

Translation of Classics by JX Native Literati of Song Dynasty from the Perspective of Translation Aesthetics*

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Abstract—With the significant growth of China's comprehensive national power, Chinese culture should not only "bring in" but also "go out". Chinese culture is extensive and profound, and classical literature has reached its peak in the Tang and Song dynasties. Jiangxi has been full of natural resources and outstanding people since ancient times, especially in the Song dynasty, when people of talent came forth in large numbers and created brilliant heritage of classic literary works for their offspring. Therefore, study on the translation of classics by JX native literati of Song Dynasty has very important academic value, application value and popularization meaning. Based on the modern translation aesthetics theory, this paper discusses how English translation of Chinese classics represents the beauty and the aesthetic value of the original from the perspective of rhetorical devices, form, images, and emotion respectively, in the hope to carry forward Chinese classics and Chinese culture.

Index Terms—translation aesthetics, English translation of Chinese classics, aesthetic representation

I. INTRODUCTION

Jiangxi culture had been developing for hundreds of years from the Eastern Jin to the Sui and Tang dynasties, and had reached its peak in the Song dynasty. During the prime time of Jiangxi culture, the prosperity of literature was a prominent mark. The phenomenon of Jiangxi literature in the Song dynasty has formed a brilliant landscape in the course of Chinese history. According to *The Complete Works of Song*, there were 16813 literati in the Song dynasty, among which 1322 were from Jiangxi, including the leaders on the literature arena at that time, such as Ou Yangxiu, Wang Anshi, and Huang Tingjian. These brilliant literati's works have been the culture gems of the whole Chinese people, reflecting the beauty of the ancient Chinese, the aesthetic standards and aesthetic value that people pursued in the Song dynasty.

Many brilliant translators such as Xu Yuanchong and Wang Rongpei have translated Chinese classics to popularize Chinese culture. Their translation works, whether from the sound, word, and sentence of formal system or from the image and emotion of non-formal system, are rare aesthetic masterpieces. Classics translation has always been a heat topic of study, and scholars often discuss it from various points of view. For example, Professor Wang Hong (2015) has conducted massive research on the strategies of Chinese classics translation and dealt with the translation of Chinese classics under the contemporary context. Nevertheless, seldom scholars undertake a study on the translation of classics by JX native literati of Song dynasty. Based on this foundation, this paper takes some works by Jiangxi native literati in the Song dynasty as examples, and through the comparison of the source texts and the target texts, analyzes how the target language embodies the beauty and the aesthetic value of the original works from the perspective of modern translation aesthetics.

II. TRANSLATION AESTHETICS

It is generally acknowledged that western aesthetics begins in the ancient Greek period. Plato (427-347BC) is the first one who discusses aesthetics from the perspective of philosophical speculation, and he puts forward "beauty in itself", the relativity and absoluteness of beauty, and the theory of beauty and epistemology. Chinese aesthetics also stems from philosophy. The concept of beauty is proposed by Lao Zi (571-471BC), who believes that honest words are not beautiful, and beautiful words are not true; and pursues the beauty of nothingness. From then on, this notion has become the standard of translation, which can be embodied in the translation thought of Gao Shian (the buddhist scripture translator in the Eastern Han Dynasty) and Zhi Qian (the buddhist scripture translator in the Three Kingdoms Period). Xuan Zang (602-664) is an outstanding translator, who translated 1335 volumes of buddhist scriptures during

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19 years. The core of his translation theory is the beauty of sound, marking the acme of the ancient Chinese translation. The classical aesthetic propositions of these ancestors have special significance to the formation of modern translation aesthetics.

Chinese translation had been in downturn since the first peak of translation of the buddhist scriptures until the most famous translation theory "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance" in modern China was put forward by Yan Fu (1898) in his translation of *Evolution and Ethics*, which indicates the second climax of Chinese translation. The "elegance" emphasizes the beauty of language. Before Yan Fu, Ma Jianzhong (1894) has proposed the theory of "good translation", striving to imitate the tone and the style of the original. Thence, the translators, such as Lu Xun and Lin Yutang have made the theory of "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance" more firmly established in China. In the 1820s, Chinese translation theory changed rapidly, and literary translation was combined with aesthetics. The theory of keeping the charm of the original proposed by Zhu Shenghao; the meaning aptness rather than form identity by Fu Lei, and the principle of "transmigration" by Qian Zhongshu, all of these have advanced the development of translation aesthetics.

As early as the in the 1980s, Zhu Guangqian, a Chinese famous aesthetic master, has put forward the concept of "translation aesthetics". In 1992, *Comparative Aesthetics of Literary Translation* written by Xi Yongji is the first monograph on translation aesthetics in China, which gives affirmation to the artistic value and aesthetic value of the source language and the target language. In 1993, Qian Guanlian's *Aesthetic Linguistics* establishes the foundation for the formation of modern translation aesthetics theory, which elaborates the issues in linguists from an aesthetic point of view. In the same year, Fu Zhongxuan also published *Practical Translation Aesthetics*, in which he expounds the aesthetic subject and aesthetic object in translation, aesthetic activities and aesthetic standards, taking an important step for the construction of translation aesthetics. Liu Miqing (1995) published the book of *An Introduction to Translation Aesthetics* in Taiwan which triggered heated responses. Not only absorbing the research achievements of predecessors, this book also discusses the artistic and scientific significance of translation, the origin of translation theories, the problems of literary translation, translation aesthetic ideal and aesthetic representation and so forth. This book constructs a complete and scientific theoretical framework for the theory of translation aesthetics. Mao Ronggui (2005) further discusses the beauty of Chinese and English respectively and the fuzzy beauty of interlingual conversion in the translation process in his book *Translation Aesthetics*, which is the symbol of the maturity of translation aesthetics and expands the fields of translation study.

III. AESTHETIC REPRESENTATION OF BEAUTY IN TRANSLATION OF THE SONG CI BY JIANGXI NATIVE LITERATI

A. *Reproduction of Beauty in Rhetorical Devices*

The rhetorical devices, a collection of language expression methods, are used to improve the impressiveness and vividness of the language according to the needs of expression by modifying and adjusting the statement. The common rhetorical devices are: metaphor, personification, exaggeration, parallelism, duality, repetition, rhetorical question, and rhetorical question. Rhetorical devices are widely used in song lyrics, which are usually short in length but vivid in language. The figures of speech in song ci help to create a picturesque scene for its readers, and thence revealing the emotion of the authors.

Example 1:

The original:

黄庭坚 清平乐

春归何处，寂寞无行路。若有人知春去处，唤取归来同住。
春无踪迹谁知，除非问取黄鹂。百啭无人能解，因风飞过蔷薇。

The translation:

Celebrating Peace and Order^{[10](P. 59)}

Oh! Where is Spring?

I know not where to go in lonely dismay.

Would anyone who knows Spring's whereabouts kindly bring

Him word, requesting that he would with me stay?

Alas! Who knows, as no trace is to be found?

To seek th'oriole's advice I may well try.

Yet unfathomable's th'bird's twittering sound;

With a gust of wind o'er th'rose bush th'fowl does fly.

Analysis: In 1105, on the way of exile to Yizhou, Guangxi Province, Huang Tingjian wrote this piece of song ci to express his deep affection for spring and to reflect the political situation. At the beginning, the author expresses his ignorance of where spring has been and his desire to consult others. When no one knows, he asks the bird for help but in vain, in that the words of the bird are not intelligible to him, which is more disappointing than a question without a reply. The poet uses the Chinese characters "归", "行路" and "住" that are used to describe human to personalize spring. In the poet's eyes, spring is more than a season, it can be said as a man, or even a friend, who he wants to live with. The rhetorical device incarnates the author's affectation for spring. Therefore, the translator should pay heed to the

personification of this lyric. “Personification is a rhetorical devices which attributes human characteristics to impersonal things, such as animals, inanimate objects, or abstractions. It is usually employed to add vividness to expression”. (Zhang, 2005, p.185). From the English version, it is obvious that spring has been translated as a person. The words “whereabouts” and “stay” accord with the original Chinese characters “行路” and “住”, then the words “him” and “he” explicitly indicate that spring is a man. Moreover, the sentence “唤取归来同住” is translated as “bring Him word, requesting that he would with me stay”. The translator adds the phrase “bring Him word” intensifying the personification of spring and showing the author’s nostalgia for spring. In a word, the translation reproduces the personification of the original, which not only reserves the beauty of rhetorical device, but also makes it easier for English readers to understand the poet’s pity for the past of spring.

Example 2:

The original

欧阳修 生查子

去年元夜时，花市灯如昼。月上柳梢头，人约黄昏後。

今年元夜时，月与灯依旧。不见去年人，泪湿春衫袖。

The translation:

Tune: Song of Hawthorn^{[6](P.152)}

Last festival of Vernal Moon,

The blooming lanterns bright as noon.

The moon above a willow tree

Shone on my lover close to me.

This festival comes now again,

The moon and lanterns bright as then.

But where’s my lover of last year?

My sleeves are wet with tear and tear.

Analysis: This piece of song ci describes the lovesickness. The first two lines portray a picture of the last Lantern Festival; the lantern fair bright as daylight, the moon, the willow tree, and nightfall create a romantic atmosphere for lovers to date. However, now the festival comes again, everything is the same as last year except the absence of my lover. It has the same effect as the “去年今日此门中，人面桃花相映红。人面不知何处去，桃花依旧笑春风”。 Through comparison between the two years, the happier I was, the lonelier I am. The English version also makes comparison between the Lantern Festival of this year and that of last year. In the first part “blooming lanterns”, “the moon above a willow tree” and “moon and lanterns bright as then” demonstrate the pageant of the festival in the past year. Amid this beautiful scene, my lover stood close to me. Although “my lover close to me” isn’t translated from word to word from the original, it’s safe to say that the translation embodies the happiness of the lovers dating on the evening of the Lantern Festival. As to the second part of this poem, the moon and lanterns are bright as last year, but “where’s my lover?” The rhetorical question has the effect of making the finishing point, not only retaining the comparison of the original but also highlighting the loneliness and lovesickness of the writer. The English version of this lyric fully represents the beauty of the original whether from the rhetorical device or from the emotional perspective, making the affection conveyed in the poem more vivid and genuine.

B. Reproduction of Beauty in Form

Form refers to the particular way something is, seems, looks or is presented. According to Liu Miqing (2005), material forms of aesthetic objects compose of the sound, rhythm and external appearance. Various literature genres have various forms. Song ci is a kind of music literature; the beauty of its rhythm is the most remarkable feature. And the characters are also visible in the external appearance; the upper stanza and lower stanza of song ci are often neatly symmetrical and repeated in the beautiful form. English poetry also has the beauty of form, and it lays emphasis on the beauty of sound; alliteration, assonance, and rhyme contribute a lot to the musical beauty of English poetry. As to the form of appearance, English poetry does not have strict requirement of the arrangement of words. Translators should pay attention to the differences between Chinese poetry and English poetry.

Example 3:

The original:

晏殊 蝶恋花

槛菊愁烟兰泣露(lu)，罗幕轻寒，燕子双飞去(qu)。明月不谙离恨苦(ku)，斜光到晓穿朱户(hu)。

昨夜西风凋碧树(shu)，独上高楼，望尽天涯路(lu)。欲寄彩笺兼尺素(su)，山长水阔知何处(chu)?

The translation:

Tune: Butterflies in Love With Flowers^{[7](P.73)}

Orchids shed tears with doleful asters in mist grey.

Silk curtain chill, a pair of swallows fly away.

The moon, knowing not parting grief, sheds slanting light

Though crimson windows all the night.

Last night the western breeze blew withered leaves off trees.
 I mount the tower high and strain my longing eye.
 I'll send a message to my dear,
 But endless ranges and streams sever us far and near.

Analysis: This is one of the masterpieces of the ci writer Yan Shu, and is also one of the most famous works of song ci. Yan Shu makes great achievements and contributions in literature. He can write both poetry and ci in an elegant and gorgeous style; his works is lucid and attractive in language and melodious and harmonious in tone. Xu Yuancong is an outstanding translator who emphasizes the beauty of images, sounds and forms. The upper stanza and the lower stanza of song ci have the same sentence pattern and are equal in the number of the characters, which can be regarded as a parallel structure. "Parallel structures are delicate, well-structured, and rhythmic in tone, thus giving the reader or listener a profound impression and at the same time being able to emphasize the meaning in a more economical way of expression." (Zhang, 2006, p.149) From the English version, the complete sentence "The moon, knowing not parting... all the night" is divided into two lines to create a visually parallel structure, which resembles the literary style of the old English narrative poem. Poems are usually increased in the number of words and expanded in the form of appearance when they are translated into English, while Xu Yuancong retains the Chinese poetry's beauty of form through enjambment. "The sentence of Chinese poetry is generally not broken, but enjambment is in line with the rules and forms of English classical poetic composition, which is of the effect of fostering strengths and circumventing weaknesses." (Xu, 1984, p.90). In addition, the enjambment creates the conditions for the beauty of rhythm. Each line of the English version is also well-rhymed in the form of "aabbdd" /aɪ/, /aɪt/, /ɪə/ respectively, which not only concurs with the rhythm of the original but also makes the translation close to the English poetry. Therefore, the translation completely embodies the beauty of form of appearance and the beauty of sound both in Chinese and English classical poems.

C. *Reproduction of Beauty in Image*

The discussion about image in China dates back in the pre-Qin period when Wang Chong (27-97) introduced it into law and discipline rite. In the Southern Dynasty Liu Xie (465-520) first introduced the image as the concept of beauty into the poetics, and the image has been established in the poetics. The word "yi xiang" (image) is an important concept in ancient Chinese literary theory. The ancients thought that "yi" is the internal abstract thought, and that "xiang" is the external concrete object; "yi" is expressed by means of "xiang". Poetic creation is a process of observation, perceiving, reflection and expression, which is a process of representing life. The author has a feeling for the outside world, and he places it on a selected concrete image, which can be integrated into the author's own sentimental color, and creates a specific art world, so that readers can make a secondary creation in their heart according to the artistic world through reading the poems.

Example 4:

The original:

文天祥·《酹江月 和》
 乾坤能大、算蛟龙、元不是池中物。
 风雨牢愁无著处，那更寒虫四壁。
 横槊题诗，登楼作赋，万事空中雪。
 江流如此，方来还有英杰。
 堪笑一叶漂零，重来淮水，正凉风新发。
 镜里朱颜都变尽，只有丹心难灭。
 去去龙沙，江山回首，一线青如发。
 故人应念，杜鹃枝上残月。

The translation:

Libation to the Moon over the Hill^{[10](P161)}
 Of all in the universe vast and wide,
 The *dragon, which is not to be confin'd
 To the little pond, is the only pride.
 In addition to deep grief on my mind,
Crickets chirp in th'cell, rains pour and winds blow.
 Oh, th'ambitions Cao who wrote a poem, spear in hand,
 Turn'd into th'distress'd Wang who, atop th'tower tall.
 Compos'd fu, and then all th'efforts melted down like snow.
 Howe'er, like waters in th'rill, in this land.
 More heroes are yet to come, after all.
 As if a drifting leave I come to th'side
 Of th'Qinhuai River again, at a time
 When the north wind is puffed up with pride.

In the mirror no more signs of my prime
 Are left, yet royal the heart does remain.
 On my way north to Longsha, I back turn
 To see the lost territories that lie
 Like a ribbon blue, which does lend me pain.
 On th'tree at dim nights, friends who show concern
 'Bout me might see th'Unyielding Cuckoo cry.

*In Chinese folklore, the dragon is symbolic of sovereignty, magical power, or auspiciousness.

Cao Cao was king of the kingdom of Wei, who launched an expedition against the kingdom of Wu *and Shu, and composed A Short Song on deck of his man-of-war before the famous Campaign of Chibi(the Red Cliff)

*Wang Can wrote his fu Ascending the Tower to express his homesickness and feelings about the sufferings inflicted by war and social upheavals while staying in Jingzhou as a refugee at the fall of the Han Dynasty.

Analysis: Wen Tianxiang, the politician and national hero in the late Song Dynasty, has written many a poem with patriotism. This piece of song ci is written during the time of being captured with his friend Liu Yan because of the failure of the war. This poem includes various images to express his loyalty to his country and patriotic emotion. The Chinese characters “蛟龙” refer to those able men who are in a fix at the moment but will eventually get rid of all the troubles. The author uses this image to express his confidence and to encourage his friend. The translator adapts the word “dragon” which has negative meaning in western cultures, so he compensates it by adding a note to explain the meaning in Chinese folklore. “风雨” and “寒虫” are natural images, referring that the status quo is difficult for the writer and the chirping of the crickets makes the poet even restless. From the translation, these images are translated literally, The sentence “横槊题诗，登楼作赋，万事空中雪。”not only refers to two famous persons, Cao Cao and Wang Can, but also means that he and his friend Liu Yan, both of them will fade away like the snow in the course of history. The translator compensates the messages that are hidden in the original, which makes it more effortless for the target language readers to understand. As to the “江流”，“一叶”，and “杜鹃”，the translator also uses literal translation. However, the Chinese characters“残月” is translated as “dim nights”，creating a scene for the readers to feel the author’s longing heart to return his home. Owing to the cultural difference between English and Chinese, it is not feasible for English readers to completely comprehend Chinese classics. Therefore, when paying attention to being faithful to the original, the translator sometimes should compensate the underlying messages and add notes to explain the historical characters and events.

D. *Reproduction of Beauty in Emotion*

“Emotion is a core proposition in Chinese literature and art aesthetics, and people are driven by emotion to create beauty”(Liu, 2005, p.354). China is a country of poetry, from *The Book of Songs* to Songs of Chu, and to Tang Poems, Song Ci, and Yuan Qu, myriad of the poets melt their emotion in the beautiful Chinese characters. The emotion falls into numerous categories, including the homesickness, nostalgia, serving the motherland, retiring from the world and so on. Emotion is the soul of literature. If translators fail to reproduce the emotion of the original, the translation is bound to be unsuccessful and ineffective. Here an example is cited to make a tentative analysis.

Example 5:

The original:

晏几道 临江仙

梦后楼台高锁，酒醒帘幕低垂。去年春恨却来时。落花人独立，微雨燕双飞。
 记得小苹初见，两重心字罗衣。琵琶弦上说相思。当时明月在，曾照彩云归。

The translation:

Riverside Daffodils^{[7](P129)}

Awake from dreams, I find the locked tower high;
 Sober from wine, I see the curtain hanging low.
 As last year spring grief seems to grow.
 Amid the falling blooms alone stand I;
 In the fine rain a pair of swallows fly.
 I still remember when I first saw pretty Ping,
 In silken dress embroidered with two hearts in a ring,
 Revealing lovesickness by touching pipa’s string,
 The moon shines bright just as last year;
 It did see her like a cloud disappear.

Analysis: Yan Jidao, the representative of plaintive style poets, is called “double Yan” with his father Yan Shu. The style of his poems is similar with that of his father’s, but better. He is adept at describing the love life in concise and beautiful language and in smooth tone. *Riverside Daffodils* narrates the sentiment of missing when the author revisits the place where he first met his lover Xiao Ping. The first sentence describes the scene when the writer wakes up, which is the excellent point of this poet. The author does not explain his dream. Instead, he gives the rein of imagination to the

readers, which greatly increases the connotation and the attraction of the poem. Then “人独立” and “燕双飞” are in stark contrast, showing that the writer is lonely and misses his lover. In the second part, the poet recalls the scene when he first met Ping. The decoration on her dress indicates that this couple of lovers are closely attached to each other. At last, the moon doesn't change and has witnessed my lover disappearing like a flake of cloud. Although the whole poem does not express the lovesickness directly, the emotion flows out from every character. As far as the English version is concerned, Xu Yuanchong represents the genuine feeling of the poet. “locked tower high” and “curtain hanging low”, “alone stand I” and “a pair of swallows fly” are two sets of comparison, completely illustrating the loneliness and sentiment of missing of the writer. “两重心字” is translated as “two hearts in a ring”, which is very vivid to show that they fall in love with each other. The last sentence means that the moon which has seen my lover go away is still there. For some scholars, “彩云” is the symbolic of Xiao Ping, but some believe that it means that Xiao Ping is just like the cloud, even though she has disappeared, wandering in my heart like a flake of colorful cloud. Xu Yuanchong translated the second meaning, “see her like a cloud disappear”. Furthermore, he adds “shines bright” to modify the moon, thus the dolefulness of the writer is more obvious and concrete against this scene. The translator not only conforms to the beauty of form, but also represents the beauty of emotion of the original. “The pursuit of beauty” can be regarded as the soul of Professor Xu's translation practice and thoughts.

IV. CONCLUSION

Song ci, one of the most important ancient literary genre, is the representative of aesthetic pursuit of ancient Chinese. And Jiangxi native literati take an indispensable part in the realm of song ci. Although numerous scholars have studied the translation of song ci from different perspectives, few analyze it from the angle of translation aesthetics. In the viewpoint of the author, the soul of song ci is the beauty of its sound, form and emotion. Combining the translation of Chinese classics with the translation aesthetics can fully demonstrate the charm of song ci and provide a new angle for studying classics translation. Representation the beauty of the original classics should not only be the aim of translator but also the duty for popularizing Chinese culture.

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