Journal of Critical Studies in Language and Literature
ISSN: 2732-4605
Global Talent Academy

The Wall of Emotion: Imagery Transmission from East to West in Ezra Pound's Translations

Liyao Zhao
Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Baptist University, Hong Kong
Email: 22482903@life.hkbu.edu.hk

Received: 05/06/2025
Accepted: 17/09/2025
Published: 22/10/2025

Volume: 6 Issue: 6

How to cite this paper: Zhao, L. (2025). The Wall of Emotion: Imagery Transmission from East to West in Ezra Pound's Translations. *Journal of Critical Studies in Language and Literature*, *6*(6), 19-26
DOI: https://doi.org/10.46809/jcsll.v6i6.403

Abstract

When poetry travels across cultures, misunderstanding and mistranslation are almost inevitable due to differences in language, historical context, and cultural traditions. Yet, literary translation simultaneously facilitates the circulation, development, and renewal of culture. Ezra Pound, as both a distinguished poet and translator, assimilated elements from Japanese haiku and classical Chinese poetry to create unprecedented poetic imagery within modernist literature. On the one hand, he rendered a wide range of Chinese texts, including *The Book of Songs* and poems by Li Bai and Wang Wei. In traditional Chinese discourse, writing emphasizes the expression of "implication", whereas translation must not only capture textual meaning but also anticipate the reception of unseen readers. On the other hand, Pound transformed poetic images into forms familiar to his cultural environment, thereby reshaping their resonance in English. Focusing on Pound's translation of terms such as "city", "wall" and "corner" in Li Bai's poetry, this paper examines how imagery is transformed and reinterpreted in the process of cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: Ezra Pound, Li Bai, *Cathy*, Wall

1. Introduction

Ezra Pound (1885–1972), both as poet and translator, demonstrated an extraordinary command of languages, working with at least nine European tongues in addition to several non-European ones. His translation practice, however, was not evenly distributed across these languages. Rather, it reflected a selective engagement shaped by his literary and cultural interests. Chronologically, Pound concentrated on texts in Latin, the Romance languages, and, most significantly, Chinese. This focus is exemplified in works such as The Spirit of Romance, his renderings of Catullus, and the volume Cathay, which collectively highlight how his multilingual background enabled him to reimagine classical traditions within a modernist framework.

Among the many languages explored by Ezra Pound, Classical Chinese poetry stands out for the interpretive freedom it afforded him. This is particularly evident in his engagement with the works of Li Bai (701–762 CE), arguably the most frequently translated Chinese poet in the Western literary canon. The translation of Li Bai's poetry into English has a long and distinguished history, with major contributors including Arthur Waley, Herbert Giles, Burton Watson, Stephen Owen, Elling O. Eide, and Victor H. Mair, among others. Their collective efforts established a rich body of translated classical Chinese poetry, generally characterized by an emphasis on lexical fidelity and aesthetic restraint. This relative absence of "wall" in mainstream translations stands in sharp contrast to Pound's *Cathay*, where the term appears with remarkable frequency across multiple poems. This unusual lexical choice raises critical questions: Why does Pound consistently use "wall" in his

translations, even when no such term exists in the original Chinese text? What does this reveal about his translation philosophy, his understanding of imagery, and the broader dynamics of cross-cultural poetic transfer? Addressing these questions forms the central aim of the present study.

Pound's translations may be broadly divided into two categories: "copies" referring to versions that remain close to the original text, and "remakes" or "rewritings" which represent a more creative mode of translation (Alexander, 1997, pp. 23–30). The former approach is exemplified in his renderings of Cavalcanti's poems, where he employed Provençal and Italian as medieval romantic languages for translation. Later, however, Pound increasingly adopted the "rewriting" method, most notably in *Cathay*. In 1913, while actively engaged in the Imagist movement, he encountered the manuscripts left by Ernest Fenollosa, which contained numerous literal translations of classical Chinese poems. Fascinated by these texts, Pound began his practice of "rewriting" with translations of poems by Du Fu (712-770 CE) and Li Bai (Graham, 2008, p. 16). However, Pound lacked a deep grasp of classic Chinese, he chose not to replicate the original poems' precise wording or rhythm in *Cathay*. Instead, he sought to achieve what might be called a "dynamic balance" based on Japanese, privileging aesthetic resonance and poetic vitality over strict fidelity (Minford & Lau, 2002, p. 742). Additionally, as Nida argued, Pound's approach anticipates later theoretical discussions of "equivalence" in translation studies, situating his practice between literal accuracy and creative fidelity (2001, pp. 223-230).

In his effort to create new poetic imagery, Ezra Pound injected fresh vitality into the literary world at the turn of the twentieth century. Drawing inspiration from Japanese haiku and classical Chinese poetry, he established a precedent for modern symbolism. As T. S. Eliot observed, "Pound invented Chinese poetry for our time." (Eliot, 1959, p. 14) Pound's engagement with Chinese classical poetry went beyond literal translation; instead, he sought to render its imagery. Through processes of refinement and extraction, he reshaped these images in ways more compatible with Western linguistic and cultural habits. Translation, for Pound, thus became less an act of replication than one of re-creation, yielding works that bear the qualities of independence and even prose-like fluidity. Xie Ming has noted that Pound's translation both inspired and enriched his own poetic practice, while his poetic innovations, in turn, guided and advanced his translation. In this sense, Pound's poetics can be regarded as a form of "translation poetry", one that redefined the very essence and ideals of literary translation in the twentieth century (Wu, 2006, p.27).

The factors behind Pound's recreation of classical Chinese poetry can be divided into internal and external dimensions. On the one hand, in the cross-cultural transmission of poetry, particularly in the case of ancient Chinese poems, it is difficult to convey its subtle charm. Readers outside the native cultural context cannot fully experience the ineffable artistic conception of Chinese classical poetry; translation, therefore, often requires processing the original text through the refinement and reconfiguration of imagery. On the other hand, nineteenth-century Victorian translators, in their attempts to reproduce classical poetry, frequently employed an archaizing diction of their own making (Apter, 1980). While intended to preserve antiquity, this practice shaped poetic creation in ways that undermined independence of style and led instead to formulaic repetition. Against this background, Pound's approach represented a striking departure. By assimilating images from classical Chinese poetry and recreating them into the linguistic and cultural idioms of his own context, he not only avoided the constraints of Victorian archaism but also opened a new imaginative horizon for modernist poetry. In so doing, Pound created fresh poetic images that simultaneously preserved the resonance of the Chinese originals and generated new aesthetic possibilities within Western literature (Wu, 2006, p.25).

2. The Image of "Wall" in Pound's Translation

Pound famously divided poetry into three categories: melopoeia, phanopoeia, and logopoeia (Pound, 1975, pp. 21–22). As Zhang Jinghua pointed out, the first two refer to the projection of artistic conception or emotion through sound and image, melopoeia being the musical properties of language, and phanopoeia the casting of visual imagery onto the mind's eye. The third, logopoeia, which Pound described as "the dance of the intellect among words", involves a more sophisticated operation. It goes beyond a word's literal definition, specifically considering how it is typically used in context, its common phrasings, normal inflections, and even ironic or figurative applications. (Zhang, 2013, p. 84-89). As a result, poetry operates primarily on the level of language itself, leveraging its internal tensions and associations to generate meaning. Though logopoeia emerged later than the other two categories, Pound regarded it as the most refined and unpredictable form of poetic expression, capable of producing complex and nuanced aesthetic effects that go beyond sound or image alone.

Therefore, Pound was not only concerned with reproducing the imagery described in the poem through his lexical choices, but even more attentive to the emotions conveyed by the scene. Accordingly, we noted Pound's emphasis on the emotions of "farewell" and "separation" in Li Bai's poetry. Li Bai's farewell poem not only conveys the sorrow of parting from friends but also skillfully merges emotion with landscape. Through the projection of personal sentiment onto external scenery, the poem creates a dynamic interplay between feeling and environment, an emotional realm that flows across time and space. This fusion gives rise to a philosophical reflection on transience and human connection, contributing to the poem's lyrical tension and aesthetic depth. In 754 CE, the great poet Li Bai composed his renowned poem "Song youren" 送友人 while in Xuancheng (modern southeastern Anhui Province). The poem captures a moment of reluctant parting: the two friends had already passed through the city gates, yet they still rode side-by-side, having slowed their pace. They simply couldn't bring themselves to say goodbye. The original text:

青山横北郭，白水绕东城。

此地一为别，孤蓬万里征。
浮云游子意，落日故人情。
挥手自兹去，萧萧班马鸣。(Li, 1999, p.837)

Here is Pound' s translation "Taking Leave of a Friend":

Blue mountains to the north of the walls
White river winding about them
Here we must make separation
And go out through a thousand miles of dead grass
Mind like a floating wide cloud
Sunset like the parting of old acquaintances
Who bow over their clasped hands at a distance.
Our horses neigh to each other as we are departing. (Pound, 1957, p. 59–60)

Xu Yuanchong' s 许渊冲 translation:

Green mountains bar the northern sky
White water girds the eastern town
Here is the place to say goodbye
You'll drift out, lonely thistledown
Like floating cloud you'll float away
With parting day I part from you
We wave and you start on your way,
Your horse still neighs: "Adieu! Adieu" (Xu, 2015)

Herbert Allen Giles translation:

Where blue hills cross the northern sky
Beyond the moat which girds the town. (Giles, 1898, p. 70)

Yang Xianyi' s 杨宪益 translation:

Green hills skirt the northern suburb
A sparkling stream circuits the eastern city. (Tinios, 2007)

In Pound's translation, the image of the "wall" functions as a symbolic barrier, evoking the emotional separation between individuals. Among the four English translations of Li Bai's "Song youren", Pound's version stands out for its distinctive treatment of imagery, particularly in his rendering of the term "北郭" (northern suburb) as "walls". The original lines, "青山横北郭，白水绕东城", literally evoke green mountains lying to the north of the outer city walls, with white waters encircling the eastern perimeter. Xu Yuanchong, Herbert Giles, and Yang Xianyi all adopt more spatial or naturalistic renderings, Xu uses "northern sky" and "eastern town", while Giles and Yang Xianyi refer to hills and suburbs, maintaining the directional and geographic orientation of the original. Xu's choice of the predicate "bar" in "Green mountains bar the northern sky" vividly conveys the majestic, enclosing presence of the mountains, offering a dynamic and expansive vision of the landscape. This technique of controlled omission and figurative verb use emphasizes the poem's atmospheric quality and enhances its artistic conception.

In contrast, Pound's translation introduces the concrete and symbolically loaded image of "walls". His version, "Blue mountains to the north of the walls. White river winding about them. Here we must make separation", foregrounds human emotion over topographic detail. The insertion of "walls" which does not appear in the Chinese original, shifts the focus from geography to psychological boundaries. In the cultural context of English modernism, "walls" evoke not just physical structures but also emotional distance and rupture. Pound further amplifies this tone by rendering "此地一为别" as "Here we must make separation", a phrase that conveys inevitability and emotional gravity more strongly than Xu's gentler "Here is the place to say goodbye". The resonance between "walls" and "separation" in Pound's version forms a tight emotional loop, enhancing the sense of disconnection between the departing friends.

This interpretive leap is illustrative of Pound's phanopoeic and logopoeic instincts. He not only casts a visual image onto the reader's mind but also reshapes the poetic language to evoke a deeper, culturally familiar emotional register. The "wall" becomes a symbolic site of departure, an architectural and psychological marker of loss. While arguably a deviation from the literal meaning, it is a deliberate act of creative mediation, aligning with Pound's modernist objective of recreating poetic experience in a new idiom. Compared with more literal or formalist translations, Pound's version sacrifices topographic fidelity in favor of emotional resonance, demonstrating how the insertion of a single image can shift the entire affective and symbolic structure of a poem in cross-cultural transmission.

Pound's translation of "Song youren rushu"送友人入蜀 more vividly illustrates his intention to associate scenes of parting with the image of the "wall". In 743 CE, while bidding farewell to a friend departing for Sichuan from the capital, Li Bai composed the poem "Song youren rushu". The whole poem describes two aspects: farewell and entering Shu 蜀 (modern Sichuan Province in southwestern China). The first two sentences write about the rugged and difficult road to Shu, and the last two sentences point out the main theme, the original text:

见说蚕丛路，崎岖不易行。
山从人面起，云傍马头生。

芳树笼秦栈，春流绕蜀城。
升沉应已定，不必问君平。(Li, 1999, p.839)

Pound' s translation:

They say the roads of Sanso are steep,
Sheer as the mountains.
The walls rise in a mans face,
Clouds grow out of the hill at his horse's bridle.
Sweet trees are on the paved way of the Shin,
Their trunks burst through the paving,
And freshets are bursting their ice in the midst of Shoku, a proud city.
Men's fates are already set,
There is no need of asking divines. (Pound, 1963, p. 199)

Xu Yuanchong' s 许渊冲 translation:

Rugg'd is the road,
I hear Built by the pioneer
In front steep mountains rise
Beside the steed cloud flies
O'er plank-way trees hang down
Spring water girds the town
Decid'd our rise and fall,
Do not bother at all! (Xu, 2007, p.55)

It is particularly noteworthy that in the original line "山从人面起，云傍马头生", the imagery centers on the imposing and immersive qualities of the natural landscape. Xu Yuanchong renders this as "In front steep mountains rise. Beside the steed cloud flies", emphasizing the grandeur and dynamism of the scenery while preserving its directional motion. Notably, Xu omits the presence of "the person" in his translation, thereby enlarging the scale of the landscape to highlight the insignificance of the human figure within it. The mountains become monumental and almost timeless, rendering the traveler a vanishing presence in nature's vastness.

Pound, by contrast, replaces the mountain altogether with an unexpected yet symbolically charged image: "The walls rise in a man's face". A literal interpretation of his version would be something like "mountains rising vertically and suddenly, like a wall confronting a person". Through this substitution, Pound deliberately transforms topography into architecture, introducing a "wall" that does not exist in the original Chinese, but which conveys a distinct emotional valence. As in "Song youren", the image of the wall becomes a metaphorical screen, one that represents not just physical obstruction but also psychological separation, existential confrontation, and even fate. This rhetorical pattern is extended in the line "And freshets are bursting their ice in the midst of Shoku", which evokes the forceful breaking of natural barriers, mirroring the emotional tension of departure. Pound's use of "wall" and its accompanying imagery thus establishes a consistent symbolic motif: a visual and conceptual marker of boundary and rupture. His translations do not aim for lexical fidelity but rather for affective resonance. By refining and reconfiguring the source imagery, he produces a uniquely modernist emotional effect, what might be called a kind of "equivalence balance". Moreover, this equivalence can further be divided into structural equivalence and dynamic equivalence: the former seeks correspondence in form and content, striving for informational fidelity, while the latter aims to connect the translation to the cultural context and emotional expectations of its target audience. (Nida, 1964, pp. 156–176) Pound's translation practice, however, tends to privilege dynamic equivalence, a mode that values the recreation of emotional and imaginative resonance over literal or structural fidelity.

In Pound's translation, the image of the "wall" can be interpreted as a metaphorical marker of inner emotional shifts. One notable example can be found in his translation of "Changgan xing" 长干行, which portrays a merchant's wife longing for the accompany of her husband and expressing her deep affection. In the lines 7 to 8, she recalls the shyness she felt at the time of their marriage, where the original lines: "十四为君妇，羞颜未尝开。 低头向暗壁，千唤不一回", Pound renders this as: "At fourteen I married My Lord you. I never laughed, being bashful. Lowering my head, I looked at the wall. Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back" (Pound, 1957, p. 53) This version significantly reduces the narrative context, omitting the husband's repeated calling, the sense of emotional avoidance, and the psychological tension between the two figures, condensing instead the scene into a solitary gesture of introspection and emotional withdrawal. Yet by fifteen, her heart has opened to love: "her brows finally lifted, and she wished to be united with him even unto dust and ashes." From the original line: "十五始展眉，愿同尘与灰。常存抱柱信，岂上望夫台". Yet by fifteen, her inner emotional state begins to change: "her brows finally lifted, and she wished to be united with him even unto dust and ashes." This transformation reflects a shift from emotional repression to outward expression. Pound captures this transformation with characteristic intensity in his rendering: "At fifteen I stopped scowling, I desired my dust to be mingled with yours. Forever and forever and forever. Why should I climb the look-out?" (Ibid.) Pound's version preserves the emotional core of the original while amplifying the heroine's voice, allowing her to express her emotions and feelings with boldness.

Pound's decision to foreground the "wall" reflects a broader pattern in his translational poetics. In rendering the classic Chinese imagery into English, he does not aim to preserve every literal nuance; rather, he distills the emotional essence and projects it through culturally resonant symbols. The wall here, as in other poems such as "Song youren" and "Song youren ru shu", functions as both a physical and psychological boundary, an object onto which emotion is cast, and through which silence, distance, and longing are communicated. Viewed cross-culturally, Pound's treatment of this image demonstrates a kind of emotional equivalence. Although the surface language differs, classic Chinese and English poetic traditions operating within distinct rhetorical frameworks, the affective structure remains recognizable. From parting between friends to the longing of a wife awaiting her absent husband, the emotional condition of "separation" is refracted repeatedly through the figure of the wall. This consistency suggests that Pound was not merely translating text but rather reconstructing an emotional architecture that could resonate within the symbolic order of his own modernist milieu.

In Pound's translation, the metaphor of the "wall" reflects the emotional perception of desolation in the environment and a deep-seated personal loneliness. In several other translations within *Cathay*, Pound continues to employ the image of the "wall" as a recurring motif, reinforcing its symbolic weight across diverse poetic contexts. In "Gufeng: tianjing sanyueshi"古风·天津三月時, in original lines 5 to 8 "前水复后水，古今相续流。 新人非旧人，年年桥上游", roughly translates as "The earlier waves give way to those that follow, time flowing endlessly from age to age. The new replace the old, yet each year people wander the same bridge again." Li Bai's poem evokes emotion through scenery, revealing the perpetual yet ever-changing principle of nature. Within this enduring natural order, however, the human world has long since changed, things remain, but people are no longer the same. Following the four lines are "鸡鸣海色动，谒帝罗公侯。月落西上阳，余辉半城楼". A roughly literal translation would render this as "At the crow of the rooster, the sea glimmers into motion; nobles and ministers line up to wait for the emperor. The moon sets west of Shangyang, and its remaining light shines upon the city towers." Li Bai reflects the rhythm between nature and political order. Furthermore, the image of "the moon casting its final glow over city towers" evokes a fleeting moment of splendor, suggesting the passing of worldly glory and subtly resonating with Li Bai's deeper meditation on the rise and fall of history. Hence, Pound translates it as: "The sea's colour moves at the dawn, and the princes still stand in rows, about the throne. And the moon falls over the portals of Sei-go-yo, and clings to the walls and the gate-top." (ibid. p. 54)

Here, Pound introduced "wall" as a visual anchor, despite its absence in the original Chinese line. The verb "clings" further imbues the walls with emotional texture, suggesting a lingering, reluctant farewell of the light, as if the moonlight itself resists departure. The wall is no longer a static architectural detail, but a surface that absorbs and reflects transitory beauty and loss. Through this, Pound once again transforms spatial imagery into an emotional exposure. Beyond this, the wall may also be read as a symbolic projection of the poet's inner tension between social ambition and spiritual retreat. It evokes a sense of temporal estrangement, of a world in constant change, where time cannot be held still and all things eventually fade. In this way, the wall becomes a threshold not only between architectural inside and outside, but also between permanence and impermanence.

A more desolate variation of the wall motif appears in "Gufeng:huguan" 古风·胡关, "荒城空大漠，边邑无遗堵", is rendered by Pound as: "Desolate castle, the sky, the wide desert. There is no wall left to this village" (ibid. p. 55). This stark statement of absence, pared down and unembellished, concludes a sequence describing autumnal decay, enemy threat, and imperial ruin. While the word "堵" in classical Chinese refers to a "block" or fragment of wall, Pound universalizes it into "wall" itself, emphasizing total collapse rather than lingering remains. The loss of the wall becomes not just physical destruction, but a metaphor for cultural disintegration, erasure, and forgotten history. The "desolate castle" and "wide desert" that precede it further magnify this emptiness, creating a spatial vastness that contrasts sharply with the precise and bounded nature of a wall. Its absence, paradoxically, marks the scene more forcefully than its presence would.

Above all, these examples demonstrate that Pound's repeated invocation of the "wall", whether present, touched by moonlight, or hauntingly absent, serves as a flexible poetic device through which themes of decay, memory, parting, inner struggling, and transience are expressed. From "Changgan xing"'s inward solitude, to "Gufeng:huguan", and now to the symbol of frontier desolation, the "wall" travels across poems as both physical construct and emotional structure. Pound's use of this image suggests that in translating Chinese poetry, he was not merely recovering classical scenes but rebuilding them within the emotional and symbolic vocabulary of modernist English verse.

3. The Emotional Equivalence In Pound's Translation

To fully understand Pound's translation of terms such as 郭 (outer wall), 壁 (interior wall), 墙 (external wall), 城 (city), and 堵 (wall fragment or block) as "wall", we must begin with the cultural and symbolic weight this word carries in the Western context. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a wall is defined as "a vertical structure, often made of stone or brick, that divides or surrounds something." (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) While seemingly straightforward, the word "wall" has accumulated rich symbolic resonance in Western literature: it can signify not only physical separation, but also emotional distance, psychological resistance, social division, or protective boundaries. This symbolic elasticity is evident in the work of many modern poets, most notably Robert Frost, as Mahmood et al. (2021) argued in their stylistic analysis of "Mending Wall", Frost uses the wall motif to explore deeper tensions around alienation, boundaries, and human connection.

Furthermore, a closer examination of Pound's repeated use of the term "wall" in his translations reveals two major contributing factors: the broader socio-historical context in which he was working, and the specific aims and intentions that

shaped his translation practice. Pound's translations of Li Bai's poetry were produced around 1915, a period marked by profound political and cultural upheaval. The turn of the century had ushered in sweeping transformations brought about by technological innovation and economic shifts. Yet paradoxically, amid this rapid progress, there emerged a growing sense of emotional alienation and a widening gap in human connection. The "wall" in this discourse may be read as a metaphorical response to such conditions, a symbol of both separation and the desire to reestablish emotional intimacy in a fractured modern world.

While Pound often succeeds in capturing the artistic conception and visual tone of the Chinese originals, his translations also raise important questions about interpretive fidelity, especially in his recurring use of the word "wall". These examples highlight a deeper tension between Chinese and Western poetics. Classical Chinese poetry privileges implication (意) over explicit imagery (象), as expressed in aesthetic concepts such as "得意忘言", grasp the meaning and forget the words (Yip, 1997). In this tradition, the image is a conduit for evoking inner meaning, not an end in itself. Therefore, once the implication has been transmitted, the surface image may be discarded. In contrast, the Western notion of "imagery", particularly within the Imagist tradition, tends to conflate "象" (image) and "意" (meaning) into a single, visualized unit. The term "意象", which in Chinese refers to the dynamic relationship between idea and image, is often translated in English simply as "image", erasing its dual structure. As a result, Pound's translations, while rich in visual texture, often emphasize image at the expense of meaning. His "walls" are vivid, symbolically potent, and emotionally resonant, but they sometimes obscure the abstract philosophical or allusive dimension of the original text. In privileging poetic visibility over interpretive depth, Pound reorients the Chinese poem toward a Western aesthetics of immediacy, tangibility, and emotional clarity.

Translations of Li Bai's poetry vary significantly depending on the translators' cultural contexts and poetic orientations. For instance, Xu Yuanchong's "Three Beauties" principle (meaning, sound, and form) reflects a modern Chinese attempt to preserve both semantic integrity and aesthetic elegance (Xu, 1984), while Herbert Giles's metrical translations follow a Victorian formalism that prioritizes rhythm over lexical precision. In contrast, Ezra Pound's approach, rooted in modernist poetics, represents a decisive break from both semantic fidelity and metrical formalism. Rather than aiming to reproduce the source text, Pound sought to reimagine it through the lens of Imagism and experimental modernism. Lexical choices such as "wall" exemplify his poetic strategy, not as mistranslations, but as deliberate symbolic interventions. For Pound, translation was not an act of equivalence but of creative transposition, in which the original imagery is transformed into symbolically resonant and emotionally accessible forms within a new poetic and cultural framework. This poetics of transpositional resonance underscores his rejection of traditional constraints in favor of expressive freedom. In comparison, Xu Yuanchong's translations reflect a modern Chinese effort to preserve philosophical meaning and aesthetic balance through his "Three Beauties" principle, while Herbert Giles's work embodies the Victorian English tradition of poetic decorum and regular meter. Positioned between these two poles, Pound's translations enact what Pearlman (1980, pp. 461–480) terms "creative betrayal" generating a space where Eastern and Western poetics collide and fuse, shaped not only by the text but also by the translator's historical context, cultural assumptions, and aesthetic priorities.

Pound's translations convey the emotional essence of Li Bai's poetry, even as they pass through a distinctly different cultural and language. His frequent departures from literal fidelity can be understood through what Escarpit calls "creative treason", the translator's conscious re-creation of meaning that revitalizes the original through transformation rather than replication. (Escarpit, 1971, p. 85) For Pound, translation was not merely a linguistic exercise but discovering within different texts new sources of intellectual and aesthetic vitality capable of energizing the cultural transition of his own social background. Through this deliberate creativity, he sought to bridge cultural distance and evoke emotional resonance among readers, achieving what might be described as an emotional equilibrium between languages and traditions.

Based on this notion of "creative treason", Pound does not merely translate classic Chinese poetry to the Western world; he mediates affective experience across civilizations. His seemingly radical adjustments are, in fact, deliberate attempts to preserve what would otherwise remain incommunicable: the poetic core displaced by time, language, and cultural distance. Xu Ping (2006) extends this idea by emphasizing that translation is inherently rebellious because it relocates the original text within a new linguistic and cultural system, and yet it is creative because it endows the source with renewed vitality and meaning. Within this framework, Pound's lexical inventions serve a dual purpose: they evoke emotional resonance for modern Western readers while reconstructing the atmosphere of solitude and transience that pervades the Chinese originals. In this way, Pound constructs what may be termed a poetic architecture of emotion, one that departs from the source text's surface form but remains profoundly faithful to its inner spirit.

Within the broader movement of modernist poetics, Pound's translation practice aligned closely with the Imagist commitment to restoring language to its pure expressive function. Rather than adhering to metrical regularity or literal correspondence, he sought precision through condensation and symbolic resonance. In this light, Pound's recurring use of the word "wall" in his renderings of Li Bai is far from a linguistic accident; it constitutes an act of symbolic transplantation, whereby a Chinese poetic image is reconfigured within a Western cultural idiom already imbued with emotional and philosophical significance. In English literary consciousness, the term "wall" extends beyond its spatial meaning, it evokes affective and ideological dimensions such as separation, solitude, protection, and resistance. By integrating this symbol into his translations, Pound constructs a site of emotional tension between interior and exterior, self and other, past and present. Through this image, he channels the sense of parting and transience central to Li Bai's poetics into a form accessible to his modernist readership.

4. Conclusion

This paper has examined Ezra Pound's distinctive approach to translating Li Bai's poetry, particularly through his recurrent use of the image of the "wall". By embedding Western emotional metaphors into Chinese poetic texts, Pound was not merely translating language, but reconstructing aesthetic and affective frameworks to align with early 20th-century modernist poetics. His use of "wall" demonstrates a shift from the Chinese emphasis on 意 (implication) toward a Western privileging of 象 (image), thereby recreating the emotional resonances of Li Bai's poems.

Comparative readings with translations by Xu Yuanchong and Herbert Giles reveal that while Pound's renderings often depart from textual fidelity, they reflect a deliberate negotiation between cultural accessibility and imagist innovation. Notably, his translation errors, such as rendering "孤蓬" as "dead grass" or "青梅" as "blue plum", underscore not only linguistic challenges, but also ideological filters shaped by his limited engagement with Chinese intertextual traditions. Yet these deviations are not simply mistranslations; rather, they highlight Pound's vision of translation as creative rewriting, driven by symbolic substitution and political-aesthetic agendas.

Indeed, Pound's translations must be understood within the dual contexts of Imagism and his utopian admiration for Confucian order, which he believed could serve as a corrective to Western modernity. His choice to infuse Chinese texts with Western tropes, such as the gentlemanly bowing in "who bow over their clasped hands at a distance", reveals both a cultural idealization and an orientalist gaze shaped by the imagined "Confucian utopia". Still, such acts of cultural re-inscription expanded the global reach of classical Chinese poetry and contributed significantly to East–West literary dialogue.

Ultimately, Pound's translations are not to be evaluated solely by the standards of fidelity or accuracy, but as interventions in a larger discourse of poetic transmission and transformation. The "wall", as introduced by Pound, is more than a structural image—it becomes a metaphorical surface where affect, ideology, and aesthetics converge. Through such translations, Li Bai's poetry not only enters the Anglophone world, but is also refashioned to resonate within a modernist ethos. In this light, Pound's work remains a pivotal—if controversial—milestone in the transnational life of Chinese poetry.

References

Alexander, M. (1997). *Ezra Pound as translator. Translation and Literature, 6*(1), 23–30.

Apter, R. S. (1980). *Creative translation: The influence of Ezra Pound on the translation of poetry* [Doctoral dissertation, Fordham University].

Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). *Wall.* In *English–Chinese (Traditional) dictionary.* Retrieved April 6, 2023, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-chinese-traditional/wall

Eliot, T. S. (Ed.). (1952). *Ezra Pound: Selected poems.* Faber & Faber.

Escarpit, R. (1971). *Sociology of literature* (2nd ed.). Cass.

Giles, H. A. (1898). *Chinese poetry in English verse.* B. Quaritch.

Graham, A. C. (2008). *Poems of the late T'ang.* New York Review of Books.

Li, B., & Wang, Q. (Eds.). (1999). *Li Taibai quanji* [The complete works of Li Bai]. Zhonghua Book Company.

Mahmood, M. I., Shamim, A., & Mobeen, M. (2021). Stylistic analysis of Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall." *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq, 4*(2), 167–174.

Mair, V. H. (Ed.). (1994). *The Columbia anthology of traditional Chinese literature.* Columbia University Press.

Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a science of translating: With special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating.* E. J. Brill.

Nida, E. A. (2001). Dynamic equivalence in translating. In *An encyclopedia of translation: Chinese–English, English–Chinese* (pp. 223–230). Chinese University Press.

Pearlman, D. (1980). Ezra Pound: America's wandering Jew. *Paideuma, 9*(3), 461–480.

Pound, E. (1957). *Selected poems of Ezra Pound.* New Directions Publishing.

Pound, E. (1963). *Ezra Pound: Translations.* New Directions.

Pound, E. (1975). Melopoeia, phanopoeia, and logopoeia. In *Twentieth century poetry: Critical essays and documents* (pp. 21–22). University of Chicago Press.

Rabassa, G. (1974). If this be treason: Translation and its possibilities. *The American Scholar,* 43(1), 29–39.

Tinios, E. (2007, April 10). *China and the Chinese in Hokusai's book illustrations.* Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan.

Trachtenberg, Z. M. (1997). Good neighbors make good fences: Frost's "Mending Wall." *Philosophy and Literature, 21*(1), 114–122.

Wu, Q. (2006). 庞德与中国文化兼论外国文学在中国文化现代化中的作用 [Ezra Pound and the Chinese culture]. 上海: 上海外语教育出版社 [Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press].

Xu, J. (2024). The origins of Xu Yuanchong's thought on translation. In *New thoughts on translation* (pp. 133–150). Springer Nature Singapore.

Xu, Y. (1984). 翻译的艺术 [The art of translation]. 北京: 北京对外翻译出版公司 [Beijing Foreign Translation Publishing Company].

Xu, Y. (2007). *Selected poems of Li Bai* (pp. 29–63). Hunan People's Publishing House.

Xu, Y. (2015). *Classical Chinese poetry and prose series* (14-book set, Chinese–English version). China Intercontinental Press.

Yip, W. L. (1997). *Chinese poetry, revised: An anthology of major modes and genres.* Duke University Press.