

Honorable Mention (LT)

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Bachelor of Arts in Translation and Interpretation

黃鳥歌

Song of the Yellow Warblers

翩翩黃鳥

Yellow warblers flutter blithely in the sky;

雌雄相依

Intimate ties between the couple can never be excised.

念我之獨

My loneliness however reminds:

誰其與歸

no one'll return with me side by side.

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Commentary

From my viewpoint, the specificities of the poem are also the difficulties throughout the translation. Yet, they are also a challenge for me to overcome. It is a double challenge actually. First, the piece has the beauty of brevity, but it is immensely rich in meaning. The 16 characters in total carry no cumbersome expression, and keeping its conciseness and full meanings is a strenuous task. Moreover, the poem was documented in Samguk sagi --- the history of the ancient Korean kingdom of Goguryeo. Therefore, it is possibly the carrier of cross-cultural exchange between China and Goguryeo, while my translation may break the limitations of time, and further connect the cultures of the aforesaid countries with the English-speaking world. It is undoubtedly a meaningful duty to facilitate the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. My principal strategy is to make the poem "like a poem". Though I have considered various styles to adopt before translating, I still consider it will somehow distort the nature of the poem if I sacrifice its specific style and format. In real practice, I deliberately insert rhyme to all four lines, although there is not an obvious, or some may even say no rhyming pair existing in the source text. Rhyming is an old-fashioned, typical but effective method to make a piece poem-like. Besides, a special feature of my version is the twisting of syntactic voice and subject. Between the second and third lines, I sense a turning point, also the essence of the poem. While the second line refers to the well-being of yellow warblers, the poet realized he was left alone in an abrupt turn. In the second line, I particularly adopt passive voice and the perspective of the poet looking at and being saddened by the warblers. What follows is the combination of active voice and the "loneliness" of the subject that further highlights the poet's impotence. He had no control, but rather was controlled by the "loneliness". Negatively-speaking, I perceive a noticeable drawback in the second line, since it is comparatively long which may harm the consistency. It should also be a concern by the original writer, as the four characters per line structure is adopted. Yet, the design of "voice" assumes a special importance and has a special function, I don't agree to shorten the second line by changing it into active voice at this point.