts and the methodological scope of *Shijing* translation research. Proposed in the last century, Catford's taxonomy of translation shifts has been predominantly applied to Indo-European language pairs, focusing on linguistic transference between ST and TT. Its potential in Chinese-English translation practice remains underdeveloped. While Xu Yuanchong's *Shijing* renditions have attracted substantial scholarly attention in recent decades, the prevailing analytical paradigm—over-reliant on the translator's own 'Three Beauties' Theory—has inadvertently constrained methodological diversity in *Shijing* rendition studies. This paper explores the extent to which translation shifts are applied in C-E translation and inject fresh theoretical perspectives into domestic scholarship around *Shijing* renditions. The findings indicate that though translation shifts do explain phenomena and process in translating *Shijing*, yet prove inadequate in explicating translator's intentions, concerning aesthetic design and cultural adaptation, which underscores the necessity of respecting theoretical boundaries: by allowing the methodology-focused framework to operate within its epistemological field, while establishing interdisciplinary connections with intention-oriented theories.

**Key words:** Translation shifts; John Catford; *Shijing* (*The Book of Songs*); Xu Yuanchong; Poetry translation

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### INTRODUCTION

In the status quo, translation shifts as a linguistic taxonomy of translation has received two main criticisms. On the one hand, some western scholars argued Catford's elaboration of translation shifts is somewhat self-referential because many examples in his book were developed by himself or not derived from actual existing ST. On the other hand, some Chinese scholars believed that translation shifts were almost only suitable to be applied in Indo-European languages. In engaging with the two types of skepticism above and enriching translation shifts, this paper tends to identify and analyze translation shifts in Xu's translation of *Shijing*, which is obviously a non-Indo-European ST and not deliberately created by any scholar for academic purposes.

All the examples in the paper are selected from Yan's (2020) edited book *A Pair of Flying Swallows: The Breathtaking Beauty of Shijing (Chinese to English)* which collects Xu Yuanchong's English translation of *Shijing* (*The Book of Songs*). As a Chinese translator with high prestige, Xu Yuanchong is particularly specialized in literary translation. During his over 60 years career of translation, Xu produced numerous highly-qualified translated works in Chinese, English and French. His translation has a deep impression on readers and scholars especially for his marvelous skills in reproducing the aesthetics of ST.

In this paper, the case analysis of each selected example includes ST (source text), LT (literal translation) and TT (target text produced by Xu Yuanchong). In this way, readers can easily understand the basic meaning of the ST through LT and compare it to TT. After examining shifts from the selected examples, this paper is aimed to

answer two questions:

How to understand the extent to which Catford's translation shifts account for important translation phenomena Xu's C-E translation of *Shijing*?

What are the prospects of the development of translation shifts in literary translation?

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## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

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### 1.1 Theoretical Stereotypes on Translation Shifts

Beginning in the 1950s, scholars started to develop and utilize linguistic approaches to analyze translations and proposed taxonomies to categorize various phenomena in translation. Vinay and Darbelnet carried out a comparative stylistic analysis of French and English (Munday, 2022), and their developed translation strategies and procedures are recognized as essential linguistic models, though the impact of which was wider, its practice was within the scope of Indo-European languages (English-Spanish, French-German, etc.). Notwithstanding Vinay and Darbelnet's model actually describes linguistic changes in translation, the term "translation shifts" was later proposed by Catford in his book *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, where he defined 'translation shifts' as 'departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL' (1965, p.73).

Coincidentally, in 1958, the same year as Vinay and Darbelnet published *Comparative Stylistics of French and English* which described their shift models, Loh Dianyong, a Chinese scholar, published his textbook *Translation: Its Principles and Techniques*, with a somewhat similar list of translation solutions (Pym, 2016). Not many scholars have noticed the relevance until Zhang and Pan (2009) initiated a study to compare Vinay&Darbelnet's and Loh's models, summarizing their differences in writing systems. Zhang and Pan's study undoubtedly enriched the shift-based studies with a Chinese perspective and introduced Loh's model of translation shifts to western world. Inspiring as their paper is, the comparative analysis was mainly conducted at theoretical level, which means Zhang and Pan's findings have not been further examined in practice. Therefore, sharing a similar direction with them, this study continues to investigate existed shifts practice in C-E translation through analyzing Xu's translation of *Shijing*, breaking the nationalist stereotype that Chinese is so different from Western languages that no western-inspired categories can be applied to translation into or from it (Pym, 2016).

### 1.2 Methodological Circularity in Studies of *Shijing* Renditions

A pronounced methodological tendency is revealed in current domestic research on *Shijing* renditions: a large number of scholars have been keen on adopting Xu Yuanchong's 'Three Beauties' Theory as the main

evaluative framework. According to Xu (1984), the 'Three Beauties' refers to beauty in sense, sound and form. In Hu's (2022) comparative analysis of Xu's and Legge's renditions of *Guanju* (a classical poem in *Shijing*), while acknowledging Legge's groundbreaking contribution in intercultural communication, she concludes that Xu's version better embodies translation aesthetics. It is obviously unfair to compare two translator's versions through a metric proposed by one of them. Recent studies demonstrate incremental sophistication in applying this framework. Yao (2024) studies the translation of 博喻 [extensive analogies], a Chinese rhetorical device, in *Shijing*. Through the 'Three Beauties' lens, Yao investigates Xu's strategic prioritization among aesthetic dimensions when negotiating untranslatability, presenting a more critical approach than Hu's comparative study. Likewise, Dong (2023) focuses on translating 叠词 [reduplicated word], a unique Chinese word-format in *Shijing* that inherently integrates aesthetic functions which overlap with Xu's 'Three Beauties'. Therefore, his study ultimately reinforces rather than challenges the theoretical framework's dominance.

While these studies focus on different research objects in the study of *Shijing* renditions, their collective epistemological limitation lies in the tendency to evaluate the translator's output through his self-formulated theoretical constructs. This practice, though deepening the insights of 'Three Beauties' Theory itself, unintentionally establishes an exclusionary paradigm that marginalizes alternative analytical frameworks.

### 1.3 Summary of the Dual Research Gaps

Based on the synthesized analysis above, the research gap is manifested in two distinct aspects. Firstly, as one of the linguistic theoretical frameworks of translation that were mainly proposed and developed by western scholars, Catford's translation shifts are underdeveloped in C-E translation. It is worthwhile to enrich it for systematic adaptation to translating Chinese texts. Secondly, extant Chinese scholarship on *Shijing* translations features predominant reliance on Xu Yuanchong's 'Three Beauties' paradigm, thereby underscoring the necessity for new perspectives to extend the research methodology of translating *Shijing*. This paper uniquely bridges the dual research void through exploring how translation shifts explain Xu's *Shijing* renditions, revealing a dynamic relationship between linguistic approaches and literary reproduction.

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## 2. CASE ANALYSIS: IDENTIFICATION AND EXAMINATION OF TRANSLATION SHIFTS IN *SHIJING* RENDITIONS

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This section adopts an inductive approach, strategically selecting distinctive poems from *Shijing* that feature

representative translation challenges from three aspects: aesthetic representation, cultural untranslatability and stylistic reconfiguration. Translation shifts will be identified in Xu's actual practice for exploring its feasibility in C-E translation, potentiality in connecting with other result-oriented theories (e.g. 'Three Beauties' Theory, *Skopos* Theory), as well as boundaries in explaining translators' decision-making process.

## 2.1 Shift Dynamics for Aesthetic Representation

### 2.1.1 From Chinese Four-Character Structures to English Iambic Trimeter

Example 1:

This example is selected from the poem 陈风·东门之池 [*To a Weaving Maiden*] (Yan, 2020, p.178).

ST: 东门之池，可以沤麻。彼美淑姬，可以晤歌。

TT: At eastern gate we could, Steep hemp in river long. O maiden fair and good, To you I'll sing a song.

LT: By the moat of the eastern gate, One can steep hemp. To that beautiful lady, One can sing a song.

In ST, the last characters of the two lines in the first sentence are 池 (chí) and 麻 (má), while those of the second sentence are 姬 (jī) and 歌 (gē). As the Mandarin pinyin pronunciation symbols shown in the brackets, 池 and 麻 are of the same tone (‘), differing from the tones of 姬 and 歌. Therefore, the end rhyme pattern of ST is quite close to AABB (running rhyme scheme) in English poems. However, in translation practice, rigidly reproducing the AABB pattern may not be the best choice, because some semantic meaning would be sacrificed in this way. That is why Xu adjusted it into alternating rhyme scheme ABAB (i.e. *could,...long* rhymes with *good,...song*) instead, which is still lilting and relatable to western readers. Moreover, in order to reorganize the rhythmical beauty of the four-character pattern in ST, Xu produced the TT with the iambic trimeter (three feet per line). The division of feet is as below:

At eas | tern gate | we could, Steep hemp | in ri | ver  
 long. O mai | den fair | and good, To you | I'll sing | a  
 song.

Structure-shifts, generally involving changes in the grammatical structure of the ST (Baker, 2011), occur twice during the translation process described above. In the first sentence, from LT to TT, the beginning sentence is reconstructed with the reallocation of the word *moat* (or *river*), and the second line 可以沤麻 [(One) can steep hemp] is segmented by a comma to replace its implicit subject *we* (or *one*) to the first line. In the second sentence, *To that beautiful lady*, the first line of LT, is transferred to the second line in TT as *To you*, while its original place is replaced by *O maiden fair and good*. Through this operation of restructuring lines, the rhythmical aesthetics are functionally realized. This exemplifies that translation shifts could be employed as a linguistic structural tool to

relevantly represent aesthetics in C-E translation, though the operation may happen spontaneously rather than out of translator's subjectivity.

### 2.1.2 Co-Occurrence of Multiple Translation Shifts

Still within Example 1, intriguingly, three types of translation-shifts occur simultaneously in the translation from 美淑姬 [beautiful lady] to *maiden fair and good*. Firstly, the Chinese character 美 has its formal correspondence *beautiful* in English, which belongs to the rank of word, but it is shifted to the rank of phrase, i.e. *fair and good* in TT. Therefore, it is a 'word to phrase' unit-shift which is defined as 'departures from formal correspondence in which the translation equivalent of a unit at one rank in the SL is a unit at a different rank in the TL' (Catford, 1965, p.79). Besides, 美 [beautiful] is a modifier while *fair and good* functions as a qualifier. In this sense, it features a class-shift from M to Q, because class-shifts means the translation equivalent of a SL item is translated into a member of a different class in TL (Catford, 1965). As exemplified by Catford in his book, translating *a white house* (English) into *une maison blanche* (French) also features a M-Q class-shift: Although *white* and *blanche* are both adjectives, at the degree of which there is apparently no class-shift, they are different at a further delicate extent that the former operates at M while the latter operates at Q.

Through unit-shift and class-shift, integrated with the added modal particle O, syllables in ST were extended from *beautiful* to *fair and good* in TT, thus forming a line with three feet. In this way, Xu realizes the transformation from Chinese four-character structures to English iambic trimeter, successfully retaining the beauty of rhyme.

The last shift here is extremely close to the intra-system shift. In ancient Chinese, 淑姬 semantically refers to 'the third daughter of one family', which is simplified to *maiden* in TT, becoming more concise and understandable. Catford (1965) defines intra-system shifts as those that happen in cases where SL and TL possess systems which approximately correspond formally as to their constitution, but when translation involves selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system. Although 淑姬 does not have an absolute formal correspondence in English, the long phrase 'the third daughter of one family' presented above is adequate to explain its meaning. However, in actual translation practice, it is simplified into *maiden*, given the risk of redundancy arising from explaining 淑姬 in details, because it may undermine the rhythmic compactness of poem, and further distract readers' attention to its complex cultural content. Xu's strategy of refining the ST's connotation in TT is appreciable.

Another selected example about multiple shifts (structure plus class shifts) for aesthetic purpose is the first sentence in 魏风·伐檀 [*The Woodcutter's Song*] (Yan, 2020, pp.140-141).

Example 2:

ST: 坎坎伐檀兮，寘之河之干兮，河水清且涟漪。

TT: Chop, chop our blows on elm-trees go; On rivershore we pile the wood. The clear and rippling waters flow.

LT: Chop chop we cut the elm-trees, And pile them along the river bank. The water is clean and rippling.

Catford (1965) pointed out that structure-shifts usually entail class-shifts due to the logical dependence of class on structure. In his English-French example discussed before that *a white house* is translated into *une maison blanche*, structure-shifts happen from “modifier+head” to “(modifier)+head+qualifier”, during the process of which, *white*, as a modifier, shifts to qualifier *blanche* to obey French grammatical requirements when the rank above (i.e. structure) changes.

By comparison, in Example 2, the structure shift happens when the non-subject VO phrase 伐檀 [cut elm-trees] is translated into a SP phrase *our blows on elm-trees go*. This “VO-SP” structure-shift entails a “verb-noun” class-shift that the verb 伐 [cut] is translated into a noun *blows*. Via the double shifts operation, Xu proactively makes *go* /əʊ/ rhyme with *flow* /əʊ/, being aesthetic equivalent to 兮 /xi/ and 漪 /yi/. In contrast, the LT does not fulfill this task.

In summary of 2.1, whether it is rebuilding sentence structures to convert Chinese four-character phrases into English iambic verse, or refining words with complex meaning via intra-system adjustment to avoid thick translation that interrupts the poetic patterns, or multiple shifts for representing end rhymes, all of them reflects unique application of translation shifts in poetry translation which serves for aesthetic values. Comparatively, Catford's examples are centred around achieving grammatical and semantic correctness (e.g. *une blanche maison* is incorrect in French without the M-Q class-shift). The case analysis in this section provides preliminary evidence for the fact that Catford's translation shifts are not limited to Indo-European languages. Instead, this framework can fit C-E translation, but translators may not be conscious about their usage of it.

## 2.2 Shifts Skills for ‘Cultural Untranslatability’

‘Cultural untranslatability’ (Catford, 1965, p.99) refers to a situational feature, functionally relevant for the SL text, that is completely absent from the culture of which the TL is a part. This type of untranslatability can be frequently encountered in translating *Shijing*, due to the great divergence between ancient Chinese culture and modern English culture. Though Catford has pointed out that cultural untranslatability is not that ‘absolute’, implying the possibility of finding translation equivalents for cultural-specific words, he does not link translation shifts to the solutions of it and neglects the dependence on contexts when selecting translation equivalents in another culture (Bassnett, 2013). Therefore, 2.2 will discuss

how translation shifts combined with poetry contexts to deal with ‘cultural untranslatability’ from two aspects: translating cultural-specific items, and representing satires in different cultural contexts.

### 2.2.1 Reverse Intra-System Shifts in Translating Cultural-Specific Items

In 2.1.2, Example 2 has discussed a case of double shifts (structure+class shifts) in the beginning sentence of the first stanza in *The Woodcutter's Song*. In this section, Example 3 will continue to focus on the rest sentences of this stanza for exploring the translation of cultural-specific words, a task in which translators are usually confronted with dual challenges: While strengthening foreignization presumably makes the TT appear awkward and obscure, the over-application of domestication may blot out cultural characteristics of the SL to forcibly make it suit the TL, falling into the trap of ‘cultural violence’ where the foreign text is reconstituted in accordance with values and beliefs that preexist in the target culture (Venuti, 2017). Therefore, Xu meticulously balanced preserving cultural connotation and poetry pattern, in the process of which, trails of translation shifts are discovered.

This part introduces a novel concept ‘reverse intra-system shift’ as a counterpoint to conventional intra-system shift. To specify their distinctiveness before analyzing Example 3, the two concepts are explained below:

A. Conventional intra-system shifts: The translator firstly identifies the correspondence of the ST in TL, and then decides the proper translation equivalent in TL to replace the formal correspondence.

B. Reverse intra-system shifts: Considering there is no correspondence of the ST when it is a cultural-specific item, the translator firstly decides a contextual/functional equivalent of the ST in SL, and then identifies the correspondence of the substitution in TL.

Example 3:

ST:

不稼不穡，胡取禾三百廛兮？不狩不猎，胡瞻尔庭有县貍兮？

彼君子兮，不素餐兮！

TT:

How can those who nor reap nor sow, Have three hundred sheaves of corn in their place? How can those who nor hunt nor chase, Have in their courtyard badgers of each race?

Those lords are good, Who do not need work for food!

LT:

Some people do not reap nor sow, Why they can own grains of three hundreds peasant families? They do not hunt, Why badgers are hanged in their yards?

O they are the nobles, So they would never get something for nothing!

In this example, the culture-loaded word 君子 (junzi)

is translated in to *lords*, generally referring to the ruling class. According to Cua (2008), in Confucianism, *junzi* is a paradigmatic individual who sets the tone and quality of the life of ordinary moral agents, and common translation versions of *junzi* are *superior man*, *gentlemen* and *noblemen or person*. In the Confucian context, fully translating the cultural connotation of *junzi* is almost impossible because *junzi* embodies traits such as 仁 (ren: benevolence) and 义 (yi: righteousness) which are also cultural-specific terms and need further explanation. Therefore, this may lead translators to a ‘matryoshka doll-like’ cycle of interpretation. Another illustration of *junzi* lies in the historical context where it refers to aristocrats and rulers in ancient China (Tan, 2016). This explanation is more suitable in the context of this poem, because *A Woodcutter’s Song* criticizes the nobles’ exploitation through the perspective of labouring people from lower classes. In this situation, *junzi* is less semantically related to ‘the moral model in Confucianism’, but more likely stands for the exploiting landlord class in ancient China. Therefore, according to the steps of reverse intra-system shifts explained above, 君子 is firstly shifted to its contextual equivalent 贵族统治阶层 [aristocracy] in SL. Secondly, more than one correspondences of 贵族统治阶层 can be easily found in English, such as *nobles*, *rulers*, and *lords*. Finally, the translator chose *lords*.

Similarly, the character 廛 (chan) is rooted in a term 井田制 (Jingtianzhi), meaning ‘well-field system’ which is a land distribution system in ancient China (notably in Zhou Dynasty). Originally, 廛 refers to the land that a peasant household get under the system of Jingtianzhi. As a Chinese character in agrarian civilization, 廛 obviously does not have its English correspondence in maritime civilization. However, in the specific poetry context, the phrase 禾三百廛 basically delivers the meaning of ‘tons of crops’, stressing that the nobles amassed substantial quantities of grain. Under such circumstance, whether 廛 refers to a farming household or the land they cultivated is not important at all; what is crucial is that it functions as a measure word. In this sense, it is easy to find many words that function the same, such as 堆 [pile], 捆 [sheave], and 袋 [bag]. And these characters apparently have their translation equivalent in English. Ultimately, the word *sheaves* was adopted.

If 廛 is translated into a long phrase like ‘thick translation’, though its rich cultural connotation can be better introduced, the compact rhythm of the poem will be undermined as a sacrifice, and even the poem is not read like a poem any more. Therefore, prioritizing the complete explanation of cultural-specific items is not the most suitable strategy in poetry translation. That is why the translator may need to firstly shift the original complex meaning of the cultural-specific item into a comparatively concise but functionally-equivalent one within the system of SL.

In a nutshell, when translating a cultural-specific word of a SL into a TL, it is commonly hard to find a correspondence directly. In that sense, the reverse application of intra-system shifts is necessary, determining a proper substitute of the cultural-specific word according to the context, semantics, or other factors, and then finding its translation equivalent in TL. This method is still may not be deliberately adopted by Xu Yuanchong, but through observing his techniques, the methodology of reverse intra-system shifts can be formulated. It not only somewhat enriches the theory of intra-system shifts, but also adds evidence to the application of translation shifts in C-E translation.

## 2.2.2 Translating Cultural Differences in Satires: High Context and Low Context

The 2.2.1 section studies how intra-system shifts in SL at the level of words, dealing with cultural-specific words in translating *Shijing*. In this section, 2.2.2 will move on to the level of sentences and examine what roles conventional intra-system shifts play in TL when the cultural-related literary expressions are coped with.

In Example 3, the ST sentence 彼君子兮，不素餐兮 reflects the literary technique of satire, literally complimenting the nobles on their qualities of not gaining something for nothing, whereas implying the cruel fact that they continuously exploited the labouring people for food. The translator could have translated this sentence directly into LT, but he chose a different way of expression in TT, which entails an intra-system shift at sentence-level. As the TT ‘Those lords are good, Who do not need work for food!’ stated, the second half of the sentence straightforwardly criticizes the class of ‘junzi’ who gains food without labouring, in contrast to the implicit expressions in ST. This may be because the translator has considered the divergence between Chinese and Western culture in expression: high-context and low-context (Hall, 1976, p.91):

In high-context (HC) communication, most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit part of the message. In low-context (LC) communication, the majority of information is vested in the explicit code.

The tendency of avoiding explicit criticism in Confucianism may account for the implicit satire in ST. In such cultural context, the sense of satire can be only delivered through the nuanced undertone. By comparison, Xu highlights the strong effect of satire through the semantic as well as logical contradiction between ‘good’ and ‘not need work for food’. This literary strategy is close to Johnathan Swift’s style of satire, which is not only plain enough (Ehrenpreis, 1952), but also features rigour and extravagance (Eilon, 1988). The frank and straightforward expression conforms to the characteristics of western low-context, making the satire more relatable to western readers.

In the original taxonomy of Catford's translation shifts, his main attention is focused on the mechanical linguistic switching process between SL and TL, without touching upon the question that which types of translation shifts may be applied to the conversion of different cultural contexts, especially those related to literary skills. However, in translators' translation practice, shifts at cultural and literary dimensions inevitably occur, for the sake of enabling readers to better understand the cultural-specific context and literary connotation. In the analysis of example 3, the embodiment of Catford's translation shifts is tracked in Xu's translation procedure of realizing cultural and literary equivalence, where these shifts function linguistically as tools, serving for the translator's various purposes. It can be envisioned that taxonomies that explain what shifts may be put into practice in dealing with cultural and literary aspects of translation. In this sense, the absence of intentionality in Catford's translation shifts (Chesterman, 2016) may not necessarily be a problem. Methodologies are methodologies, and the task of exploring translators' subjectivity is for other intention-oriented theories (like the *skopos* theory). The real question is, most of the time, translators do not actively link the 'methodologies/tools (i.e., translation shifts)' to their translation purposes beyond the linguistic level.

### 2.3 Shifts in Stylistic Reconfiguration: Narrative and Lyricism

Besides the 'cultural untranslatability', another distinctive challenge in translating *Shijing* falls upon stylistic reconfiguration. Different from translation equivalence at levels of words and sentences, stylistic equivalence is more abstract, broad and uniquely reflected through sets of stanzas, which means it is more subtle and hard to recreate. This section investigates how two basic stylistic features of poems, i.e. narrative and lyrical styles are manifested in Xu's translation, and to what extent Catford's translation shifts were engaged in the translating process.

#### 2.3.1 Subject Visualization in Narrative Poetry: Level-shifts for Weaving 'Trans-Spatial Dialogue'

Different from the last example *The Woodcutter's Song*, which is a narrative poem through a woodcutter's 'mono-perspective', there are also many narrative poems with 'multi-perspectives' in *Shijing*. Example 4 is selected from *Mutual Longing*, the stanza of which entails a special literary style: a 'trans-spatial dialogue' where the protagonists in the poem communicate with others across time and space. Via switching vivid scenes like a montage-style, this poem shows yearning sentiments between the lovers when they are far apart, extolling the sublimity of romantic devotion.

Example 4:

This example is selected from 周南·采耳 [*Mutual Longing*] (Yan, 2020, p.4).

ST: 采采卷耳，不盈顷筐。嗟我怀人，寔彼周行。  
陟彼崔嵬，我马虺隤。我姑酌彼金罍，维以不永怀。

TT: Wife: "I gather the mouse-ear, With a basket to fill. I miss my husband dear, And leave it empty still."

Man: "The hill I'm climbing up, Has tried and tired my horse. I'll drink my golden cup, So as to gather force."

LT: Gather and gather the mouse-ear, I cannot fill the basket. I miss the one afar, and leave the basket beside the road. I envision that you are climbing the steep mountain, and the horse is tiring out. You raise the golden cup, And relieve the pain in heart.

In the ST, It can be discovered that the identities of protagonists are concealed because the only visualized subject is 我 [I], and readers can hardly tell the exact identity of 'I'. This phenomenon results from the lack of a strict system of pronouns in the Pre-Qin period. For the same reason, various interpretations of the narrative perspectives in this poem have existed for a long time. Fortunately, at least the question that 'who is the protagonist of the beginning part from 采采卷耳 to 寔彼周行' has been reached an academic consensus. Scholars generally believe that the protagonist of this part is a woman who was collecting mouse-ear, but eventually left her basket on the road because she missed her husband so much. However, the narrator of the next part from 陟彼崔嵬 to 维以不永怀 was controversial in studies of *Shijing*. Scholars generally propose two versions of understanding. Some believe that the woman was imagining the scene that her husband was drinking to relieve his pain of missing her, which means the narrator is still 'the woman'. Others interpret this part as an internal monologue of the husband, in other words the narrator is 'the man'. According to Xu's translation, his comprehension was in line with the latter. Therefore, he added two words *Wife* and *Man* to visualize the protagonists that were originally hidden in ST, and transformed the two parts into a dialogue. In this way, the man and the woman were having a conversation that transcended time and space. Their strong lovesickness was vividly expressed thanks to that the visualized subjects make the poem more understandable for western readers.

Level-shifts may decode this translation strategy for the following reasoning. Firstly, 'hidden/implicit subjects' is a very common but unique grammatical phenomenon in ancient Chinese. There is no equivalence at the level of grammar in English for such a phenomenon. A translator has no choice but to shift it to another level in English TT. For example, the ancient Chinese sentence 学而时习之，不亦说乎 [LT: If (you/one) study(ies) and review(s) occasionally, won't (you/he/she) feel(s) enjoyable?] in *The Analects of Confucius* conceals the subject 'you' or 'one'. Amplification is necessary for the LT to adequately deliver the meaning of ST. By analogy, in example 4, Xu makes the added words *Woman* and *Man* (level of word) in TT serve the same function as the hidden subjects

(level of grammar) in ST. This ‘grammar to word’ shift could be explained by Catford’s level-shift: a SL item at one linguistic level is translated into an equivalent at a different level in TL (1965). Obviously, further explaining the shift in literary expression from ‘narration and description’ to ‘dialogue’ is beyond the theory of level-shifts, because it concerns more about the translator’s subjectivity and personal choices.

### 2.3.2 Lyrical Enhancement: Translating ‘Strophic Repetition’

The preceding section has analyzed how a poem with an unique narrative style is translated and what are the functions as well as boundaries of translation shifts reflected in the translator’s personal skills. Besides narrative poetry, lyric poetry features another prevailing style of expressing authentic and heightened feelings in *Shijing*. This section will focus on a frequently observed stylistic device in lyricism: 重章叠句 [Transliteration: Chongzhang Dieju (Strophic Repetition)]. According to Chu and Tan’s (2006) elaboration in their Chinese book 先秦文学史 [Pre-Qin Literary History], as the literary technique widely used in *Shijing*, Chongzhang Dieju features repetition of sentence patterns across stanzas, sometimes with substitution of words at pivotal textual positions.

Example 5 is the complete text of 周南·桃夭 [The Newly-Wed] (Yan, 2020, p.8) which distinctively manifests the occurrence of Chongzhang Dieju.

ST:

桃之夭夭，灼灼其华。之子于归，宜其室家。  
 桃之夭夭，有蕡其实。之子于归，宜其家室。  
 桃之夭夭，其叶蓁蓁。之子于归，宜其家人。

TT:

The peach tree beams so red; How brilliant are its flowers!  
 The maiden’s getting wed; Good for the nuptial bowers.

The peach tree beams so red; How plentiful its fruit!  
 The maiden’s getting wed; She’s the family’s root.

The peach tree beams so red; Its leaves are lush and green.  
 The maiden’s getting wed; On household she’ll be keen.

LT:

The peach tree grows so well; Its flowers are bright and red.  
 The maiden is getting wed, Which benefits the couple.

The peach tree grows so well; Its fruits are rich and full.  
 The maiden is getting wed, Which benefits the household.

The peach tree grows so well; Its leaves are dense and lush.  
 The maiden is getting wed, which benefits the family.

On the surface, this poem eulogizes the vitality and beauty of the peach tree. In the essence, it exalts the bride who is expected to bring prosperity to her family.

It can be obviously observed that the structure 桃之夭夭...之子于归 is a complete Chongzhang Dieju because it is repeated in the three stanzas without any change of characters. However, the structure 宜其XX is regarded as an incomplete Chongzhang Dieju, because the place of ‘XX’ was respectively filled by 室家 [the couple], 家室 [the household], and 家人 [the family] in the three stanzas, though its former two characters 宜其 always remain the same. In ancient Chinese, 室家 semantically emphasizes the unity of a wife and a husband, 家室 refers to a household, including the couple’s close family members who daily live with them, as well as their farmland, etc., and 家人 stands for the whole big family across generations and relates to even distant relatives. The lexical chain of the three words features a conceptual-zooming effect, foreshadowing that the bride will gradually bring happiness to the family. In translation practice, Xu reproduced the complete Chongzhang Dieju according to its original pattern: ‘The peach tree beams so red [桃之夭夭]; ...The maiden’s getting wed [之子于归]’ is strictly repeated in TT for three times without any adjustment. Comparatively, in terms of 宜其XX, Xu’s strategy was more creative, bold and free. He did not follow the original structure of ST but largely transformed it. The three target texts of 宜其XX are of different structures: ‘Good for nuptial bowers [宜其室家]’ is a prepositional phrase; ‘She’s the family’s root [宜其家室]’ is a complete sentence with subject, predicate and object; ‘On household she’ll be keen [宜其家人]’ is an inverse construction in which the adverbial modifier was placed in the beginning of the sentence. Although readers can hardly imagine that the three target texts are actually a strophic repetition in ST when their structures are greatly diversified, this does not necessarily be an unfavorable translation. It is hard to assert that the translator intentionally avoids or unconsciously overlooks the translation of the incomplete Chongzhang Dieju, because it is apparently too easy for him to represent the original structure like what the LT states: ‘Which benefits XX’. In fact, Xu may consider the reproduction of rhymes is more important, so he sacrificed the translation of Chongzhang Dieju for recreating rhythmical pairs: *flowers* and *bowers*, *fruit* and *root*, *green* and *keen*, corresponding to those in ST, i.e., 华 (hua) and 家 (jia), 实 (shi) and 室 (shi), 臻 (zhen) and 人 (ren). This translation decision is mainly explained by the translator’s self-judgement. Translators are always weighing various aspects of translation, and making value-based subtle decisions.

Since translation shifts function as methodology rather than explain translators’ subjective choices, the following analysis will be divided into three steps: A. In the process of realizing the translator’s purposes, whether the occurrence of translation shifts can be detected, and what are they? B. How to compare Xu’s translation of complete and incomplete Chongzhang Dieju from the perspective

of translation shifts? C. What are the interrelationships among translation shifts, Chongzhang Dieju and lyrical effect?

Firstly, the existence of translation shifts can be discovered in example 5. Some cases are exemplified below:

(1) The shift from 宜 [benefit] to *Good for* represents a 'word (verb) to (prepositional) phrase' unit shift.

(2) The transition from 室家 to *nuptial bowers* features an intra-system shift, because the former has its direct translation equivalent 'couple' in TL, but the translator still choose another expression *nuptial bowers*.

(3) A 'phrase to sentence' unit shift happens between the Chinese phrase 宜其室家 and the English sentence *She's the family's root*.

Secondly, from the angle of translation shifts, it is apparent that in dealing with the complete Chongzhang Dieju, few tracks of translation shifts are uncovered, because the translator mainly follows the original structures to achieve the 'beauty of form'. Contrary to this, various translation shifts take place when the translator tends to significantly alter the structure in translating the incomplete ones. However, the translator's motivation of applying different translation shifts is still unlikely to be generalized. For example, the case (1) and (3) above may not entail any specific incentive of translation. They may simply happen naturally at the linguistic level when Xu was recreating the rhythmical pattern. While the case (2) possibly involves the intention to cater to TL readers' reception at the cultural level: In western culture, the bowers are not only common places for holding wedding ceremonies, but also the imagery of courtship in medieval chivalry literature. Therefore, the choice 'nuptial bowers' is more culture-friendly than 'couple'.

Thirdly, based on the analysis above, it has to be admitted that translation shifts can not directly and fully interpret the translation for the literary skill of Chongzhang Dieju, but the existence of translation shifts is real. When the translator adopts various strategies to translate different types of Chongzhang Dieju, translation shifts do not explain the mechanism of making certain choices, but they do characterize what the exact translating process looks like and the subtle motivation for some phases of the process. Moreover, the relationship between Chongzhang Dieju and lyrical effect features the former realizes and enhances the latter through repetitive structures that urge for strong emotions. When the translator faithfully reproduces the original pattern of Chongzhang Dieju mainly through 'word for word' translation (e.g. 桃之夭夭...之子于归), the involvement of translation shifts is not distinctive. By comparison, when the translator remarkably adjusts the structure of ST through free translation (e.g. 宜其XX), translation shifts occur frequently while the lyrical effect is somewhat

retained by maintaining the semantic and rhythmical resemblance. Be that as it may, accurately evaluating the degree of the represented lyrical effect is yet to be feasible because it cannot be quantified so far.

## CONCLUSION

This study identifies and examines the occurrence of translation shifts in Xu Yuanchong's *Shijing* renditions through case analysis from three aspects: aesthetic representation, cultural adaptation and stylistic reconfiguration. In the conclusion part, the two central questions of this paper proposed in the introduction are going to be answered:

A. How to understand the extent to which Catford's translation shifts account for important translation phenomena Xu's C-E translation of *Shijing*?

B. What are the prospects of the development of translation shifts in literary translation?

First and foremost, it turns out that the implementation of Catford's translation shifts is not restricted to Indo-European languages, otherwise his theory cannot withstand the test of analyzing the C-E *Shijing* translation in this paper. Therefore, despite the linguistic taxonomy appears objective and mechanical, which still reveal new insights into interacting with emotive and poetic literary texts.

Besides, though no evidence indicates that Xu intentionally refers to and adopts Catford's translation shifts in his translation, his translation practices inevitably involve operations that close to or can be totally explained by some types of translation shifts. Differing from Catford's elaboration in his book that concentrates on the basic linguistic functions of translation shifts, those shifts unveiled in Xu's work serve for more complex and abstract purposes, such as aesthetic, literary, cultural and stylistic equivalence. Nevertheless, neither Catford nor Xu has built links between the methodological property of translation shifts and the potential higher translation tasks it may be applied to.

Moreover, contrary to that Catford exemplifies each type of translation shift separately in his book, this paper discovers overlaps of translation shifts in Xu's translation of *Shijing* (e.g., multiple shifts in 2.1.2 and the density of shifts in 2.3.2), which reveals that the interactions of different types of shifts are more flexible and multifaceted in authentic translation scenarios.

Secondly, there should be no shame in admitting the fact that translation shifts may not shed light on translators' highly subjective skills. Proposed by Catford, the taxonomy of translation shifts is originally targeted on translation process, rather than aims. On the one hand, respecting the nature of translation shifts and relevant theoretical boundaries is essential. Methodology is methodology, and it does not have to be all-powerful. On

the other hand, what may be meaningful lies in integrating methodology-oriented theories with those purpose-oriented theories (e.g. The *Skopos* Theory, The 'Three Beauties' Theory, etc.) to break closed-loops in theoretical frameworks.

Relevant future research may be explored from three perspectives. Firstly, the taxonomy of translation-shifts could be enriched to transcend the linguistic level, through developing innovative concepts like style-shifts that explain translation between two different literary expressions (e.g. from Chinese four-character structures to English iambic patterns; from monologue to dialogue), or culture-shifts that deal with the compromises between two cultural contexts. Secondly, translation shifts, as methodology, have the potential to be matched with instructive theories to overcome more complex translation challenges. Lastly, it is meaningful to apply lexical frequency analysis and text measurement as empirical assistance to further evaluate the status of translation shifts in literary translation.

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