

Charm Translation from the Perspective of Translation Aesthetics

-- A Case Study of Ode to the West Wind Translated by Guo Moruo

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Abstract

This paper studies the charm translation proposed by Guo Moruo from the perspective of translation aesthetics theory put forward by Liu Miqing and explores the relationship between the two. It first introduces the background of the theory of charm translation and translation aesthetics, as well as the background of Ode to the West Wind. Then it takes Ode to the West Wind as an example to analyze the thoughts and connotations of the charm translation theory. Based on the characteristics of rhythm and sentence patterns in Ode to the West Wind, it embodies the charm translation theory to the theory of translation aesthetics in terms of music, rhyme, and Chinese culture.

Keywords

Charm translation; Translation aesthetics; Ode to the West Wind.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The charm translation is a translation theory put forward by Guo Moruo for the translation of foreign poems into Chinese. Against the backdrop of the New Culture Movement and the May 4th Movement, many literary creators in the 1920s believed that they could find ways to save the country from foreign literature so as to inspire the people and protect the country. Translators and translation theories thus burgeoned in China at that time.

More and more literary creators, though some were not highly educated, began translating foreign literary works, resulting in a plethora of problems in their translations(Liu 42). Such problems were particularly acute in poetry translation, which is more difficult. A few short lines should not only convey the ideas and power of the author, but also ensure the accuracy of the words and retain the charm of the poem itself (Guo, 1954). But at that time, most poems were translated literally, leaving an impression of clumsy, bungled or garbled works on many readers because the translators failed to apprehend the meaning of the poems (Fu 43).

On the basis of Yan Fu's "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance", Guo Moruo put forward, through his own translation practice, the translation theory of charm translation aimed at translating foreign poems into Chinese. In his The Idea in Goethe's Poem on March 5, 1920, Guo first put forward "charm translation". (Yin 125). Since then, however, this method has been controversial. He has been criticized by other literary creators(Liqiang, Xian, 49-54). For example, Zhou Zuoren, a literary writer who supports literal translation, once affirmed literal translation in Literature Improvement and Confucianism. But there are also supporters. Wen Yiduo, an illustrious Chinese poet, and Zhu Ziqing a renowned writer, bolstered up Guo's

translation of poetry and his translation methods. Zhou Yang regarded Guo as “Chinese Goethe” (Wu and Xu 99).

1.2. Literature Review

Wang Yuchun, a domestic scholar, believed that the charm translation is based on the principle that “translation is creative work and good translation is creation” (48). Cheng Fanwu put forward the “Poetry Composition Translation Method”, whose purpose is to “focus on poetry and translate the rhythm in poetry”. This method, though rather akin to charm translation, only focuses on the rhythm of the poems, without considering the emotions, nor can it render the artistic conception of the poems. Shen Yanbing, a Chinese writer, believed that “literature should be translated directly, without thinking and discussing the meaning of the article” (Wang and Qi 60). In terms of artistic expression of poetry, the charm translation has changed the previous translation concept of “poetry text as the center” (Yin 125). “Using poetry to translate poetry” is the central idea of charm translation, and also its purpose.

1.3. Significance

Some scholars in China are studying the charm translation theory from various angles. Most of them, however, only explore the central idea of charm translation. Some scholars study the significance of the charm translation to poetry translation. Only a few scholars, though, have studied the charm translation from other perspectives.

At present, foreign scholars do not do much research on the theory of charm translation, and only one recent domestic research investigates the charm translation of Ode to the West Wind from the standpoint of image and touches upon the culture-loaded lexis.

It is therefore a relatively new perspective to study the translation theory of charm from the perspective of translation aesthetics proposed by Liu Miqing, in particular regarding the formal and non-formal levels of rhyme, image, culture. We therefore take Ode to the West Wind as a case to study the aesthetic embodiment of charm translation, to find out the influence of the latter on foreign poetry translation and its historical significance to foreign poetry translation, as well as the contribution of charm translation to the translation academia.

2. Translation Aesthetics and Charm Translation: An embodiment

2.1. Translation Aesthetics

Translation aesthetics is the aesthetics of language. It discusses the history and development of language and also analyzes some aesthetic problems in the process of language transformation (Xue 39). In accordance with translation aesthetics, the translator should not only understand the meaning of the source text (ST), but also translate the original meaning of the ST. The theory of translation aesthetics is embodied in many translated works.

Aesthetics was first proposed by A. G. Baumgarten, A German philosopher, and studied the relationship between human beings and the world’s aesthetics. “A.G. Baumgarten, the first person to put forward aesthetics as an independent discipline, is the father of aesthetics in the west” (Zhou 39). Later, it was introduced to China by Wang Weiguo. After continuous communication, development and innovation, it became the aesthetics we are familiar with now (Zeng 95). On the basis of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” and combining the characteristics of artistic aesthetics, Fu Lei put forward the idea of “spirit likeness”, which is the earliest prototype of translation aesthetics theory.

2.2. Liu Miqing’s Translation Aesthetics

On the basis of the “spirit likeness” proposed by Fu Lei, Liu Miqing (Zhang xv), Liu Miqing combined his own translation experience and translation theories of various translators, and put forward his own translation aesthetics theory (Liu 1995). He also authored a book The

Aesthetic Theory of Translation to expatiate on this theory. The theory is now used by domestic scholars to study the translation of foreign literature in early China, or to assess the quality of a translated work from the dimensions of the meaning and thoughts the author wants to convey to the readers. Liu Miqing believed that as early as 1,700 years ago, ancient China made some achievements in the study of aesthetics, which is mainly reflected in some ancient Chinese poems, as well as some words left by Confucius and Lao-tzu. The eastern theory of translation aesthetics does not lag behind the Western theory of translation aesthetics (86). Such discoveries made Liu Miqing very interested in the aesthetics of translation, so he wrote this theory in his book.

Liu Miqing's translation aesthetics falls into the "formal" and "non-formal" categories. The former includes aesthetic information at the phonetic, lexical and syntactic levels and the latter, emotion, mood and cultural image.

2.3. Aesthetic Embodiment of Charm Translation

In the theory of translation aesthetics, the author should not only render the meaning of the ST, but also translate convey the beauty expressed in the work. Xue Fei believed that in the process of translating English poetry into Chinese, Guo Moruo would follow the rules of poetry, and on the premise that the rules would not be disturbed, Guo Moruo would also convey the charm of poetry to readers (39). Guo's "charm" is a concept in whole, though he did not expand on it. Luckily, this is exactly the rules of aesthetics and language transformation in translation aesthetics, which specifies that the beauty of translation in two macro-levels and several micro facets.

In the following part, we will discuss the application of the charm translation in poetry translation through the analysis of the poetry rhythm, cultural image, culture-loaded words and sentence patterns in Ode to the West Wind.

3. Ode to the West Wind Translated by Guo Moruo — Charm and Aesthetics

Ode to the West Wind is a poem written by an English romantic poet in 1819. Britain in 1918 was in a period of struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie. In order to encourage the courage of the workers, Shelley wrote the poem Ode to the West Wind, which, by praising the power of the West wind, expressed his expectation for the workers to succeed. We will now look into how Guo Moruo used the translation method of style from three aspects: rhythm, emotion and cultural image. We will also attempt to prove that the translation method of aesthetic is in consonance with the aesthetic at the phonetic, lexical, syntactic and emotional levels in Liu Miqing's translation aesthetic theory.

3.1. Rhythm

It is important to preserve the rhythm of poetry, which is undeniably the essence. Nervelessness, English and Chinese are two different languages, so it is crucial that the translator retain the charm of the original poem without changing the meaning of the original poem (Xu 74). "Widespread consensus exists among linguists that rhythm is an important aspect of spoken language"(Aniruddh 140). Poetry itself is a special kind of spoken language. Jonathan mentions in his article that "Shelley's Ode to the West Wind is a sonnet" and therefore has a strong rhythm(946). Moreover, Ode to the West Wind is a famous sonnet, and each verse follows the same rhythm, ABAB, BCB, CDC, DED, EE.

It is very difficult to keep this rhythm in Chinese translation. Although Guo Moruo did not retain its original rhythm when he translated Ode to the West Wind, he created another rhythm consistent with the Chinese aesthetics. He mimicked the rhyming style of ancient Chinese poetry and recreated the strong rhythm in Ode to the West Wind.

Take the second canto as an example. At the beginning of the second canto, Shelley used ABAB rhythm, but Guo Moruo did not translate this part in accordance with the original rhythm.

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,	太空中动乱嶙峋，
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,	松散的流云被你吹起，
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean	有如地上的落叶辞去天海的交枝
Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread	那是雨和电光的安琪。

By observing Guo Moruo's translation, we found that although Guo Moruo did not use ABA rhythm like Shelley, the translated poem has its own unique rhythm. The last character of each of these four lines, both of which are pronounced "qi", clearly fit the prosodic structure of EE. Though from a modern perspective, "安琪" is foreignized, it is understandable and acceptable in this context. In addition to these three sentences, other rhythmic structures can be found in Guo Moruo's translation.

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below	掀起了一海的狂涛巨浪！
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear	深处的苔花藻叶本不青葱，
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know	听着了你的声音，立地惶惶沮丧，

This is a partial translation of the third canto, in which we found that Guo's translation still has its own rhythm. Guo used the rhythmic structure of ABA in the translation of this part. The final Chinese characters in these three lines are pronounced "lang", "chong" and "shang", which clearly fit the ABA's rhythmic structure.

The following is another example of rhyme, in which, the original rhyme pattern is ABAB. Guo's translation, though, did not follow this pattern rigidly, and subsequent versions have proven the improbability of using the same rhyme to translate poetry. Here, Guo's rhyme pattern is AABB. Note that the chart below is only a part of the second canto and that we did not choose the Chinese lines that completely corresponds the original. This is to prove that Guo has his own unique way of creating the rhyme.

On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,	在你那青色的云涛之巅，
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head	从暗淡的地平以至太空的中点
Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge	布满了欲来的暴风雨之鬃丝，
Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread	如像猛烈的预言者之怒发上指！

Preservation of this rhythm follows the rules of language transformation in language aesthetics, so the translation method of charm is a method in line with Liu Miqing's translation aesthetics at the phonetic level.

3.2. Emotion

When Guo Moruo translated Ode to the West Wind, he also used exclamatory words and repetition to well express in Chinese the emotions in the original poem. This is also a pivotal view in Liu's translation aesthetics.

3.2.1. Exclamatory Words

One of the earliest forms of poetry was in the form of opera. Whether in the West or in China, poetry originated from opera. In other words, poetry can be expressed directly in the form of music. This thesis will study the following three examples to find out the beauty of music in the translation of charm.

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,	哦，不羈的西风哟！你秋之呼吸，
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!	啊，你吹舞我如波如叶如云吧！
The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,	严冬如来时，哦，西风哟，

In the ST, Shelley used exclamatory words, but Guo Moruo translated them into “哦(similar to /ɔ:/)” and “啊(similar to /ɑ:/)” respectively. Moreover, Guo added “ba” and “yo” at the end of the sentence, which are not in the ST. If these rigorous music words are removed, the translation will appear rigid and passionless. Nevertheless, exclamatory words cannot be added arbitrarily. Therefore, Guo first understood the ST, and then re-created the translation, so that his translation is emotional and exuberant. It can be proved that the translation of charm not only conforms to the musical beauty of translation aesthetics theory, but also conforms to the rules of translation.

Below are two more examples.

I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed! ...	我生是巨创深痛，我是血流遍体...
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!	如像从未灭的炉头吹起热灰火烬！

In these two examples, the original “bleed” and “ashes” are fact-oriented, while Guo's translation presents an emotional picture by adding adjective “热(hot)” or adverb “遍体(over one's whole body)”. This expresses Guo's, as well as the society's emotion towards the plight of the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement.

3.2.2. Parallelism Though Repetition

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,	黄者、黑者、苍白者、惨红者，
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.	我个太浮，太傲，太和你一样不羈的！

Shelley used words for colors like “red” and “black” in the ST. When Guo Moruo translated, he added “zhe”. “Zhe” in Chinese means a person, or a living object, equivalent to using personification. In other words, he personified the colors in the poem. In the second example, Guo Moruo added the word “tai”. The word “tai” in China means “more than”. In these two examples, Guo Moruo added two words with Chinese meanings, “zhe” and “tai”, so that his translation of Ode to the West Wind was not only emotional, but also understandable to Chinese readers. It is common in Chinese poetry to add an object or adjective.

In these two examples, Guo Moruo not only uses personification, but also uses parallelism to express the emotions of the ST. Parallelism in the translation endows readers a sense of progression, a mood from weakness to strength. Other examples are to translate “oh, hear” as “你听，你听” rather than “哦，你听”. Guo's translation is vocative, motivational, and expressive, which a literal translation would deaden the charm or beauty of the original.

3.3. Cultural Image

As is mentioned in the previous chapter, Liu Miqing's translation aesthetics falls into formal and non-formal categories. Guo Moruo's translation perfectly complies with the non-formal "image" to show the beauty of the verse.

Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow	直等到你阳春的青妹来时，
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill	一片笙歌吹遍梦中的大地，
Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:	请把我作为你的瑶琴如像树林一般

In the ST, Shelley uses "Azure Sister", "Clarion" and "Lyre" to symbolize something beautiful. These words extol the good life. "This ode contains ritualized, oracular speech and references the lyre, characteristic of the lyric poetry of ancient Greece" (Paul 39). Guo did not translate in compliance with the ST; he used some words with symbolic significance in China. He translated "Azure Sister" into "Qing Mei" and "Clarion" and "Lyre" into "Sheng" and "Yao Qin". "Qing Mei" is the sister of the blue sky in Chinese. In China, the blue sky can also be called "qing tian", but a direct translation of the sister of the blue sky would spoil the smoothness of the poem. Therefore, Guo Moruo chose the Chinese character "qing" to replace the blue sky.

"Sheng" and "Yao Qin" are both ancient Chinese Musical Instruments. "Sheng" is made of reeds and can produce mellifluous sound. The word "sheng" symbolizes happiness and beauty in ancient China. "Yao Qin" is an ancient Chinese musical instrument. "Yao Qin" is actually "Gu Qin" decorated with jade. The "clarion" and "lyre" are also ancient Western instruments. "Clarion" is a kind of European horn, similar to "sheng", which can blow a beautiful sound. A lyre is an ancient Greek seven-stringed harp. Shelley used "Clarion" and "Lyre" in the ST to symbolize a bright future, while Guo Moruo used "sheng" and "yao qin", two musical instruments with Chinese meanings to symbolize the bright future. This is because Shelley's readers were westerners at that time, while Guo's readers were Chinese. A literal translation will therefore cause cultural default and the readers would not be able to readily understand the poem. These evidences show that when Guo's translation of Ode to the West Wind was based on this comprehension and literary creation. This not only retains the beauty of artistic conception in the original poem, but also conveys the idea that the ST wants to convey.

It should also be noted that Shelley wrote Ode to the West Wind at the outbreak of the workers' revolution, hoping to encourage the working class in their fight against the capitalist class. And Guo translated this poem during the outbreak of the May 4th Movement, as a way to encourage the Chinese people fighting against feudalism. Therefore, in the translation, Guo Moruo uses these things that symbolize happiness in the Chinese culture to replace the things in the ST. In addition, Guo Moruo used personification and metaphor in his translation, combined with these symbolic words, to suggest to the Chinese people at that time that only a gallant struggle against feudalism could lead to victory. To sum up, the translation method of charm completely conforms to the artistic conception beauty of translation aesthetics theory.

3.4. Culture-loaded Characters

In this part, instead of citing both the original and Chinese-translated lines of the poem, we will only concentrate on some characters, for a clearer understanding of the theme we are going to touch upon.

Guo used such Chinese culture-loaded characters as "韶光", "深湛", "鬓丝" "迢遥" etc. in his translation. "韶光" appeared as early as in the Southern Kingdom, about 1,500 years ago; "深湛" can be found in Book of the Han Dynasty, dating back 2,000 years ago; "鬓", can be traced in the Book of Songs, or back 3,000 years ago; "迢遥" originated in the Southern Song Dynasty, about

1,600 years ago. All these characters, though seemingly archaic, are readily understandable to those equipped with some literary knowledge. By using words familiar to Chinese readers, we can achieve more cultural identity. This is the charm of ancient Chinese, and the translation aesthetics at the lexical level.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Summary

The purpose of this paper is to find out the relationship between translation aesthetics theory and the translation theory of charm. It takes Ode to the West Wind as an example to discuss the contribution of the translation theory of charm to the translation of foreign poetry.

Guo Moruo's translation of Ode to the West Wind was a result of his understanding of the meaning of the poem and his superb command of language and literary creation. In the translation process, Guo did not abandon the poetry of the original rhyme. Whether from the perspectives of the rhyme of Ode to the West Wind or of the characteristics of its sentence pattern, the translation method of charm and rhyme is extraordinary. Moreover, after the translation into Chinese, the artistic conception of the poem itself and the spirit of unremitting self-improvement that the author wanted to convey to the readers did not change. In fact, this is the rule of language rendition in translation aesthetics. All these fully prove that charm translation method is interrelated with translation aesthetics.

Based on our knowledge of the two translation theories, we analyzed in great detail how aesthetics were embodied in the charm translation, with reference to the rhyme, image, and sounds, which are aesthetics at the formal and non-formal dimensions of lexis, image, culture, etc.

4.2. Limitation of the Research

In search of materials related to the translation theory of charm, few foreign scholars can be found to have studied the translation theory of charm. Moreover, the theory of translation aesthetics has a long history, but it was put forward accurately in recent decades. There are similar theories in foreign literature, but they are not necessarily called translation aesthetics theories. Due to the influence of these factors, this thesis is not a comprehensive study of the theory of charm translation and translation aesthetics. We suggest that more scholars delve into this field.

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