

The Enlightenment of Xu Yuanchong's Three Beauties Principle on the English Translation of Song Ci —— Taking Ci of Li Yu as an Example

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Abstract. Among these excellent representatives of Chinese culture, Song Ci can never be ignored. It's just because it's so wonderful that it's very difficult to translate it into English. When many translators and readers get stuck, Professor Xu Yuanchong's three beauties principle answers the doubts of everyone as if it were initiation. Through the introduction of Song Ci and Professor Xu Yuanchong's three beauties principle, this paper analyzes the translated Song Ci under the three beauties principle, in order to let more people to realize the advantages of this principle and to spread the excellent culture of our country.

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Besides the innate nature of survival and reproduction, the most ancient thing that human society inherits is the culture of each country. As one of the representatives of Chinese culture, the perfect translation of Song Ci has a positive significance for the spread of Chinese culture.

Mr. Xu Yuanchong, a Chinese translator, once put forward the famous "Three Beauty Principles"^[1], namely the beauty of meaning, sound and shape, and the most important one is the beauty of meaning. The author believes that this is exactly what translation of Song Ci needs.

1.2 Objectives

Song Ci is the peak of literature in Chinese Song dynasty. Not only does China want to spread Song Ci, but also the world needs such a beautiful literature. On this basis, the purpose of this paper is to further help these people to understand and introduce the three beauty principles of Xu Yuanchong, and provide a reference for the English translation of Song Ci in China.

1.3 The Significance of the Thesis

The goal of this paper is to show the advantages of translation under the three beauties principle by introducing Xu Yuanchong's three beauties principle and a comparative analysis is made of the Song Ci translated according to the principle of "three beauties", free translation and literal translation, so that to publicize the translation method of the three beauties principle, and to provide a practicable choice for Song Ci translation.

1.4 The Layout of the Thesis

The paper consists of five chapters. The first part is the introduction. And chapter two is literature review, including the translation of Chinese poetry at home and abroad. The third one is theory framework, consisting of difference between different translation methods in translating Song Ci and the merit of the three beauties principle. And then, this paper will provide several examples to compare and analyze the advantages of translating Song Ci with the three beauties principle. At the last part, this paper will give a conclusion and a generalization of the thesis, pointing out the main idea of the author and figuring out the significance of this research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Translation of Chinese Poetry at Home and Abroad

2.1.1 The Translation History of Chinese Poetry by English

The process of translating Chinese poetry began in the United States. Before and after the First World War, East Asia, as a strategic focus of the United States, was highly valued by the United States. During that period, Sino US relations were quite friendly. There were many institutions studying Chinese literature in the United States. In the Second World War, with the same strategical targets, China and the United States entered the honeymoon period, which was further conducive to the translation of Chinese classics and literary works^[2].

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Under such circumstances, the English translation of Chinese poetry has entered a period of prosperity. Among them, Arthur Welley, an American translator, translated 170 Chinese poems in addition to *The Book of Songs*. He was hailed as the most outstanding Orientalist in the first half of the 20th century. It can be seen that the English translation of Chinese poetry is of great importance in literary translation.

2.1.2 The Translation History of Chinese Poetry by Domestic Scholars

The first poem translated independently by Chinese scholars is the *English Rhyme of Tang Poetry* translated by Tsai Ting Kan, One of the most outstanding translators in the period of the Republic of China. According to the reading habits of foreigners, Mr. Tsai Ting Kan translated the five character quatrains and seven character quatrains in Tang poetry into the five syllables and six syllables iambic in traditional English poetry. After Mr. Tsai Ting Kan started the translation of poetry, a large number of Chinese scholars began to devote themselves to the translation of Chinese poetry. Among the outstanding works are *Lisao*(one of the works by Qu Yuan) translated by Mr. Yang Xianyi according to the heroic double line format prevailing in the 18th century in England, *Dongpo Poetry Selected* by Mr. Lin Yutang and *Quyuan Poetry Selected* by Mr. Sun Dayu. All these works provide a reference for Contemporary Chinese scholars to translate poems into English.

2.2 The Present Situations of Chinese Classical Poetry Translation

Nowadays, there are many literary translation works with lower quality. In China, some problems in the translated works often occur, such as over translation, mistranslation, omission^[3], etc. The reasons for these problems are not only the lack of the translator's own ability, but also the lack of correct translation principles as a standard, which can provide them with a guide in translation.

Yan Fu once stressed the translation standards of faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance (Yan Fu, 1897). However, even today, many scholars have great differences on how to translate poems. The obscurity of Song Ci and the lack of translator's ability lead to the inaccuracy of Song Ci translation. And it is difficult to change this situation without a good principle to guide the translation of Song Ci.

3 Theory Framework

3.1 Frequently-Used Translation Methods

3.1.1 Literal and Free Translation

Literal translation is a one-to-one translation method based on the original word for word, which appeared during the May 4th Movement in 1911 in China, and it emphasized that it must be faithful to the original text, so

that translation can be "expressive" and "elegant". Literal translation is to clarify the original meaning comprehensively and maintain the original style ^[4]. Sometimes even the emotions or feelings contained in the original text should be expressed directly.

On contrary, free translation is based on the content of the original text. It only requires the original text to be expressed in general, without paying too much attention to details, and only requires the natural and smooth translation ^[4]. When using direct translation, if the original structure and expression cannot be directly adopted, we must change the sentence structure and expression according to the expression form and characteristics to convey the original meaning.

There are usually many differences between the original language and the translated language in words, grammar, variation and rhetoric, we can only use appropriate methods to convey the original meaning and reproduce the original effect. In the translation process, to make the language clear, persuasive, and consistent with language habits, the translator must try to follow the language customs and correct usage, rather than stick to the original expression mode.

3.1.2 Shortcomings of Literal and Free Translation in Translating Song Ci

Literal translation and free translation, as the two most basic translation strategies, have their own applicable texts. For most literature, literal translation and free translation are both great translation methods. The translator can choose the translated version to be closer to the original rhythm or meaning by the two methods.

But for the translation of Song Ci, they both have their own limitations. As a special literary genre in ancient China, the meaning and form of Song Ci are inseparable. Song Ci is actually a form of song in the Song Dynasty of China, so it has a high requirement for rhythm, which is also a difficulty in translating it and requires that the translated version not only respect the original meaning, but also the original phonological and formal beauty ^[5].

Although literal translation is not equivalent to dead translation, there are many defects in the presentation of the original content. This defect is particularly prominent when translating Song Ci. Some words and phrases appearing in Song Ci, even for Chinese people, need to be carefully conjectured. If Song Ci is literally translated, it will inevitably lead to deviations or even misunderstandings of foreign friends.

Although free translation can accurately express the meaning of Song Ci, it may cause another problem, that is, it is not possible to express the rhythm of Song Ci well if the translation only pays attention to the original meaning.

3.2 The Three Beauty Principle's Positive Influence on Translation

In view of the dilemma of domestic translation, Mr. Xu Yuanchong, on the basis of inheriting the predecessors'

theories and integrating his whole life's experience in translation, put forward his own translation theory "optimization theory", which is generalized by his words of "beautifying art, creating excellence like competition" (Xu Yuanchong, 2000), and specifically discussed the differences between Chinese and Western cultures in terms of the similarity of form, spirit, truth and beauty, translation and creation and so on^[6]. Xu believes that the beauty of meaning, rhyme and form is the ontology of translated poetry. Since Professor Xu Yuanchong put forward the three beauties principle, it has exerted a great influence on the field of translation. Many articles only explain the contents of the three beauties principle, but do not give real examples. This is the point that this paper wants to add.

Since Professor Xu Yuanchong put forward the three beauties principle, it has exerted a great influence on the field of translation. Although the theory is simple and easy to be understand, it is extremely difficult for a translator to translate a work that can achieve the three beauties principle. Many articles only explain the contents of the three beauties principle, but do not give real examples to let readers feel the advantages of the three beauty principles. This is also a point that this paper wants to add.

4 Appreciation of Professor Xu's English Translation of Song Ci under the Three Beauties Principle

4.1 Eternal Emperor of Song Ci

Li Yu is the last monarch of the Southern Tang Dynasty. He is not politically competent, but he has extraordinary artistic talent. He is regarded as "Eternal Emperors of Ci" by later generations.

There are more than 30 poems of Li Yu in the world. In terms of content, it can be divided into two periods: the first period mainly reflects the life of the court and the love of men and women. The style is beautiful and soft, although the style is not taken away from the flowery poets. However, the description of characters and scenes has a greater artistic summarization power than the flowery poets, and some of the words also show heavy sorrow (such as "Qing Ping Yue • Bai Lai Chun Ban"); the later works reflect the pain of the death of the country, which is mournful and sad, far-reaching artistic conception.

Li Yu's position in the history of Ci poetry is more determined by his artistic achievements. Li Yu's main contribution to the development of Ci lies in the expansion of the field of Ci expression. His works are beautiful, pure in emotion, lack of rational restraint due to pure feeling, natural, refined and expressive in language, with high generality and great originality in style.

4.2 The Only Person Who Translates Chinese Poetry in English and French

As same as Li Yu, Xu Yuanchong is also a talented scholar. Mr. Xu Yuanchong has been engaged in literary translation for more than 60 years. His translations including Chinese, English, French and other languages. The translation focuses on the translation of ancient Chinese poetry into English^[7]. As creating the method and theory of rhyme translation poetry, he is known as the only person who translates Chinese poetry in English and French.

Professor Xu grew up in a family of literati. His mother is good at painting. His uncle is a great translator and has translated "Wang Baochuan". He graduated from the Southwest United University and translated Lin Huiyin's "Don't Throw It Out" into English for publication. As a young man, he has made his debut in the translation world.

After decades of accumulation of translation life, he put forward the three beauties principle: beauty of rhyme, beauty of form and beauty of meaning (Xu Yuanchong, 1987). Some people praised the three beauties principle and some criticized it. Xu Yuanchong explained: "western translation stresses equivalence. 90% of the words in their main characters are equivalent. Chinese is different from other languages, only half of them are equivalent. Although equivalence does not violate the objective law, it does not play a subjective initiative. Without distorting the author's meaning, translation must embody the taste, essence and soul of a national culture."(Xu Yuanchong, 2000)

4.3 Li Yu's Poems Translation Appreciation

As the emperor of ancient poetry, Li Yu's works can be said to be the pinnacle of Song Ci. Mr. Xu Yuanchong is known as "the only person who translates poems into English"(Xu Yuanchong, 2004), and can also be said to be the leader in present translation world. The work created by the two together is of great appreciation value.

Let's take a look at Li Yu's *Xiangjianhuan* (Li Yu, 975). This work was written after Li Yu lost his country and was captured. One of the English translations was translated like this:

"The Rouge-Colored Tear (To the Tune of Xiangjianhuan)

Soon, the spring splendor fades
from the flowers

in the woods, too soon.

There's no stopping the chill rain at dawn,
or the shill wind at night.

The memories of the rouge colored tears,
of the stays overnight amid cups...

When will all that happen again?

Life is long in sadness

as water keeps flowing and flowing east." (Qiu Xiaolong, 2019)

It is obvious that this translation adopts the method of literal translation without following the three beauties principle, as far as possible to retain the format of the original text, and it is still very catchy after skimming,

but if you are familiar with the original text, you will know that this translation is not accurate in explaining the meaning of the original. In particular, the sentence "The memories of the rouge colored tears of the stays overnight amid cups" is inconsistent with the original meaning, and the full text does not reflect the emotion of Li Yu's creation of the work. Let's appreciate another version of free translation:

"Joy at Meeting

The spring scarlet of the forest blossoms fades and falls,

Too soon, too soon;

There is no escape from the cold rain of morning,
the wind at dusk.

The tears on your rouged cheeks,

Keep us drinking together.

Thus the ctemal orrows of human life,

like great rivers flowing ever" (Daniel Bryant, 2011)

Compared with the previous version, this translation obviously grasps the meaning of the original text. If it is a novel translation, it is very good. But the beauty of Song Ci lies not only in its content, but also in its style. However, the translation of rhymes is very plain, without the charm and melody of the original text. The following version of Mr. Xu Yuanchong is translated according to the three beauties principle. When he translated this work, he started from the meaning, kept the original content, standardized the format of each sentence, tried to be consistent with the original sentence pattern and length, and added appropriate rhymes at the end of the sentence, which not only preserves the content of the original work, but also displays the metrical beauty of the Ci properly:

"Tune: Crows Crying at Nigh

Springs rosy color fades from forest flowers

Too soon, too soon.

How can they bear cold morning showers

And winds at noon?

Your rouged tears like crimson rain

Will keep me drink in woe.

When shall we meet again?

The stream of life with endless grief will overflow."

(Xu Yuanchong, 2019)

As mentioned before, the advantage of translating Song Ci lies in the perfect understanding of the original works. That's why the second translation is better than the first. But if we only understand the content of the original work and neglect the rules of Song Ci, it cannot be called a good work. Only Mr. Xu Yuanchong's translation completely narrated the content of the original work, and preserved the sentence patterns and rhymes of the original work. It can be said that the translation of Song Ci under the three beauties principle is the combination of the advantages of literal translation and free translation.

5 Conclusion

Poetry translation is difficult, especially for ancient Chinese poetry translation. How to translate these

obscure poems into place and make foreigners willing to accept them are urgent problems in China.

Although Song Ci is beautiful, it has strict requirements for its format and use of words, which makes it difficult for many Chinese to understand it perfectly. It is more difficult to translate it well in English.

Mr. Xu Yuanchong's three beauties principle has opened up a bright road for this dilemma. The translation of Song Ci under the principle not only retains the beauty of the original, but also facilitates the acceptance and absorption of international friends. This makes Song Ci no longer an elegant art belonging to a specific country, but a world-renowned literature.

According to the three beauties principle, the translated works have beautiful words and profound meanings [8], which is what Song Ci should look like. This paper hopes that through the introduction of the three beauty principles and the appreciation of a good translation, more people will pay attention to the three beauty principles, which can be applied to the translation of all Song Ci and spread the excellent culture of China.

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