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“Home”

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Born in Canada but brought up in Singapore, the author of “Home”, Miriam Wei Wei Lo, now resides in Australia, which she considers her home. She has a diverse background, being of both Malaysian-Chinese and Anglo-Australian heritage. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Western Australia and earned a PhD from the University of Queensland. Her debut book, *Against Certain Capture*, garnered the 2004 Western Australian Premier's Award for Poetry. She is currently a lecturer in creative writing at the Sheridan Institute of Higher Education. Recognised as the 2023 Westerly Mid-Career Fellow, she has released her new book, *Who Comes Calling?* Which was published by West Australian Poets Publishing in May 2023.

About the Poem and Translation Analysis

“Home” is a poem that was first published in the 2013 anthology *Contemporary Asian Australian Poets*, edited by Adam Aitken, Kim Cheng Boey, and Michelle Cahill. The poem's significance is highlighted by its inclusion in the NSW Higher School Certificate syllabus. The poem is written in standard free verse form, with varying stanza lengths and line lengths that serve to create a sense of organic flow and reflect the fluid nature of the poem's themes. In the translation of the poem, particular attention was paid to preserving the line breaks and other elements of the original freestyle, ensuring that the translation captures the full essence and impact of the poem's imagery and language.

While reading this poem, one must crucially consider the literary devices employed by the poet. These elements not only enhance its impact but also enrich its meaning. Of particular note is the rich imagery saturating its initial stanza: sensory descriptions evoke an olfactory experience – specifically that of food's aroma – and simultaneously contrast cultural influences from East to West. As we transition into subsequent stanzas, auditory and tactile imagery take centre stage: they vividly portray sounds like running waters – echoing with their unique rhythm; and textures reminiscent of braille, thus infusing a deeper sensory experience within our understanding of the piece. The final stanza employs botanical imagery, crafting a vivid and evocative portrait of foreign plants. This addition intensifies the pervasive sense of displacement and otherness that the stanza conveys.

Lo also intentionally employs metaphors and imagery in “Home” to construct a complex amalgamation of emotion and image that communicates the experience of dislocation and uncertainty regarding identity. Throughout the poem, she accentuates the contrast between East and West, intertwining culture with religion. This imbues an additional layer of depth into the persona's perception of displacement and otherness. Additionally, the poet's background is crucial to understanding the poem's themes and perspectives. As noted earlier, the poet has lived in different countries and comes from a mixed-race marriage. These personal details shed light on the poet's unique experiences and cultural background, which likely influenced the themes and perspectives of the poem.

While cultural and linguistic challenges were involved in translating this poem, capturing the biblical allusions and references to C.S. Lewis's (1898-1963) work was the primary difficulty. These elements underscore the poem's underlying theme of life as a pilgrimage to a higher purpose. They emphasise the transient nature of earthly homes in contrast to an eternal spiritual abode.

This translation employs Lefevere's strategies, focusing particularly on blank verse, literal translation, and interpretation to maintain the original poem's thematic depth and poetic form. Blank verse provides syntactic freedom without sacrificing thematic integrity. It aims to render the poem into unrhymed iambic pentameter, valued for its rhythmic consistency and approximation of natural speech patterns.

For instance, the line “我将独自生活在那里，同时与我所爱的人共处” (“I will live there alone and with everyone I love”) uses blank verse to convey complex emotional states. It juxtaposes solitude and community, enriching the poem's emotional depth. Another example is “I consider my father, born into a single room”. This line aims to retain the many layers of meaning by contemplating the humble origins of the poet's father. Although Chinese does not share the same metrical constraints as English iambic pentameter, a conscientious translation still aims to capture both the content and some semblance of the original rhythm, as seen in “我忆起父亲，生于一小房”.

The conversational tone often attributed to blank verse is evident in the line “我们回家了！他们肯定视这里为家” (“We're going home! They must mean this place”). This form's universality and relatability are heightened by its resemblance to spoken language. On the aesthetic front, blank verse excels in capturing a naturalistic flow, demonstrated in “足够的书籍卷轴，满足皇后与中世纪国王的渴求” (“enough books for a dowager empress, or medieval king”). The line's rhythmic cadence enhances the reading experience by mimicking everyday speech.

Moreover, the utility of blank verse in maintaining thematic integrity is evident in lines like “提醒我已为此，舍去思想的束缚” (“reminding me that I have left the life of the mind for this”). Here, the translator preserves the implications of choosing spiritual knowledge over earthly pursuits. The subtlety of this meaning could be compromised if a more rigid translation approach were used.

In conclusion, adopting blank verse in Chinese translations successfully preserves the original poem's structural complexity and thematic richness. This form serves as an adaptable medium that translates the poem's essence into a linguistic and cultural context accessible to a Chinese readership.

Bibliography

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Home
Miriam Wei Wei Lo

回家
罗薇薇

Translated by Leei Wong

1. One day I will find it

I'll follow the smell of food:
fried ikan balls, roast lamb, mangoes;
Or the sound of water touching down on
sand, stones, mud.
Perhaps the code for entry will be in braille
and I must stand in a dark room at midnight,
weeping
and running my fingers over two stone
tablets.
It will be in my mouth—a thin wafer of
honey,
The bitter salt taste of my husband's sweat.
I will see it, I'm sure, yellow as wattle in
winter
And brown as the grass under snow.

It will be a skyscraper, fifty storeys tall.
It will be the smallest, most picturesque
cottage.
I will live there alone and with everyone I
love.

No children are raped there.
No one eats while others go hungry.
No lying awake, wondering which woman
or child
in what sweatshop has made these pyjamas I
wear,
or the sheets on the bed, or the rug on the
floor.
I will not have to lock the door.

2. Without Warning

An explosion of light.
A word that is itself.
A word to possess me.
An image so bright and complete
it can only be seen with eyes shut tight.
As in prayer.
As in sleep - a dream that outlives reality.
An image to enter me like a knife, like a
nail,

1. 我终将寻获

追随美食芳香：
炸香鱼丸、烤羊肉香，与芒果之味；
或波涛拍岸，感受沙石泥韵。
盲文或许是通往内心的密码，
漆黑房间独自夜半啜泣，
指尖探寻摸索双石碑。
它将在我口中，犹如薄薄的蜂蜜饼干，
夹带我丈夫汗水的苦咸。
我将见到它，它肯定黄如冬日的金合欢，
棕如雪地下的草丛。

它将是座五十层高楼耸立在天。
它将是最小巧，如画的小屋。
我将独自生活在那里；同时与我所爱的人们共
处为伴。

那里孩童免受性侵犯。
他人饥饿时，无人独享餐。
不再辗转反侧，琢磨/揣测是哪位女人或孩
童，
在何处的血汗工厂，缝制我身上的睡裳，
床头衣物或地板上的地毯。
我将无需锁门防护。

2. 毫无预兆

突如其来目眩的光芒。
神的话语自身。
深深地占据我。
如此明亮完整的图像，
唯闭双眸，方可领悟。
如同祷告般。
如梦境般存在，超越现实。
如刀如钉般的影像，穿透我心，

hammering in till it finds its reply, taking
my body
like breath, like the strong kiss of a
bridegroom,
like death, in all its finality

Someone is at work in me,
translating this corrupt language of my
body,
the dark, bitter words of my heart,
into the pure language of that other place
where every word is a radiant arrival
that draws me across the threshold
and claims me as its own.

3. A Place to Return To

Bed, toilet, kitchen. Exposed brick walls.
This worn grey carpet, toys all over the
floor
reminding me that I have left the life of the
mind
for this. "Home!", the children call out in
the car,
"We're going home!" They must mean this
place.

I consider my father, born into a single
room,
that housed his whole family. And this —
running water, six sets of taps, a fridge, a
washing machine,
enough books for a dowager empress, or
medieval king.

If there must be a place,
a tent for the body on this earth,
I'll take this one,
with the blue plumbago waving defiantly
through the natives, the climbing white
jasmine rampant over the fence,
and the mulberry tree,
that foreigner so completely at home,
growing taller each year.

锤打不已，直至觅得回应，占据我身
宛如呼吸般自然，犹似新郎深情热吻。
犹如死亡，带着最终的决断。

有某种力量在我身躯中呼之欲出，
将我体内的腐败语言，

我内心黑暗、痛苦之词，
转化成那纯净之地的语言，
字字闪耀如光辉迎来，
引导我迈过门槛，
并宣称我属于祂。

3. 回归之地

床、厕所、卫生间、厨房。裸露的红砖墙。
磨损的灰色地毯，地上散落着的玩具
提醒我已为此，舍去思想的束缚，
“回家了！”孩子们在车里欢呼，
“我们回家了！”他们肯定视这里为家。

我忆起父亲，生于一小房，
家人全共居一隅。而这儿一
潺潺流水、六组水龙头、一台冰箱、一台洗
衣机，
足够的书籍卷轴，满足皇后与中世纪国王的
渴求。

若必须有一处居所，
一座容身之所，
我会选择这里
蓝钟花倔强地

向当地肆虐篱笆的白茉莉花，挑衅地挥舞着
还有桑树，
这异乡之植，竟盎然生长
逐年生长更高。