Poetry Translation and Creative Misreading—on Gopal Sukhu's English Rendering of "Lisao"

Qimin Chen[1]

[1] Wuhan Textile University, Wuhan, China

Correspondence: Qimin Chen, Wuhan Textile University, Wuhan, China.

Abstract

This article aims to analyze Gopal Sukhu's singular misreading of the Chinese poem "Lisao" in his English translation, examine the reasons and types of his misreading, and explore the wider implications of misreading for literary translation. Misreading is integral to poem translation due to the semiotic nature of language, the aesthetic appeal of poetry, the idiosyncrasy of translator, and the communicative purpose of translation. It is found that in his translation of "Lisao", Sukhu makes deliberate misreading in four dimensions, namely, retelling the allegorical story, turning ambiguity into clarity, making adaptation on rhetoric devices, and creating textual cohesion. Sukhu's creative misreading endows a renewed poetic value to the original.

Keywords: misreading, poetry translation, "Lisao", Gopal Sukhu

1. Introduction

"Lisao 離騷", written by the eminent poet Qu Yuan 屈原 of the State Chu in the Warring Period, is a most influential work in the classical Chinese poetry anthology *Chuci* 楚辭. The poem enjoys a high reputation in Chinese literary history for cultivating novel poetic style and systematic symbolic expressions, and it "virtually" invented "a completely new sort of poetry out of an old oral tradition" (Hawkes, 1985, p. 68).

"Lisao" never fails to arouse people's desire of rereading, and it has been interpreted by numerous poem-lovers, either intra- or inter-linguistically. The earliest English translation of "Lisao" was presented by E. H. Parker in 1879. Since then, study and translation on works of *Chuci* have been well under way. Dedicated sinologists, such as Legge, Payne, Hawkes, Owen, and Hinton, produced their English versions of "Lisao" successively (Feng, 2017). In 2017, professor Gopal Sukhu from the City University of New York published his idiosyncratic translation of *Chuci*, with Zhu Xi's Song-dynasty edition as its basis. This translation is "impressive" in reconstructing "an adequate historico-cultural context of the ST" and makes "a lasting contribution to the dissemination and exchange of world cultures" (Tian, et al., 2022).

A translated poem is inevitably the misreading of the original, since classics "must always signify more than is needed by any one interpreter or any one generation of interpreters" (Lianeri & Zajko, 2008, p. 5), and later poets would necessarily misread and "swerve from the work of their precursors" (Mileur, 1998). Misreading brings about significance shifts from the original text, and "translation critics should not take a simplistic and arbitrary negative attitude towards significance shifts" (Wang, 2004, p. 117). Therefore, this article tries to examine the significance shifts in Sukhu's rendering of "Lisao", analyze the types, reasons and effects of creative misreading in his translation, and to explore the wider implications of misreading for literary translation.

2. Misreading and Poetry Translation

The prefix "mis-" means "wrong" or "bad" in the Oxford dictionary, and the word "misreading" is usually considered a deviation from the true or orthodox meaning of a text, tantamount to pejorative terms like "bad reading" or "erroneous interpretation". However, the renowned critic Harrod Bloom champions misreading as necessary and positive to poem creation.

The temporal relationship between reader and text predetermines misreading in understanding, for "every act of reading is an exercise in belatedness, yet every such act is also defensive, and as defense it makes of interpretation a necessary misprision" (Bloom, 1975). Like a sign in a semiotic system, "texts don't have meanings, except in their relations to other texts, so that there is something uneasily dialectical about literary meaning" (Bloom, 1975), and a text is potentially available for different understandings. By means of

misreading, later writers deliberately revise their precursors to surpass tradition and reform canon (Bloom, 1973). In a sense, misreading and tradition dialectically highlight each other, and "tradition becomes an image of the heights by being driven down to the depths, or of the depths by being raised to the heights" (Bloom, 1975).

In brief, misreading consists in singular reading or creative writing on a former text, reflecting the originality of the reader, and bringing the revival of literary classics. Apropos of translation, its decoding and recoding cannot be devoid of deviation from the original, and "no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original" (Benjamin, 2004, p. 77). Especially for poetry, where "there is a more-than-usually acute ambivalence", misreading counts as "the normal mode of poetic history" (Bloom, 1975). Poem translation goes hand in hand with misreading for reasons as follows.

Firstly, the semiotic nature of language gives rise to the possibility of misreading in translation. Language is a system of signs, and the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, so "on any and every level", the meaning of language depends on "the culture of the language community" (Nida, 1994, p. 1). Considering the uniqueness of culture, signs of two languages rarely achieve semantic correspondence completely, and semantic intersection, inclusion or even vacancy are more often the cases for them. "Based on interpretations that invariably give rise to variations", translation "entails rewriting accompanied by an act of repossession and arrogation" (Sun, 2019), and information loss and change are unavoidable in the process. The translator usually "displaces, alters, and hybridizes the original" in the process of message "resignification" (Xie, 2007), and misreading is only natural and legitimate when two languages and cultures are involved.

Secondly, the aesthetic appeal of poetry makes misreading necessary in translation. The beauty of poetry is embedded in its open structure and particular form, which challenges the translation from two aspects. On one hand, "the openness of a poem is ground for generating new singular articulations" (Xie, 2011); on the other hand, different languages vary in the modes of aesthetic expression due to innate cultural disparities. Robert Frost takes poetry as "which is lost out of both prose and verse in translation" (Richard & Richardson, 1995, p. 856), hence the translator needs to break the linguistic limitation of the original poem, and reconcile form and meaning creatively for a similar aesthetic appeal. A translation may look quite different from its original, but it is not necessarily a wrong or inferior rendering, if we admit the unavoidable loss of message and the priority of literariness in poem translation.

Thirdly, the idiosyncrasy of the translator increases the chance of misreading in translation. Idiosyncrasy is a behavioral attribute peculiar to an individual, resulting from personal experiences, habitus, ideologies, and other cultural influences. In translation, the original poem only makes sense when being decoded and recoded by the translator, and the meaning of the original hinges on the psychological reaction of the translator. In poetry reading, the translator copes with meaning gaps or indeterminacies by utilizing established gestalt structures in his mind, displaying "the tendency toward a psychologically comfortable completion or closure" (Dubenko & Golubovska, 2022). Since the translator's psychological gestalt structure hardly coincides with that of the author, he naturally forms his idiosyncratic understanding on the original. Besides, the translator tends to change the original by replacing complexity or strangeness with simple or regular expressions (Koffka, 1935; Wertheimer, 1923), making his translation a transformation with personal preferences.

Fourthly, the communicative purpose of translation necessitates misreading in rewriting. Translation as a means of communication concerns both the reception and sending of message. "The process of translating a poem is one of negotiation between poet, translator, and reader" (Xie, 2011), and the translator has to adopt a dialogic and reconciling manner to bridge the poet and the reader. Cultural factors, such as translation patronage, social ideologies, and dominant poetics (Lefevere, 2001), influence the sending and receiving of textual information, causing (un)intentional deflections in translation. In addition, to deal with cultural incommensurability, the translator often turns to strategies like transliteration, annotation, explanation, replacing, omission, or even deletion. Accordingly, information distortion, loss or compensation takes place, as a justifiable misreading for cross-cultural communication.

3. A Case Study on Sukhu's Translation of "Lisao"

"Lisao" was written by Qu Yuan when he was alienated from the King of Chu, though the exact year of composition is still controversial. Recognized as highly autobiographical, this poem describes the life experience of its poetic persona, including his birth, self-cultivation, ambition, rejection by the king, frustration in beauty pursuing, and final departure. Covering a total length of 373 sentences, "Lisao" is acclaimed for its beautiful rhythm and rhyme, novel poetic form, touching narrating tone, and profound artistic conception.

Sukhu's "Leaving My Troubles" is a distinctive and enlightening translation of "Lisao", showcasing the insight of the translator and creative misreading in poetry translation. As "boundless energy can stem from

mistranslation" (Sun, 2019), this article makes a case study on Sukhu's version of "Lisao" by analyzing types, reasons and effects of misreading in his translation.

3.1 Misreading on the Poetic Story

Due to allegorical narration, "Lisao" is most cryptic in meaning and structure. Since the Han Dynasties, numerous scholars have been trying to clarify its storyline and intention. Though varying in their discussion on textual details, scholars generally interpret "Lisao" with reference to the life and character of its poet Qu Yuan, highlighting the symbolic and autobiographical color of the poem. "In China, finding the Qu Yuan story in the 'Lisao' and other works in the *Chuci* is thought to be simply a matter of proper interpretation" (Sukhu, 2012, p. 4). Along this tradition, it is widely acknowledged that "Lisao" tells of the frustrated life experience and political pursuit of the poetic persona (figuratively the poet), in a benighted age, who finally decided to take off (figuratively drown himself), in order to maintain his integrity and fortitude.

"The interrelations of texts and authors [and contexts] in a literary history are not 'embedded in the historical process […] but are constructed by the literary historian" (Perkins, 1992, p. 67). Therefore, Sukhu tries to deconstruct the historically constructed context and take a different route to the understanding of "Lisao". In Sukhu's opinion, most traditional interpretations conflate the poetic persona with the author, make no distinction "between metaphor and metaphrand, allegory and referent, what is said and what is meant". Those exegeses often bear profound political, cultural or ideological motives of their times, which is respectable by their historical standards, but may prevent "the poetic persona from speaking as him- or herself" and make the poem "rhetorically convoluted and barely comprehensible" (2017, p. 27). Sukhu emphasizes that "Lisao" has its poetic significance as an independent text, and its allegorical form of writing should be reflected properly in translation.

Therefore, Sukhu makes a purposeful misreading on the storyline of "Lisao". Inspired by the account of Guoyu 國語 as well as a few distinctive studies since the Song Dynasty, Sukhu describes the poetic content in a very different way:

> "The story, in outline, is about a spirit, named True Norm, who descends from the sky attracted by the fragrances of flowers and herbs and desiring to be with the one who cultivates and wears them. That person is a ruler of a shaman kingdom named Spirit Adorned. In order to have a proper relationship with the shaman ruler, the spirit must inhabit the body of a female shaman. As their love affair proceeds, Spirit Adorned's taste in personal adornment changes and he turns to the cultivation of foul-smelling weeds to wear. He also rejects True Norm. The fragrance-loving spirit now merged with the fragrance-loving shaman feels abandoned and hurt but cannot decide whether to leave or not. After much hesitation and consultation with diviners, however, the spirit-shaman decides to leave the shaman kingdom and departs traveling through the sky in a state of triumph mixed with sorrow" (2017, p. 28).

This version of story may sound extraordinary to those familiar with traditional "Lisao" exegeses, yet Sukhu argues, "Clearly this is not the story of Qu Yuan that appears in the Shiji. It is a far more magical one. Yet it is not an entirely different story" (2017, p. 28). The translator doesn't deny the relevance between Qu Yuan's life and "Lisao" story, but he tries to present the poem as an allegorical one and maintain the integrity of the storyline in it. This allegorical story begins with four poem lines describing the birth and genealogy of the persona.

Example 1:

> 1) 帝高陽之苗裔兮，   I am latter day kin of the god-lord Gaoyang,
>
> 2) 朕皇考曰伯庸。   My late father, august shade, was the Elder Rong.
>
> 3) 攝提貞於孟陬兮，   When the Grip Stars pointed at the first moon of spring,
>
> 4) 惟庚寅吾以降。   On the gengyin day, I descended from the sky (Sukhu, 2017, p. 35).

To get across to readers the persona's mystic birth as an immortal spirit, Sukhu deals with cultural terms like "高阳" "伯庸" "摄提" "孟陬" "庚寅" and the verb "降" in his peculiar way.

The lines 1 & 2 introduce the celestial lineage of the poetic persona. The names of his first ancestor "高陽" and his father "伯庸" are both transliterated, but in a slightly different way: the former being its exact Chinese pronunciation "Gaoyang", while the latter being a combination of meaning and pronunciation—"Elder Rong", rather than a direct transliteration. In his endnotes, Sukhu (2017) explains the reason for rendering the father's name in this way: Zhu Rong 祝融 is the title of fire governor appointed by the King Di Ku 帝嚳. When Zhu Rong was executed by Di Ku for a failed mission, his title was transferred to his younger brother, thus there were two Zhu Rong successively. Since "伯" means "the eldest brother" in Chinese and "Yong 庸" is another way of writing "Rong 融" in pre-Qin texts, "伯庸" can be translated as "Elder Rong".

Still in the lines 1 & 2, "帝" (literally "lord", either celestial or earthly) and "皇考" (literally "great late father") are rendered respectively into "god-lord" and "My late father, august shade", clearly extending their literal meanings. The words "god" and "shade" are added intentionally to declare the supernatural quality in the persona's genealogy.

The lines 3 & 4 talk about the birth of the persona, involving ancient Chinese terms marking time—"摄提" "孟 陬" "庚寅", also translated flexibly. On the term "摄提", there are two major opinions on its meaning: one, represented by the Han scholar Wang Yi 王逸, holds that the term is the abbreviation of "摄提格", signifying the first year of the ancient duodenary Jupiter-cycle years, or a year of "yin 寅"; the other, represented by Zhu Xi of the Song Dynasty, holds that "摄提" is the name of a constellation, which was used by ancient people to indicate the beginning of spring in a calendar year (Hawkes, 1985). Sukhu takes "摄提" as the name of a constellation and invents an English name "Grip Stars" for it, with the word "grip" representing the literal meaning of "摄提".

To avoid burdening readers with excessive proper names in one line, the term "孟陬" is paraphrased into a common expression "the first moon of spring", making the sentence clear and smooth. While for the term "庚 寅", Sukhu translates it into "gengyin day", adding a word "day" to the pronunciation "gengyin", balancing the exoticism of term and the transparency of basic meaning.

For the verb "降" in the line 4, Sukhu also gives an unconventional interpretation. Wang Yi holds that "降" means "to be born", and this poem line tells that the persona (or Qu Yuan) was born on an auspicious day (Hong, 1983). This viewpoint seldom stirs up controversy among readers and scholars, since "Lisao" is generally accepted as an autobiographical poem. However, inspired by a few dissentient *Chuci* scholars (like Li Chenyu 李 陳玉, Jiang Liangfu 姜亮夫, Dong Chuping 董楚平) and the manuscripts of Guodian tomb bamboo slips, Sukhu (2012) puts forward: in the pre-Qin times, the verb "降" was used only to describe spirit or things descending from the heaven; while to depict human birth, the verb "生" was applied. Hence Sukhu translates "降" into "descended from the sky", clearly reminding the reader of the immortal identity of the persona.

To make the storyline consistent, Sukhu pays attention to details in translation. For instance, the last line of "Lisao" was rendered to indicate the persona's determination to ascend back to heaven, echoing the persona's descent in the very beginning.

The last line of the poem "吾將從彭咸之所居" is translated into "I will follow Peng and Xian, and go where they dwell". In the original, the name "彭咸" arouses different interpretations from readers. Following Liu Xiang 劉向, Wang Yi explains Peng Xian as the name of an upright minister in the Shang Dynasty, who chose to drown himself when the king trusted him no more. Therefore, the last poem line is a euphemistic expression that the persona intends to commit suicide, just like Qu Yuan. However, supported by the studies of modern scholars like Gu Jiegang 顧詰剛 and Guo Moruo 郭沫若, Sukhu (2017) holds that "彭咸" should be an abbreviation of two names, "巫彭[Shaman Peng]" and "巫咸[Shaman Xian]", who resided in the western holy mountain and are still worshipped as shaman founders today in some places. Thus, Sukhu translates "彭咸" into "Peng and Xian", indicating that the poetic persona is leaving for the celestial abode of two shaman ancestors, rather than for death. And by suggesting the persona's ascent back to heaven in the last line, the allegorical story acquires a structure integrity and a plot symmetry in its own right.

3.2 Misreading on Ambiguous Expressions

The one-character concept of Chinese language allows arbitrary signification and free collocation in classical Chinese poems, and traditional Chinese poetics favors implicit expression and ambiguous beauty per se. Therefore, the literary criticism "詩無達詁 [A poem cannot be interpreted exactly]" has been widely recognized in China for its emphasis on the dynamic nature of poem reading.

In "Lisao", it is not rare for a word to have multiple referents or grammatical functions. "There are few more difficult poems in the Chinese language, and few more controversial. Complicating its unprecedented use of imagery is an almost perversely playful use of language. It is full of puns and double meanings, most of which are impossible to translate" (Sukhu, 2017, p. 25). To convey the literariness of poetry, poetic ambiguities could be preserved if possible. But in the translation of "Lisao", most ambiguities have to be transformed into explicit and clear English, considering expression habit and reception psychology.

The first ambiguity Sukhu must deal with is the title of the poem. The title "離騷" is a polysemous collocation of two Chinese characters, which can be understood as two separate words, or an indivisible binding word, leading to a variety of interpretations on its connotation.

Three major opinions were proposed by the Han scholars: The first, put forward by Wang Yi, holds that "離" means "parting" as an adjective, "騷" means "sorrow", and together they forms a noun phrase "the parting

sorrow". The second, supported by Sima Qian and Ban Gu, sees the title as a verb-object phrase "encounter the sorrow", where "離" means "encounter", and "騷" is still the noun "sorrow". The third one, advocated by Yang Xiong, thinks that "離騷" should be read as a disyllabic noun, whose pronunciation is similar to that of "牢騷", meaning wholly as "complaint" (Lu, 1957, p. 275).

Sukhu admits that "all these readings are appropriate to the content of the poem and seem to have been intended" (2017, p. 25), but he has to turn ambiguity into transparency, choosing a clear expression for the English Title. Intending to read "Lisao" as an independent text "without the filter of Han politics and ideology", Sukhu interprets the title in a distinctive manner, which is translated into "Leaving My Troubles". This English title is specific and clarified, echoing the end of the poetic story that the persona decides to leave behind his troubles and sorrows.

Example 2:

1) 皇天無私阿兮，	The August Heavens have no favorites.
2) 覽民德焉錯輔。	Where they see someone of virtue there they send their help.
3) 夫維聖哲以茂行兮，	Only the sagely and wise strive to do likewise,
4) 苟得用此下土。	If they win sway over these lands below (Sukhu, 2017, p. 40).

These four lines are the persona's summary on the rise-and-fall rule of states after he reviews different stories of kings in the history.

In the lines 1, Sukhu's translation of the Chinese character "天" is noteworthy, reminding us the unnoticeable ambiguity on this culture-loaded word. As an analytic language, Classical Chinese doesn't have the plural marker of noun, and the number sense of noun is implicit, judged by the reader according to the context. In Chinese, "天" can be a cosmological constituent, being plural like in the word "九天 [Nine Heavens]"; or can represent the supreme force of universe, without a concrete image, and being singular like in the word "天道 [Way of Heaven]"; or can be a humanlike figure with the power of managing the universe, being either singular or plural, like in "天助我也 [Heaven(s) is/are with me]". Sukhu chooses to translate "皇天" into "August Heavens" in the line 1, and uses "they" to refer to the plural concept "皇天" in the line 2. This special choice of word echoes in details with the beginning part of the poem, which tells that the persona is intentionally sent down by these august heavens.

The character "苟" in the line 4 is also ambiguous, and two different explanations lead to different logical relationships between the line 3 and 4. According to scholars like Wang Yi, Zhu Xi and Wang Fuzhi, "苟" should be read as "故(therefore)" or "乃(so)" (You, 1982, p. 232), and the line 3 is the condition for the result in the line 4. Therefore, "夫維聖哲以茂行兮,苟得用此下土" is traditionally interpreted as "only when the kings of sagely wisdom behave in extremely virtuous way, could they maintain the heaven-sent power and rule the world".

But Sukhu settles the meaning of 苟 down to "if", taking the line 4 as an conditional adverbial following the main clause of the line 3. Besides, he regards "茂" in the line 3 as a verb and translates it into "strive to (do)", very different from Wang Yi's explanation—"virtuous". And in his endnote, Sukhu explains in details that he bases his interpretation on the ideas of the Qing scholars like Wang Bangcai, Dai Zhen and Wu Shishang (2017, p. 53).

By adding endnotes, Sukhu justifies his own translation as well as offers readers a comprehensive framework of information. These endnotes, as important paratexts of translation, "can help to promote a better understanding of the source culture" and "provide an effective platform for the reconstruction of cultural identity" (Luo & Zhang, 2018).

3.3 Misreading for Rhetoric Appeal

Poetry is the artistic union of form and meaning, and the aesthetic function is of primary importance to poetry (Jakobson, 1960). The translation of a poem should never ignore the rhetoric beauty produced by the peculiar arrangement of language.

"Lisao" is rhetorically beautiful both in sound and in words, which contributes to its profound poetic connotation and magnificent artistic conception. However, too often the rhetoric aspect has to be forsaken in the poem translation, because target language can barely maintain the specific union of form and meaning in the original. Sukhu doesn't scrape a rhetoric correspondence between lower linguistic units in his translation, but tries to convey the poetic beauty from a global textual level. That is, the translator pays more attention to the literary charm of the target poem in its own right. When it is difficult to manifest the original rhetoric style directly, he changes forms of expression, and compensates the lost aesthetic effects by using alternative rhetoric devices in

suitable places.

Example 3:

1) 惟夫黨人之偷樂兮，	Consider the fleeting pleasures this cabal enjoys,
2) 路幽昧以險隘。	on their dark and dangerously narrow road.
3) 豈余身之憚殃兮，	Do I quail at the calamity they've set there for me?
4) 恐皇輿之敗績。	No. That they will overturn your godly chariot—that I fear.
5) 忽奔走以先後兮，	Around it I would run, eye on the road, front and rear,
6) 及前王之踵武。	Till it rolled in the tracks of the ancient kings,
7) 荃不查余之中情兮，	But, Lure Leaf, you do not look to see what I harbor within,
8) 反信讒而齌怒。	No, trusting slander instead you boil in sudden rage (Sukhu, 2017, p. 36).

These eight lines describe how the persona spares no efforts to lead the king to the right path of governing, only to incur the anger of the king, who gives a ready ear to the slanderous cabal. To express the rhetoric appeal of the original text, Sukhu makes creative misreading on three aspects, i.e. the poetic sound, the image in metaphor, and the tone of speaking.

Firstly, Sukhu maintains a similar poetic rhythm to the original but changes its major rhyme pattern, using plenty alliteration to recover the musicality lost with the ridding of end rhymes.

As for the Chinese "Lisao", the sound beauty mainly derives from its novel poetic rhythm and regular end rhymes. By introducing to poetry the features of Chu dialect, "Lisao" changes the mainstream poetic form with irregular poem lines, giving the poet freer space to express his feelings with sprung rhythm. At the same time, regularity still exists among irregularity for the poem to be catchy and recitable, through the constant use of the syntactic expletive Xi 兮 in the end of each odd-numbered line as well as the rhyming words in the end of each even-numbered line.

In sound rhetoric, Sukhu's takes into account both the source text and target readers, and his translation embodies what Bassnett describes as "in-betweenness" (2002, p. 3). The translated lines follow the original in being flexible in sentence lengths, presenting a natural sprung rhythm of poem lines. And Sukhu tries not to sacrifice the meaning for form beauty, or distort expression for end rhyme. The reader may find occasional end rhymes in Example 3, such as "fear" in the line 4 rhyming "rear" in the line 5, but more often the translator makes no attempts to preserve end rhymes. However, Sukhu makes up for the lost melodiousness with frequent use of alliterated words, such as "consider" and "cabal" (in the line 1), "dark" and "dangerously" (in the line 2), "quail" and "calamity" (in the line 3), "run" "road" and "rear" (in the line 5), "lure" and "leaf" (in the line 7), "slander" and "sudden" (in the line 8). In a different manner, Sukhu highlights the existence of sound beauty in "Lisao", and endows the translation with independent literariness.

Secondly, Sukhu handles the metaphorical images of the original flexibly, considering comprehensively their textual significance in the original and their reception in the target culture.

One prominent feature of "Lisao" is the systematic use of metaphorical images, such as the image lists of fragrant flora. Qu Yuan pushed symbolism and suggestiveness to a further important position in Chinese poetics. Sukhu translates major images of the original literally if they could be well accepted in the targe culture; if not, he replaces original images with ones of different referents. Sometime, he adds new images to the poem to enhance the rhetoric effects of translation.

In Example 3, there are two kinds of metaphorical images: journey and flora. As of the former kind, the "路 [road]" in the line 2, "輿[chariot]" in the line 4 and "踵武[track]" in the line 6 are major images which compare the process of governing kingdom to a journey of driving a chariot. Sukhu presents these three images directly to the readers through literal translation, because comparing life experiences to a journey is common in both Chinese and English, and these images are not culturally specific. Then the line 5 mainly describes the action of the persona, with no image of noun in the original, but Sukhu uses the word "road" again in the translation, which is an obvious supplement to the series of journey image, aiming to increase the rhetoric vividness and cohesion.

Sweet flora are important images symbolizing virtuous people, such as "荃" in the line 7. "荃" is used here as a respectful reference to the persona's King. This plant is culturally unique, and general readers do not know what kind of plant "荃" is except that it is a fragrant herb. Sukhu invents an English term to represent the plant "荃" -- "Lure Leaf", and he explains that "荃" is "a fragrant herb used as fish bait, i.e., a deceptive enticement". Sukhu's

novel translation implicitly suggests the cheating quality of the plant (or the King) and that the persona is "the victim of an erotic bait-and-switch maneuver" (Sukhu, 2012, p. 85). This free translation of image words makes the metaphor more intelligible and acceptable.

Thirdly, the translator adapts properly the sentence types and speaking tones of the original lines, in order to strengthen the emotional appeal in the translation.

Compared with general classical Chinese poems, "Lisao" may seem quite straightforward in feeling expressing, but to modern readers, it is still too restrained and euphemistic in diction. Besides, though punctuation enters modern versions of "Lisao", virtually only comma and period are used, which couldn't help readers much in grasping poetic emotions and tones. In Example 3, Sukhu varies the sentence types and uses punctuation marks properly in his translation, so as to augment the rhetorical force of the translation and increase its emotional appeal for target readers.

The first two lines "惟夫黨人之偷樂兮，路幽昧以險隘" describe the perilous political situation the persona is facing, but his deploring tone is diluted in the declarative sentence. However, the translation "Consider the fleeting pleasures this cabal enjoys, on their dark and dangerously narrow road." changes the sentence type from declarative into imperative. When this sentence begins directly with a verb, it conveys a stronger anger and a clearer condemnation.

The lines 3 & 4 "豈余身之憚殃兮，恐皇輿之敗績" are a rhetoric question and an answer, though they end with a comma and a period in the original. The translation displays the sentence types in a clearer way – the line 3 begins with the auxiliary verb "do" and ends with a question mark; and the line 4 adds an exclamation "no" in the beginning, marking itself as an answer.

The latter half of line 4 adopts an inversion by putting the object clause in the front and the subject-verb part in the end, achieving a special rhetoric effect. In this violation of normal syntax, the end word "fear" of the line 4 could rhyme with the end word "rear" of the line 5, improving the sound beauty of translation; meanwhile, the object clause– "they will overturn your godly chariot", is pushed to the foreground of this line, further accentuating the selfless devotion of the persona to his king.

The lines 7 & 8 talk about the unfair treatment that the persona gets from the king. The original lines are the monologue of the persona expressing his grievance, without a direct listener. Sukhu turns his monologue into a dialogue, and involves the King as his direct addressee by adding the second personal pronoun "you" into this dialogue. Now the speaker seems to be charging his King face to face, and his suffering becomes more explicit in the accusation. Then Sukhu uses an exclamation "No" to lead the line 8, redoubling the disappointed tone of the speaker.

3.4 Misreading for Textual Cohesion

In English, the concept of cohesion is so important because it "accounts for the essential semantic relations whereby any passage of speech or writing is enabled to function as text" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 13). However, this is not the case with Chinese writing. Classical Chinese poems can be very coherent in meaning, but lacking in cohesion and connection on the linguistic level.

In "Lisao", it is very common to come across poem lines without subject, or verbs, or conjunctions, waiting for the readers to participate in its meaning construction and sort out inter-sentential logic. Out of his individual understanding, Sukhu strengthens the textual connection in the translation through various cohesive means, including supplementing syntactic constituents for a poem line, adding connectives between neighboring lines, and creating textual echo between far separated lines.

Example 4:

1) 欲從靈氛之吉占兮，	I wanted to follow Ling Fen's auspicious oracle,
2) 心猶豫而狐疑。	But my heart swithered in doubt.
3) 巫咸將夕降兮，	Shaman Xian was bound to descend that evening,
4) 懷椒糈而要之。	So I welcomed her with crossed lapels stuff ed with pepper and rice.
5) 百神翳其備降兮，	Her spirit crowd, like a vast canopy, descended over us,
6) 九疑繽其並迎。	As the spirits of Nine Doubts thronged to welcome her.
7) 皇剡剡其揚靈兮，	The Majestic One manifesting her power in blazing light,
8) 告余以吉故。	Told me why the oracle was auspicious: (Sukhu, 2017, p. 44).

These eight poem lines follows a description on an auspicious oracle given by the shaman Ling Fen 靈氛, to whom the persona asks opinion about leaving or staying. Then these lines continue to tell of the persona's state of mind and his consequent actions after that inquiry. The oracle of Ling Fen encourages the persona to leave his home state, but still in hesitation, the persona turns to Shaman Xian 巫咸 for a second opinion. The original describes the whole event in brief words, and omit details considered inferable to Chinese readers, making the narration vague in minutia if translated word-for-word. To increase the cohesion of the translation, Sukhu supplement the poem lines in syntactical, inter-sentential and textual levels.

Firstly, Sukhu strengthens the syntactic cohesion by adding necessary grammatical elements within a poem line. In accordance with the target writing norm, which highly recommends grammatical completeness, Sukhu gives subjects to poem lines when needed, such as adding the pronoun "I" as the subjects to both line 1 and line 4, when the two lines in Chinese begin directly with predicative verbs. In this way, the translated lines become syntactically unbroken and semantically unambiguous.

Sukhu also adds determiners in translated lines to improve informational clarity and grammatical intactness. The Chinese poem line 2 contains a usage of synecdoche, with the subject "心(heart)" representing the persona himself. By adding "my" to "heart" in the translation, Sukhu not only make the line clear and complete, but also conveys the peculiar style of the original writing, which would be screened if this line is translated simply into "I faltered and hesitated". Then in the line 5, Sukhu translates "百神" into "her spirit crowd" rather than "a hundred spirits", in order to manifest the subordination of these spirits to the Shaman Xian, a minor but commendable replenishment of cultural information to the target readers.

Secondly, Sukhu puts conjunctions between adjacent lines according to the inner logic between them. Poem lines of "Lisao" are strung mainly through coherence of meaning, with connectives rarely used to indicate inter-sentential relation. In that case, Sukhu adds suitable conjunctions between poem lines, turning the paratactic syntax into hypotactic, the implicit logic into explicit, and the discursive text into cohesive. In Example 4, conjunctions "but" "so" "as" are added respectively to the lines 2, 4 & 6, elucidating respectively the contrastive, causal, and concomitant relationships between three pairs of neighboring lines. Without these conjunctions, the translated lines may seem abrupt and incoherent to target readers, and misunderstanding or alienation may arise consequently, impairing its literary charm and cultural acceptation.

Thirdly, Sukhu uses some words repeatedly in different lines, managing to evoke the textual echoing between far separated lines. In Example 4, two words of the line 1 – "auspicious" and "oracle", appear for a second time in the line 8. Checking against the original, we can find that the character "吉(auspicious)" does appear in both lines, but "占(oracle)" only appear in the line 1. However, the word "oracle" is still used for a second time in the translation of line 8 – "Told me why the oracle was auspicious:", bringing a dictional echo between the line 1 and line 8. In fact, the line 8 could also be interpreted differently, such as "telling me the auspicious reason" or "telling me auspicious stories", yet Sukhu's translation not only offers another reasonable reading, but also helps building textual cohesion and structural integrity.

4. Conclusion

Poem translation unavoidably involves intentional misreading, due to the semiotic nature of language, the aesthetic appeal of poem, the idiosyncrasy of translator, and communicative purpose of translation. However, misreading should not be regarded as harmful to translation, since "the meaning of the original is constructed in each act of reading and is thus subject to change, and the translation is an afterlife of the original that allows new interpretations" (Wang, 2021).

Gopal Sukhu's English translation of "Lisao" is unique and inspiring, manifesting the translator's insight, erudition and creativeness. Measuring the literary features of the original and the cultural acceptance of the translation, Sukhu makes misreading on the original mainly in four dimensions, namely, retelling the allegorical story in the poem, changing the ambiguity into transparency, making adaptation on rhetoric devices, and creating textual cohesion in the translation. By deliberate misreading, the translator endows a renewed poetic value to the original, and displays a different glamor of the classical. The English version of "Lisao" reconciles Chinese and English poetics and cultures in a proper way, virtually promotes the literary communication between East and West, and furthers the international sinology studies on Chu culture.

Authors' contributions

Not applicable.

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Not applicable.

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