

1st Price (Non-LT)
ZHANG Jingyi

Bachelor of Arts in Media and Communication

黃鳥歌

The Song of Yellow Bird

翩翩黃鳥

In pairs yellow birds are flying;

雌雄相依

Lovingly they are snuggling.

念我之獨

I sigh, for my loneliness:

誰其與歸

Who'll return with me?

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Commentary

The poem 黃鳥歌 was composed by a king after his failure of chasing back one of his concubines. Comparing himself to a pair of yellow birds flying lovingly, the king sighed deeply for his loneliness. Though the poem is read by most to express the romantic attachment of the king to his concubine, I rather see it as an expression of the sorrow of separation from his concubine and his longing for her return. He lamented the vacuum left by his soulmate. Here the soulmate should be defined as a female who can understand him, accompany him, care about him, shares the same interest with him and love him. A pair of a perfect couple should be just like poetess 李清照 Li Qingzhao and her first husband 趙明誠 Zhao Mingcheng, as depicted in the line 賭書消得泼茶香. The last line 誰其與歸 reminds me immediately of the well-known lines 噫，微斯人，吾誰與歸！（Alas, if there were no such persons, who would I go with!）(<岳陽樓記>). The seeking of a soulmate was a recurrent theme in the history of Eastern Asian culture, Poets found it hard to find a soulmate. As the saying goes, 人生得一知己,足矣! “If you find a soulmate, your life is already worth living.” During the translation, I paid attention to the rule of translating Chinese poetry in three dimensions, the artistic conception, the rhyme, and the structure. It is obvious that the direct meaning of this short poem is straightforward and easy to understand. So from my perspective, the difficulty lies not in the translation of sense, but more on the structure and rhythm of the poem. Finally, I pick the /i/ as the foot because the continuous tense is adopted in the first two lines.