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Translating beyond languages: the challenges of rendering Taiwan's visual concrete poems in English
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Translating Beyond Languages: The Challenges of Rendering Taiwan's Visual Concrete Poems in English

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Abstract

This article offers an experimental translation of three representative concrete poems written by Zhang Bing, Chen Li, and Lin Yao-de in Taiwan. The major problem found in rendering in English the manifold appearances of a concrete poem is the inevitable loss of hieroglyphic characteristic in Chinese and its calligraphic manifestations that present a distinctive image form. To offset the loss of visual potential and part of its meaning during transfer, we resort to the visual possibility of English, a phonogram, by turning the Latin alphabet into symbols so that the poems in question can be read as interplay between form and content. By elaborating different types of approach our translations illustrate ways to deconstruct and exploit various possibilities and mechanisms inherent in the English language.

'Concrete poetry,' as the Brazilian poet-translator Augusto de Campos defines it, is a 'real "concrete," "verbivocovisual" entity − i.e., an entity composed of meanings, sounds and shape […] connected with both conceptual and natural reality' (qtd. in Jackson 1996: 23). The 'verbivocovisual' essence employed in concrete poetry uniquely constructs 'language heard and seen' (Merritt 1969: 113).   A concrete poem with visual effects is also called an altar poem or pattern poem which, according to J. A. Cuddon, 'has lines arranged to represent a physical object or to suggest action/motion, mood/feeling; but usually shape and motion' (1999: 651).   This definition is somewhat similar to that of Taiwan's concrete poetry, which exploits the ideogrammatic features of Chinese characters to 'form a particular shape that produces some concrete effects or to be symbolically indicative of a poetic activity' (Ding 2000: 1, our translation).

Experiment with poetic form has a long history in the Chinese culture. Chinese is a hieroglyphic language, with lots of characters portraying nature, objects or human behaviors.   Therefore, each character can be considered a picture.   Such a feature was once employed in the writing of ancient poems selected in *Shi Jing* [詩經] (Book of Odes).   For example, in the poem 'Ting Zhe Fang Zhung' [定之方中], a vivid depiction of lush trees goes 'shu zhi zhenli, qitong zihshu, yuanfa qinse' [樹之榛栗，椅桐梓漆，爰伐琴瑟].   James Legge (1991) rendered the lines as 'He planted about it hazel and chestnut trees, / The yi, the tong, the zi, and the varnish-tree, / Which, when cut down, might afford materials for lutes' (81).   In the Chinese original, the radical part 'mu' [木] (literally: the

wood) is repeated seven times.   The ancient form of '木' is '$\bigwedge$', which resembles the shape of a tree bulk.   Hence, the repetition of the radical part creates 'an image of dense woods' (qtd. in Ding 2000: 11-12, our translation).   This distinct hieroglyphic feature, however, is lost in translation.   Since *Shi Jing* is a collection of folk songs and ritual chants, ancient Chinese readers could savor both auditory and visual feasts at the same time. This special attribute gradually became less noticeable as the Chinese characters underwent several modifications.   Nonetheless, ancient Chinese poets sometimes engaged in experiment with poetic form and composed patterned poems such as palindromes and pagoda poems, but this kind of writing was always taken lightly by writers and scholars. Therefore, almost no serious attempt had been made before the concrete poetry movement began in Taiwan.

Starting in 1955, Lin Heng-tai, influenced by Guillaume Apollinaire's concrete poetry and Ji Xian's 'Modernist Movement', released numerous renowned concrete verses along with supporting theories to initiate a new trend in modern poetry writing.   In a 1988 interview, Lin argues that 'hieroglyphic Chinese in itself is Cubism […] Therefore, Chinese language quite suits Baudelaire's symbolism' (qtd. in Ding 2000: 43, our translation).   He promoted the writing of Symbol Poetry, a sort of concrete poetry composed by 'minimizing the reliance on "semantic meaning" and transforming every word into a "being"' (qtd. in Ding 2000: 45, our translation).   The poetic movement was also supported by Bai Di and Zhan Bing, whose renowned concrete poems manifest their artistic endeavor to promote this special poetic genre.   Together, the three pioneers paved the way for the development of concrete poetry in Taiwan.   Later, critics like Zhang Han-liang and Luo Cing established a more solid theoretical ground, on which quite a few poets devoted themselves to making this poetic genre fully fledged.   According to Ding's categorization, the modern concretists can be divided into three generations: 'the First Generation (born in or before 1940, including poets such as Luo Men and Luo Fu), the Middle Generation (born between 1941 and 1960, including poets such as Siao Siao, Luo Qing, Su Sao-lian, Du Shi-san, Chen Li, Luo Zhe-cheng, Chen Jian-yu), and the New Generation (born after 1961, including poets such as Lin Yao-de and Yan Ai-ling)' (2000: 86, our translation).

When it comes to translating concrete poems, most works are deemed untranslatable. Chen Li's concrete poems can be taken as good examples.   Among all his poems, thirty-two poems are identified by the poet as concrete, but only a few have the English version.   Moreover, the translator of Chen Li's works, Chang Fen-ling, decided not to translate into English Chen's most celebrated concrete poem 'Zhanzheng Jiaoxiangqu' (A War Symphony).   She reasons that "much of its charm will definitely be lost in the process of translation" (Chen 1997: 20).   That is to say, she only translated the title of 'A War Symphony' and presented the Chinese original as its translation, with a belief that 'those Chinese characters […] and the verse form with special visual effects [will] speak for themselves' (Chen 1997: 20).

In contrast to Chang's approach, we attempt in this paper to experiment with the English translation of Taiwan's concrete poetry.   The decision is made for two main reasons.   Firstly, not every concrete poem can be presented as translation.   Foreign audiences who do not know the Chinese language can appreciate the graphic layout of the

source text but lack sufficient understanding of the ideogrammatic features of Chinese characters. Since concrete poetry is a 'verbivocovisual' entity, presenting the original as its translation may merely deliver the visual effects of such an intricate work to the target audience. Secondly, very few attempts have been made to explore the feasibility of English translation of Taiwan's concrete poetry. Even though there is ample research on concrete poetry in Taiwan, the principles and strategies for translating these concrete works have not been carefully studied.

Concrete poetry is a distinct literary genre in Taiwan, but it has enjoyed a rather limited international readership. Given its significant literary status in the history of modern poetry in Taiwan, Taiwan's concrete poetry deserves a wider readership and should be promoted overseas through translation. Although concrete poetry appears untranslatable to most translators, our assumption is that such unconventional pieces can be translated—not in traditional ways but by using innovative means. To verify this assumption, we will probe the following two questions: What stylistic features and unconventional techniques are employed in the writings of concrete poetry? What creative approaches can be applied to translate concrete poetry into English? It is hoped that experimental translation that aims at exploring the ideogrammatic potential of English will produce a successful result and that our translation of Taiwan's concrete poetry will help Western readers to appreciate the concrete poems composed in Taiwan.

In what follows, we will first categorize Taiwan's concrete poetry into three types and discuss their stylistic features. Given the limited scope of this paper, we have selected three visual poems for translation and discussion, and our main focus is to explore the visual possibilities of the English translation of concrete poetry. The selected poems include Zhan Bing's 'Shuiniutu' (The Portrait of a Buffalo), Chen Li's 'Zhanzheng Jiaxiangqu' (A War Symphony), and Lin Yao-de's 'Muxing Zaochen' (The Morning in Jupiter). We will then conduct experimental translation of the three concrete poems and offer some self-commentary. Translation principles and strategies will then be inferred from the result of the experimental practice.

Stylistic Features of Taiwan's Concrete Poetry
Concrete poetry, as Mike Weaver described it, can be categorized into three kinds: 'visual (or optic), phonetic (or sound) and kinetic (moving in a visual succession) poems' (Solt 1968, Sec. 'Introduction'). Defined as a 'constellation in space' by Eugen Gomringer, the visual poem is characterized by a 'sense of simultaneity and multidirectionality—a spatial order—[that] inhibits a successive, phonetic response to the verbal units' (qtd. in Barnstone 1953: 60). A visual poem, as opposed to traditional poems, may be arranged or appreciated in any possible direction. Traditionally, Taiwan's modern poetry is written in right-to-left and vertical order, but an optic poem can be composed in an unconventional manner. For example, Bai Di's widely studied poem, 'Liulangzhe' (The Wanderer), a superb illustration of a solitary traveler, exhibits the 'simultaneity and multidirectionality' of the visual poem. The excerpt below is taken from the first two stanzas of the poem:

望著遠方的雲的一株絲杉
望著雲的一株絲杉
一株絲杉
一株絲杉
在地平線上
在地平線上
一株絲杉

(Ding 2000: 77)

In the second stanza, ten Chinese words are placed in horizontal order to represent the word 'Dipingxian' (literally: the horizon) on which grows 'Yizhu Sishan' (literally: a cypress). Upon seeing the poem, one first notices the overall imagery before beginning semantic analysis. With this horizontal word-line, Bai Di compels readers to read the piece horizontally, not vertically. To stress 'the solitude, loneliness, and insignificance of the traveler' (Ding 2000: 78, our translation), the poet prefers the straightforward image to abundant metaphors or similes.

As for the phonetic poem, Weaver delineates it as an 'auditory succession', whose layout generates 'a configuration of filled time against emptied time' (qtd. in Barnstone 1953: 59). Luo Zhe-cheng's 'Chun' (The Spring) falls into this category. In this sound verse, all the space between the lines and stanzas is filled with one onomatopoeic word '叮' (pronounced 'ding') to imitate the continuous alarm at the railroad crossing. Whenever '叮' is repeated, the train, 'a metaphor of time,' travels further away from the narrator (Ding 2000: 170, our translation). Similarly, in 'A War Symphony', Chen reiterates the onomatopoeic characters '乒' (pronounced 'ping') and '乓' (pronounced 'pong') dozens of times to cram the page and create the audio effect of 'clashes and gunshots between combatants' (Chen 1997: 331).
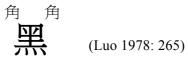
According to Weaver, the kinetic poem is a 'visual succession' and 'the dimensions of the visual figure are extended to produce a temporal configuration only made possible by the sense of succession' (Barnstone 1953: 59). As the reader reads on, semantic meaning is accumulated via a 'serial method' instead of via 'discursive grammar' or via 'familiar spoken or written forms' (Barnstone 1953: 59-60)). A good case in point is Lin Heng-tai's most celebrated concrete poem 'Fengjing No. 2' (Landscape No. 2) in which the author places the noun 'Fangfonglin' (literally: the windbreak) one after another, as if rows of trees outside the window slide backwards when a car dashes forward. This poetic means creates a vivid illustration of movement and of the scenery of costal townships in Taiwan. Most importantly, since the windbreak is grown to guard against the lashing sea wind, S. H. Ding holds that the sight is indicative of the hardship of local residents. 'A War Symphony' also presents a special kinetic effect through visual succession. The poet exhibits three hundred and eighty-four '兵' (literally: soldier) in a square formation, with one line following another. At a glance, the lines look like ranks of marching infantry, resonating with the title 'War'.

In terms of the stylistic features of concrete poetry, Janet Larsen McHughes pinpoints three major traits of the genre. First, concrete poems establish 'a new poesis of space' with skillfully manipulated literary forms (1977: 169). According to McHughes, the 'full incorporation of the dimension of space into poetic art is the greatest achievement of concrete poetry', which innovatively break the linear and successive flow of thoughts and syllables (1977: 169). In concrete poetry, grammatical and syntactical rules are replaced by the special arrangement of words and space. For instance, in Chen Jian-yu's 'Guanyintu' (The Painting of Bodhisattva), the poet scatters words and phrases to form a sketchy figure of the goddess rather than relying on verbal description. Second, concrete poetry has the feature of 'ultimate linguistic reduction', meaning that 'materials of concrete poems are words reduced to their syllabic structure, or even stripped to the letters and (occasionally) the graphic lines that comprise their letters' (McHughes 1977: 170). One may either appreciate these components of language as separate signs or combine them into words or phrases for semantic comprehension. The reduction feature is shown in 'A War Sympathy', in which the poet decreases the strokes of one Chinese character—from '兵' to '乒' or '乓' and to '丘'. Third, some concrete verses are characterized by 'sheer repetition' to 'assume a position of increased prosodic significance' (McHughes 1977: 171). In other words, certain words or phrases are reiterated several times to lay great emphasis on the pattern and sound of the poem.

Poems Selected for Translation
In this section, the stylistic and linguistic features of three concrete poems are analyzed with an attempt to explore their innovative writing methods. The poems will be presented in chronological order according to the year of birth of the author. Zhan Bing, Chen Li, and Lin Yao-de come from different generations and therefore represent respective phases. The concrete works composed by Zhan Bing, Chen Li, and Lin Yao-de are chosen for translation because those poems pose challenges to a translator. The following analysis will present the characteristics of the three concrete poems and why they are particularly difficult to translate into English.

Zhan Bing (1911−) is considered the first concretist in the modern literature of Taiwan and therefore belongs to the First Generation. In 1943, he performed poetic experiments to test whether literary works can be 'universally acceptable as painting or music' (Ding 2000: 24, our translation), and the result was a series of modern concrete verses. His well-known concrete poem 'The Portrait of a Buffalo', published in 1986, has been ubiquitous in high school textbooks because it well instantiates the genre of concrete poetry. Lines in the poem are organized in the figure of a buffalo, with a head, a body, a tail and limbs. The most impressive and acclaimed part of the poem is the depiction of the buffalo's head:

角　　角

黑　　(Luo 1978: 265)

Moreover, the poem corresponds to the poesis of space, arranging unrelated characters to

constitute the profile of a buffalo.   The three finely positioned words effectively create the image of the buffalo's head.

In terms of technical innovation, Zhan takes advantage of Chinese's hieroglyphic nature to produce photographic details.   The ancient form of the Chinese word 'jiao' (角, literally: a horn) is '螽', which shows a hard substance with one sharp tip and two grains. The visual features of the original shape, after so many centuries, are still traceable in its modern form.   Moreover, the word '黑' (hei) (literally: black) is an illustration of the buffalo's face.   As Ding comments, 'The upper part of the character with two strokes in two boxes looks like two eyes.   The vertical line in the center represents the snout while the two horizontal lines stand for the mouth.   Four strokes at the bottom resemble the beard of the creature' (Ding 2000: 33, our translation).   Furthermore, the character '黑' is enlarged and bold-faced to emphasize the size and especially the color of the animal.   The hue of the buffalo's face, as Luo Qing indicates, is similar to the darkly tanned skin color of Taiwanese farmers.   Therefore, the buffalo 'symbolizes the diligent rice-growers who toil under the scorching sun' (1978: 237).   The translation problem in this case arises from the fundamental difference between Chinese and English, with the former being a pictographic and the latter a phonographic language.

Chen Li (1954−), a dominant player of the Middle Generation, is hailed as 'one of the best representatives of contemporary poetry in Taiwan' (Chen 1997: 13).   Michelle Yeh even regards Chen's concrete poem 'A War Symphony' as a work that 'transcends existing modern literary modes' (Wang 2002: 167-168, our translation).   Being the most renowned concrete work by Chen, this poem has been selected in several overseas publications.   In an interview with Pai Shin Yu, the author offers his own elaboration and interpretation of the poem.   The abbreviated version of the three stanzas of 'A War Symphony' is provided below, and each is followed by Chen Li's explanation:

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(Chen 1997: 286)

'In the first "movement" of the poem, sixteen perfect ranks of the Chinese character for 'soldier' (兵, pronounced 'bing') are presented as if in battle array' (Pai 2007: para. 11).

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兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵

兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵兵 兵兵兵 兵

乒兵 兵兵乒兵 兵 兵   乒兵   乒兵   兵兵

乒兵   乒兵 兵 兵 兵 兵 乒兵兵   兵 兵

 乒兵 兵 兵兵 兵   兵 兵 兵 兵   兵

兵   兵兵   兵   乒 兵

(Chen 1997: 286)

'In the second movement, the soldiers are progressively decimated, first by eliminating their right or left "foot" to produce the two onomatopoeic characters that make up the Chinese word for "Ping-Pong" (乒乓, pronounced the same as in English) then by eliminating the soldiers themselves' (Pai 2007: para. 11).

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(Chen 1997: 288)

'In the third and final movement, the soldiers are presented with both their "feet" removed to form sixteen perfect ranks of the Chinese character for "mound" or "hill" (丘, pronounced 'chiu'), which is where the Chinese bury their dead. This poem is a silent protest against war, a compassionate elegy for the sufferers, and a tribute to the Chinese language' (Pai 2007: para. 11).

The reduction of language begins in the second stanza, where '兵' becomes '乒' or '乓'. The scale of the combat and sacrifice are dramatized by the sheer repetition of the four Chinese characters. Moreover, the spaces sprinkled between words indicate the fallen and create the dimension of space.   Since this poem manifests all the main stylistic features of concrete poetry, it is especially difficult to translate.   As Chen claims, 'much of its charm will definitely be lost in the process of translation' (Chen 1997: 20).   The biggest challenge will be to preserve the image triggered by the Chinese ideogram.

Lin Yao-de (1962-1996) is one of the most prominent and prolific concretists in the New Generation.   Yang Mu comments that even though the tide of concrete poetry in Taiwan had ebbed, Lin still devoted himself to writing concrete poems, which makes him

an outstanding poet of the 1980s.   In 'The Morning in Jupiter', the poet refers to Odin by means of a Chinese character 'yan' (literally: an eye), which constitutes a line tucked between two lines of space to create a powerful illustration of the one-eyed god:

拉　韌　　　　眼　　　挖　不　天
長　帶　　　　　　　　起　猶　帝
　　與　　　　　　　　一　豫　奧
　緊　神　　　　　　　枚　地　丁
　縐　經　　　　　　　　　用
　　與　　　　　　　　　　勁　為
　　飛　　　　　　　　　　指　了
　斷　濺　　　　　　　　　插　整
　裂　的　　　　　　　　　入　個
　　血　　　　　　　　　　眼　世
　　管　　　　　　　　　　眶　界
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　的
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　存
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　在

One of the three stylistic features—integration of space—is clearly demonstrated in this piece.   The vertical lines on the right-hand side resemble the figure of the deity who stands upright, with the phrase 'tiandi Aoding' (literally: Odin the Lord of Heaven) placed in the position of his head.   One row of space separates the word '眼' from the previous lines, breaking the train of ideas and accentuating the enormous sacrifice the god makes.   The character is suspended in the air, as if he puts the freshly-plucked eye in his hand and willingly stretches out the arm, generously giving up his one eye in exchange for wisdom. Instead of offering detailed depiction, the poet employs spatial arrangement to showcase Odin's movement.   Furthermore, the visual potential of the Chinese hieroglyph '眼' is exploited by the poet to vividly represent the eye Odin plucks out.   How to preserve the hieroglyphic image of the eye becomes a challenge in translation.

The works of concretists from three generations are chosen to outline the evolution of concrete poetry in Taiwan.   The First Generation exploited pictographic features of Chinese and composed verses in imitation of nature.   However, they rarely dissected one word into segments—although they rotated Chinese characters or changed their font. Concrete poetry of this era was criticized for its inability to express 'narrative themes, abstract ideas or extremely intricate thoughts' (Luo 1978: 70, our translation). Nevertheless, critics and writers in this period initiated various poetic experiments, established well-thought-out principles, and enshrined concrete poetry in Taiwan's modern literature.   After the 1970s, new concrete verses frequently appeared, and many were extremely creative.   By this time concrete poetry had become a mature poetic genre with diverse styles.

A Translation Experiment
Despite the fact that the fashion for concrete poetry in Taiwan has subsided, Taiwan can claim to have the most fruitful achievements in Chinese concrete poetry. Yet the visibility of Taiwan's concrete poetry in the world is limited, in part due to a lack of translations. There is a need to introduce Taiwan's concrete poetry to Western readers via English translation.   In what follows we will discuss the problems that emerge during the process of translating these three visual concrete poems and the attempt to find corresponding

solutions.   The complete renditions of the three concrete poems are provided in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

In translating 'The Portrait of a Buffalo', one can succeed in duplicating the poesis of space by simply imitating the original pattern.   The first and foremost challenge, however, is to find the semantic and visual equivalent in English to render the two Chinese symbols, '角' and '黑'.   In practice, we chose two English letters, 'H' and 'B', to undertake our task. For two reasons: first, they are the initial characters of the words 'horn' and 'black' (or 'buffalo'); second, the two letters, with some typographical modifications, can indicate the appearance of a buffalo's head.

It can be easily observed that Zhan bold-faces the character to stress the colour of the buffalo's face.   Since the poet deliberately changes the shape and size of characters, we decided to follow his example and derive our translation strategy from his creative technique.   The result is the following translation:

The shape of the character 'H' is moderately distorted to form the buffalo's curved and pointed horns; meanwhile, the character 'B' is bold-faced and turned clockwise 90 degrees to represent the animal's crown and two eyes.   This is a simple illustration, in which English characters are used as symbols and bear reference to two words – horn and black. When this picture is combined with the body-shaped stanza, one can easily recognize the pattern as the buffalo's head.   Nonetheless, most of the exquisite details of '黑' are lost because the English translation 'B' only offers a rough depiction.

Unlike the concrete poetry of the First Generation, 'A War Symphony' showcases complex graphic sophistication and makes the first foray into reducing language, which creates pleasure as well as problems for translators.   Our translation is an attempt to duplicate in the target text the degree of enjoyment felt by the source readers as well as the creativity of the source text.   When one renders the poem, the prime difficulty is to represent the word '兵' (literally: soldier) with a proper linguistic symbol, which can either be reduced or distorted to depict injured combatants.   To solve the problem, we resorted to the creativity of Siao Siao, a contemporary writer of Chen.   In a poem entitled 'Ni yu Wuo—Zhishishi' (You and I: An Ideogrammatic Poem), the poets orchestrate a philosophical word-play of English characters.   Transforming the Latin alphabet into a collection of signs, he uses the character 'i' to signify a person, because the dot can stand for the head and the vertical line the body.   The 'i' is 'an individual self, an insignificant self' in the vast universe (Ding 2000: 265).   Given the connotation of this innovative symbol, we utilize 'i' to translate "A War Symphony".

In the first stanza, 384 elongated 'i's are arranged in a square formation, with an emphasis on the individuality of each unimportant yet unique fighter.   With the assistance of the title, a reader can recognize the 'i's as soldiers in great numbers.   We distort the symbol into 'ɟ' and 'ι̇' in the second stanza, to delineate combatants made lame or

wounded by the stormy battle.   Eventually, all the soldiers collapse and perish, leaving innumerable bodies, and so we bend the character into '∧'.   Reading the symbols separately, one might find the distorted character similar to a dead body in an agonized posture.   Yet, when a reader reads the myriad bodies together, s/he will discover a massive graveyard packed with tombstones.   This rendition gives the foreign reader a chance to explore the possibility of treating English as an ideogrammatic language.   Nonetheless, the scene of lame soldiers is not as daunting as the ranks of handicapped fighters.   Almost all the audio effects are lost in translation.   The only compensation is that the character 'i' can be the vowel indicating a series of verbs suggestive of warfare: stride, fight, lie down and die, sequenced as the scenario in the three stanzas.

In the realm of concrete poetry, the writing and reading habit can be altered and a phonogram in English can be used as a pictograph.   To maintain the distinct features of spatial arrangement, one must consider differences of writing convention between English and Chinese.   In Taiwan, poetry is often written in a right-to-left, vertical order.   Since most English poems are composed in horizontal order, a translator may be forced to translate the source text horizontally.   However, the spatial dimension of poetry has significant implications and should not be neglected or altered.   In rendering "The Morning in Jupiter", the vertical order of Chinese is indispensible to illustrate the upright posture of Odin, the deity standing fearlessly before the fate of Ragnarök.   We cannot present the translated version in a horizontal position lest the suggestive pattern of the original be omitted.   As stated before, concrete poetry defies poetic traditions, and so some poems are written in such a way that they can be read horizontally or vertically.   Therefore, in rendering experimental works like concrete poetry, a translator must not be strictly bound by literary conventions and should possess certain degrees of freedom to exert creativity.   Firm in this belief, we translate the poem vertically to maintain the towering figure of Odin.   The translation of the excerpt is shown in Appendix 3.

Also, at a glance, one may deem it unfeasible to carry across an ideogrammatic word such as '眼' to English.   The Chinese pictograph is more effective as a vehicle with which the concretists can express ideas.   For instance, 'moon' in Chinese is '𝔇' in its ancient shape and '月' in its modern form, both resembling a crescent moon.   It may seem impossible for an English phonogram to do something similar, but English concretists' creative approaches add more possibilities to English poetry.   According to concrete poet Ronald Johnson, English characters can be used as symbols.   Johnson suggests that '"O" can rise, like the real moon, over the word "moon"' (Barnstone 1953: 52).   e. e. cummings also employs the same technique—transforming English letters into visual symbols.

The(oo)is

lOOk

(aliv

e)e

yes

(Webster 2001: 110)

Cummings extrapolates that 'oo' stands for the 'wideopen eyes', 'OO' for 'intense stare,' and '(aliv/e)e/yes' for 'alive eyes which say yes' (qtd. in Webster 2001: 110). This interesting representation can allow a translator to transform phonographic English into a pictograph. Like Cummings' 'e)e', the English word 'eye' carries a picture of a nose and two eyeballs. In rendering the Chinese word '眼' into English, we translated it as '**e Y (e)**' and bold-face our translation, using 'e' to represent the visual organ and isolating the letters with a parenthesis. This pattern is indicative of the Norse deity who digs out one eye for the well-being of the universe.

Translation Principles and Strategies

On the basis of our experimental translations, we would suggest that translating concrete poetry is possible if a translator is allowed to deviate from linguistic conventions. Simply put, a translator, when translating concrete poems, should deploy certain degrees of 'linguistic freedom' and 'typographic freedom'. Useful translation strategies can be developed from these two types of freedom. If linguistic freedom is granted, a translator can exploit the potential of the target language. S/he may turn English's phonographic characters into visual symbols whenever necessary. For example, our experimental practice shows that 'e' can be used as a pictograph to represent an eyeball, while 'i' can stand for an individual or a soldier. In addition, words can be reduced or distorted to preserve a special intention of the author. The strategy can be applied to the translation of 'A War Symphony'. The letter 'i' is changed into 'j' and 'ʟ' and finally '∩' to symbolize the progression of the battle and the tragic fate of the soldiers.

Additionally, typographic freedom enables a translator to reproduce the dynamic and volatile nature of the original. S/he can alter the shape, position or size of words as the author does. During the process of translating 'The Portrait of a Buffalo', we deformed English letters to recreate the image of the creature's head. More importantly, a translator can even change the writing sequence of the English translation from left-to-right, horizontal order to right-to-left, vertical order – as we have done in the translation of 'The Morning in Jupiter'. Since the concretists liberate themselves from the linguistic and typographic traditions to generate innovative works, a translator of concrete poetry should also be free from limitations. In fact, learning from the innovative procedures of concrete poets means learning the ways they transgress linguistic and literary conventions.

Conclusion

Inasmuch as the concretists employ creative approaches to break away from conventions and express their thoughts in ingenious ways, concrete poetry is a profound and intriguing genre. Basically, concrete poetry can be divided into the visual poem, the phonetic poem and the kinetic poem. It has three distinct stylistic features: artistic layout of space, extensive use of repetition, and deconstruction of languages. All three features are showcased by our examples. While these characteristics enrich the content and form of concrete poems, they pose enormous challenges to translators who attempt to transplant them into a foreign environment.

Accordingly, some may hastily conclude that these pieces are untranslatable.

However, our translation experiment demonstrates that concrete poems are translatable. To present the peculiarity of the original, we derive translation strategies from Western concrete poets to resolve problems encountered in the translation experiment. From these innovative measures, we infer two concepts: linguistic freedom and typographic freedom, which allow translators to exert their creativity. All our translation experiments are grounded in two beliefs. First, presenting the original as its translation may hinder foreign readers from appreciating its semantic aspect. Second, since only a scanty amount of literature has been devoted to translation of Taiwan's concrete poetry, a study of the subject can help explore the translatability of this special genre. It is also our sincere hope that a worldwide readership may be gained through English translation.

Regardless of the differences between English and Chinese, we have demonstrated that a new universality can be discovered if a translator closely scrutinizes the stylistic features of concrete poetry and the creative measures used by concrete poets, especially those who violate linguistic and literary conventions. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher points out two directions for practitioners of translation: a translator may 'yield to the original text or conquer it, whether he will stop at acknowledging the differences between languages or whether he will move toward possible rapprochement of styles between languages' (Schulte 2002: 15). This study takes the second path and proves that it is always possible for translators of concrete poetry to make the untranslatable meaningful in another language. Finally, we suggest that future studies of concrete poetry in translation may incorporate other language pairs and cover the phonetic and kinetic aspects of the genre, so as to raise international awareness of Taiwan's concrete poetry and discover creative measures for concrete poetry in other languages.

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Appendix 1: 'The Portrait of a Water Buffalo'

as a buffalo shakes his **B**-shaped face
the concentric ripples continue to expand then extend
upon all those parallel waves
the summer sun and leaves are doing The Twist Dance
he is sitting in paddy's water but
knows no Archimedes' Principle.
amidst the tiny horny parenthesis
the breeze of thoughts is blowing.
atmospheric clouds in eyeballs
regurgitated solitude in stomachs
listening to men's songs, cicada's and soundless sound
he forgets the burning heat and
time and himself and is perhaps silently waiting for
the being that never comes
      just
            waiting, waiting and waiting!

Appendix 2: 'A War Symphony'

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Appendix 3: **'The Morning in Jupiter'** [Excerpt]

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