

A Comparative Study on Rhetoric Expressions and Effects of Fifteen English Versions of *Nostalgia*

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ABSTRACT. *The study analyzes the rhetoric expressions and rhetoric effects of 15 English versions of **Nostalgia** from the perspectives of style, text, image and rhythm. In order to reflect the rhetoric expressions and effects of the original contemporary poems, their English versions should emphasize the style equivalence to the original poems in terms of the number of words, lines, stanzas, etc.. The English versions should also focus on the textual structure of the original poems and attach importance to the translations of keywords, conjunctions and interjections, and they should fully understand the profound connotation of the original poems and demonstrate their image rhetoric. At the same time the English versions should pay attention to the rhythm rhetoric of the original poems, and coordinate the syllables, steps, verses and liaisons as a whole to enhance the rhetoric effects of the translation versions.*

KEYWORDS: *Nostalgia; rhetoric; Yu Guangzhong; English versions*

1. Introduction

Poetry translation is a process of interpretation and reproduction of the style, text, image and rhythm of the original poems, which embodies the translator's painstaking efforts and ingenuity. With the promulgation and implementation of the strategy of "Chinese Culture Going Out", more and more poets and translators have been involved in the translation of poetry. The English translation of contemporary Chinese poetry also has developed rapidly with a remarkable number.

This study chooses 15 English versions of Mr. Yu Guangzhong's representative contemporary poetry *Nostalgia* as the research object (Yu Guangzhong:2017). Based on the multi-dimensional rhetoric perspective, the study analyses the similarities and differences of the fifteen English versions of *Nostalgia* from the aspects of style, text, image and rhythm, and compares them with the original poem to explore the possibility of "expressing feelings" and "reproducing the essence" in the translation of contemporary poetry into English.

2. Literature Review

In the study, we get totally 2570,000 relevant results by Baidu search with the keyword of "English translation of Yu Guangzhong's *Nostalgia*"; and there are 263 search results on CNKI with the same keywords. By reviewing the relevant search results, it is found that most scholars interpret the poem *Nostalgia* from the perspectives of ideology (Wang Shirong: 2015), culture (Li Tefu: 2014) and the poet's achievement (Mu Lei: 1998; Guo Hong: 2010; Zhang Lifeng: 2014); while translation researchers focus their studies on the evaluation of the English translation of *Nostalgia* from the perspectives of aesthetics (Xiang Rui:2012) and translation Theory (Wang Jialin:2011).

3. Research Design

3.1 *Nostalgia*

Nostalgia is a contemporary poem written in the year of 1972 by Yu Guangzhong (1928-2017), the famous contemporary writer, poet, scholar and translator. It expresses the poet's deep yearning for the homeland and the beautiful vision of the unity of the motherland.

The poem consists of four sections of 88 words with the time as longitude, space the latitude and images the axis, and promotes poetry space construction as time goes by, thus forming the extension of images, singing softly and affectionately in seemingly indifferent and plain narrations. *Nostalgia* is ingeniously conceived, structurally arranged in a matrix, with words, sentences and sections echoing each other, repeating the same words at the same place in each section, reflecting the

symmetrical beauty of neatness and balance. The rhythm of the poem is neat, and the long and short sentences are erroneously interlaced with changes in neatness, forming a rhythmic beauty. The theme is materialized with specific images (namely stamp, ship ticket, grave and strait) to describe the invisible and ABSTRACT nostalgia by creating a melancholy tense atmosphere of beauty (see Table 1). *Nostalgia* is undoubtedly one of the greatest poems in the contemporary poetry.

Table 1 Structure and Image of Nostalgia

poem	Time	Events	Images
Stanza 1	childhood	departure of mom and son	stamps
Stanza 2	growing up	departure of husband and wife	ship tickets
Stanza 3	later	departure of life and death	tomb
Stanza 4	now	departure of home and country	strait

3.2 *Nostalgia and its translations*

Nostalgia is such a famous poem that a large number of translators with multiple identities translated the poem in different languages and forms. This paper chooses 15 English versions of *Nostalgia* as the research source (see Table 2), compares the original poems and the translated versions of *Nostalgia* from the perspective of rhetoric, and explores the possibility of "expressing feelings" and "reproducing essence" in the English translation of the contemporary poetry.

Table 2 List of translators of Nostalgia (in phonetic order of translators' names)

No.	Translators' names	Identities
1	B.O.Yan	Chinese translator
2	Chen Wenbo	Chinese translator and dictionary expert
3	Gu Kedan	Chinese translator
4	Huang Yangxun	Chinese translator
5	Innocent Sword	Chinese translator
6	Rewi Alley	New Zealand activist and educator
7	Rhapsodia	Canadian translator

8	Translation Study Institute of China	Professional institution
9	Wang Lei	Chinese translator
10	Yang Zhongyan	Chinese translator
11	Yu Guangzhong	Poet and translator
12	Zhang Zhizhong	Chinese
13	Zhao Junhua	Chinese
14	Zhao Yanchun	Chinese translator and linguist
15	Zhu Manhua	Chinese translator

As can be seen from Table 2, the English translation versions of *Nostalgia* are characterized by translators of different identities, which include Mr. Yu Guangzhong, the poet. They all enthusiastically participated in the translation of the poem and aroused the focus of the literature world.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Rhetoric Analysis of Fifteen English Versions of Nostalgia

The translation of contemporary poetry requires translators to have a deep understanding and grasp of the source culture and the target culture, that is, the eastern and western cultures. While skillfully applying various translation techniques, they can consciously convey the original poem from the perspectives of style, text, image and rhythm, and reproduce the similar rhetoric connotation.

4.2 Stylistic Rhetoric in the Fifteen English Versions of Nostalgia

While discussing the characteristics of the language of poetry, Terence Hawkes (Hawkes: 1987) points out that the remarkable features of poetry lie in the arrangement of words, the meaning of words, the external and internal forms of words. They all have their own weight and value. In other words, the linguistic form of poetry is a two-level symbolic system based on the first one. Poetry translation emphasizes the similarity of form and spirit. As far as the form of poetry is

concerned, its "form" includes the number of characters, size of fonts, type of fonts, line number limitation, section regulation, matrix arrangement and so on. The translation should adopt the same style as the original poem to ensure that it is faithful to the original poem in the form and can embody the rhetorical connotation of the original poem.

The original poem of *Nostalgia* has four stanzas; each stanza has 4 lines, 22 words (without punctuation), thus totally 16 lines and 88 words (without punctuation). The whole poem is composed of scattered sentences, interlaced in length and neat in form. From Table 3, we can easily find that, compared with the form of the original *Nostalgia*, most translators have noticed the genre equivalence between the translation version and the original poem. Apart from the differences in the number of words in the whole poem, they strictly follow the matrix arrangement of the original poem in terms of the number of stanzas and lines, which effectively guarantees the inherent stylistic features of the original poem and directly highlights its stylistic and rhetorical effects.

It should be pointed out that Chen Wenbo's version is quite different: it translates the whole poem into one stanza and shortens the lines to eight lines. Although the number of words is similar, it has changed the style of the translation. We believe that "Form serves the content", the form of poetry is an integral and inseparable part of it. Changing the style of the translated version is against the faithfulness of the original poem and is not conducive to the rhetoric expression of the form and connotation.

Table 3 A List of Styles and Formats of English Versions of Nostalgia (in phonetic order of the translators' names)

Translators	Stanzas	Lines	Words
B.O.Yan	4	16	56
Chen Wenbo	1	8	80
Gu Kedan	4	16	65
Huang Yangxun	4	16	89
Innocent Sword	4	16	76
Rewi Alley	4	16	61

Rhapsodia	4	16	71
Translation Study Institute of China	4	16	66
Wang Lei	4	16	62
Yang Zhongyan	4	16	69
Yu Guangzhong	4	16	71
Zhang Zhizhong	4	16	65
Zhao Junhua	4	16	70
Zhao Yanchun	4	16	66
Zhu Manhua	4	16	94

4.3 Textual Rhetoric in the English Version of Nostalgia

"The textual framework of a particular society forms the mainstream poetics of the society, which guides translators to rewrite the original text into a translation that conforms to the aesthetic orientation or poetic characteristics of the society(Zhao Yanchun:2005)." Yu Guangzhong, the poet of *Nostalgia*, was deeply influenced by Chinese and Western cultures. The poem is simple and elegant, condensed and concise without any redundant expression.

The whole poem closely revolves around "NOSTALGIA". Comparing the fifteen versions, we can see that for the translation of the keyword "nostalgia", Chen Wenbo, Gu Danke, Zhao Junhua and Zhu Manhua all translated it as "homesick" or "homesickness"; while others translated it as "nostalgia". The word "Nostalgia" refers to the connotation of "nostalgia and longing for past people, events, or the environment". It is far more rhetorical than "homesickness", which reflects the poet's complex feelings of nostalgia and homesickness.

The poem *Nostalgia* connects the whole poem with four turning points as "childhood", "growing up", "later" and "now". The use of modal auxiliary words "啊" and the conjunction "而" makes the whole poem complete, smooth and comfortable, creating a sad and helpless atmosphere. In terms of the treatment of four turning points, most versions are faithful to the original poem, "when I was young", "when I grew up", "but later on", "and at present" and other translations faithfully restore the rhetoric effect of the original poem. However, "then" and

"now" in Chen Wenbo's version are too vague and straightforward, and "during the later years" and "and now at present" in Yang Zhongyan's version are too figurative and redundant.

Table 4 A list of rhetoric in the English versions of Nostalgia (in phonetic order of the translators' names)

Translators	乡愁	小时候	长大后	后来啊	而现在
B.O.Yan	Nostalgia	In my childhood	After growing up	Later on	And now
Chen Wenbo	Homesick	When I was a child	When grew up	Then	Now
Gu Kedan	Homesickness	In my teens	When I grew up	Later on	But now
Huang Yangxun	Nostalgia	When I was a child	Then I grew up	Years gone by	And now
Innocent Sword	Nostalgia	When I was a child	When I was grown up	Many years later	But at present
Rewi Alley	Nostalgia	In my childhood	When I grew up	Later	And now
Rhapsodia	Nostalgia	When I was a boy	When I grew up	Years later	And now
Translation Study Institute of China	Nostalgia	In my childhood	When grown-up	Later	And now
Wang Lei	Nostalgia	When I was a child	When I grew up	Later	And now
Yang Zhongyan	Nostalgia	When I was a child	Then I was a grown-up	During the later years	And now at present
Yu Guangzhong	Nostalgia	When I was young	When I grew up	But later on	And at present
Zhang Zhizhong	Nostalgia	When I was a child	When I become an adult	Later on	But now
Zhao Junhua	Homesick	As a boy	When grown	Later on	And today

			up		
Zhao Yanchun	Nostalgia	Me a child	Me grown up	Later on	And today
Zhu Manhua	My Homesickness	During my childhood	When I grew up	And then	But now

4.4 Image Rhetoric in the English Version of Nostalgia

Tong Qingbing, a literary and artistic theorist, holds that image is an image that aims at expressing philosophical concepts and achieves the ideal state of human beings with symbolic or absurd characteristics (Tong Qingbing:1992). It can be a perceptual image formed on the basis of perception, or a new, advanced intentional design image conceived by human beings for a certain purpose. All the artistic images or language images appear in the works. Image, as the carrier of poetry's emotion, materializes the poets' emotions, deepens the aesthetic pleasure, increases the tension of poetry and sets off the themes of the poetry.

The poem *Nostalgia*, by means of the four images of "stamps, ship tickets, graves and straits", superimposes and advances step by step in the form of juxtaposition, keeps part in line with the whole, conceives ingeniously, forms a natural focus effect, and realizes the rhetorical effect of foiling the theme of nostalgia in a natural way.

In Table 5, we can find that the translations appropriately dealt with in terms of imagery, not only in the parallelism of imagery in form, but also the thematic expression of imagery in connotation. Each translator shows a strong subjectivity in image translation, and carries out additional translation and subtraction, but some of them are not so perfect or even deviate from the original poem's image connotation.

The use of reduplicated words such as "small", "narrow", "short", "shallow" is employed in the versions of Gu Danke, Yu Guangzhong and Zhao Yanchun, especially in Zhao Yanchun's version, which adheres to the principle of approximation and applies "little", "small", "small", "low shallow", "low shallow", and "shall" to a Chinese character with one syllable. "Ow" is translated one by one, which is strictly faithful to the original poem; but most of the other versions ignore the translation of reduplicated words.

Secondly, Huang Yangxun's version added quantifiers, such as "piece", "slip", "square" and "strip" to every verse, which seems to be too complicated.

Thirdly, most versions are more cautious in subtraction, but the subtraction of images in the versions of B.O.Yan and Chen Wenbo is more obvious. They did not translate the most thematic adjectives in the original poem. Instead, they translated "shallow" as "short". In Yang Zhongyan's version, the three images are simply translated as "a travelling ticket", "a graveyard" and "a channel", which are quite different from the original poem.

"A poetry translator must be good at capturing the poet's emotions sensitively (Jiao Pengshuai: 2012)." In the process of translating poems into English, excellent translators should pursue a true understanding of the original poems with a serious and rigorous attitude, carefully comprehend all the connotations contained in each word of the original poems, and fully guarantee the control of image rhetoric. Due to the poor understanding of the image of the original poem, the mistranslation of the original poem or the arbitrary addition and subtraction of the original poem are not only unable to accurately reflect the content and connotation of the original poem, but also make the translation lose the rhetoric mood of melancholy and sadness.

Table 5 A List of Image Contrasts in English Versions of Nostalgia (in phonetic order of the translators' names)

English Versions	一枚小小的邮票	一张窄窄的船票	一方矮矮的坟墓	一湾浅浅的海峡
B.O.Yan	a small stamp	a ferry ticket	a glum grave	a short strait
Chen Wenbo	a small stamp	a ticket	the shape of the grave	a narrow strait
Gu Danke	a little, little stamp	a narrow narrow streamer ticket	a short short grave	a shallow shallow strait
Huang Yangxun	a tiny piece of postage stamp	a narrow slip of streamer	a lowly square of	a shallow strip of

		ticket	grave	water
Innocent Sword	a small stamp	a narrow boat ticket	a low grave	a shallow strait
Rewi Alley	a little postage stamp	a little boat ticket	a low, square tomb	just a sea strait
Rhapsodia	a tiny stamp	a slim streamer ticket	a squatty tomb	a shallow strait
Translation Study Institute of China	a small stamp	a slip of ship ticket	a squat tomb	a shallow strait
Wang Lei	a small stamp	a narrow streamer ticket	a low tomb	a shallow channel
Yang Zhongyan	a small stamp	a travelling ticket	a graveyard	a channel
Yu Guangzhong	a tiny, tiny stamp	a narrow boat ticket	a lowly grave	a shallow strait
Zhang Zhizhong	a tiny stamp	a slip of boat ticket	a short tomb	a shallow strait
Zhao Junhua	a tiny stamp	a small ship ticket	a little tomb	a shallow strait
Zhao Yanchun	a little, little stamp	a small small boat ticket	a lowly lowly tomb	a shallow shallow strait
Zhu Manhua	a small stamp	a shipping ticket	a lower tomb	the sea beach is shallow

4.5 Rhythm Rhetoric of the English Version of Nostalgia

Rhythm includes rhythm and rhythm. The beauty of the rhythm of poetry lies in the combination of phoneme and rhythm, which shows the rhythm changes of

strength and weakness, fluctuation of height and priority, and gives readers a good artistic experience and delicate emotional resonance. The rhythm rhetoric in poetry is embodied in syllable equivalence, rhyme of verse, liaison and the coordination of rhythm, which makes the whole poem a sense of rhythm and music.

Nostalgia has the strict structure, regular sentence pattern and the harmonious symmetry. The rhymes of each verse section are neat. It corresponds to each other repeatedly. Each verse has its own highlights. There is unity in the rhythm of the whole poem, and novelty in its regularity. It is a poem written with music, which deepens the theme of nostalgia and produces a strong emotion.

Comparing the rhythms of the translated versions in Table 6, except for Chen Wenbo and Yang Zhongyan, all the other translators are faithful to the beauty of the rhythm of the original poem. The KEYWORDS "nostalgia", "here" and "there" appear repeatedly in each stanza, which helps readers to realize the poet's sad, helpless and confused feelings of departure.

Table 6 A List of Rhymes in English Versions of Nostalgia (in phonetic order of the translators' names)

English Version	First Stanza	Second Stanza	Third Stanza	Fourth Stanza
B.O.Yan	here, there	here, there	outside, inside	here, there
Chen Wenbo	/	/	/	/
Gu Kedan	here, there	here, there	outside, inside	here, there
Huang Yangxun	/	/	outside, inside	/
Innocent Sword	end, end	end, end	outside, inside	shore, shore
Rewi Alley	here, there	here, there	/	/
Rhapsodia	end, that	end, that	that	that
Translation Study Institute of China	end, other	end, other	other	end, other

Wang Lei	here, there	here, there	outside, inside	here, there
Yang Zhongyan	/	/	/	/
Yu Guangzhong	side, side	side, side	outside, inside	side, side
Zhang Zhizhong	hither, thither	hither, thither	/	hither, thither
Zhao Junhua	here, there	here, there	here, there	here, there
Zhao Yanchun	here, there	here, there	outside, inside	here, there
Zhao Manhua	away, stay	narrow, boat	tomb, dumb, home	shallow, narrow

5. Conclusions

To sum up, *Nostalgia*, as a typical representative of contemporary Chinese poetry, expresses the poet's strong feeling of missing his homeland. The English translation versions of *Nostalgia* are of great significance to the popularization of the original poem and the promotion and dissemination of Chinese culture. As a special style, contemporary poetry's rhetoric effect is embodied in concrete texts, images and rhythms. Translators should grasp the essence and mechanism of translation from the perspective of multi-dimensional stereo rhetoric, deeply grasp and understand the poet's unique rhetoric techniques, and try their best to reproduce them in the translation, so as to help the readers understand and appreciate the content and style of the original poems correctly.

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