

An Appreciation of the Translation of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond* from Stylistic Perspective

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Abstract: *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*, a famous piece of prose with beautiful language and deep meaning, was written by Mr. Zhu Ziqing and has attained high literary status at home and abroad. In this paper, we analyze the translation of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond* from the perspective of stylistics, and select different translations for comparative appreciation. First, the concepts and theories of stylistics are introduced. Secondly, a brief introduction to the four translators of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*. Finally, the problems in the translation are analyzed on three levels: lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical. The purpose of this paper is to analyze that how different translations deal with the linguistic forms and stylistic features of the original text from the perspective of stylistics. In order to make the translation more suitable for the reading habits of the target language readers. It is expected to serve as a reference for the readers to appreciate the translation of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*.

Keywords: *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*; stylistics; appreciation

1. Introduction

Moonlight over the Lotus Pond is a famous modern lyric prose written by Zhu Ziqing while he was teaching at Tsinghua University. The prose is about the beautiful scene of the moonlight over the lotus pond in the Tsinghua Campus, which implicitly and euphemistically expresses the author's dissatisfaction with real life, his desire for freedom, his inability to make a difference, his political thought of looking forward to the future, and his love for the moonlight over the lotus pond^[5]. The composition of the whole prose is original and ingenious, the language is fresh and elegant, and the scenery is delicately depicted with a strong sense of the pictorial.

Stylistics is the study of literary style using linguistic methods. Literary style is a theoretical approach to the study of the influence of literary texts on the psychological and cognitive patterns of readers, including the social function of literary texts. This essay focuses on the use of linguistics by literary stylists as a tool for the study of prose discourse for description and interpretation^[4]. From the perspective of literary stylistics, it analyzes how translators fully consider the cultural characteristics of the translated language as well as the linguistic features and cultural factors of traditional Chinese literary works in the translation process. In particular, the translator's treatment of the linguistic form and stylistic features of the original text is analyzed to provide a reasonable appreciation of the translated text. Through the analysis of some paragraphs in the translation, it is found that the translator chooses different stylistic features in the translation according to different background factors such as the time, region and culture in which the translation is made, so as to make the translation better conform to the reading habits of the target language readers. It mainly includes linguistic aspects such as vocabulary, syntax and rhetoric.

2. The stylistic features of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*

The lyric prose of Mr. Zhu Ziqing is exquisite, with beautiful language and profound meaning, and his work *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond* is exemplary. It is a cleverly conceived piece, combining fresh and elegant language with rich imagery, showing the author's love of nature and his helplessness towards real life^[5]. The language of the work is fresh, natural and the lines are smooth, harmonious, and poetical. The author uses a variety of rhetorical devices to describe the lotus and the moon, using many metaphors and similes. The author uses line drawings, without complex sentence structures and rhetorical devices. By describing the beauty of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*, he expresses his love for the natural landscape and his dissatisfaction with real life. There are many beautiful sentences in the

text that are easy to read. The author uses personification to describe the beauty of lotus flowers, which seem to come to life and have the same emotions as humans under the author's writing. And the lotus blossoms beautifully and impressively in the moonlight. The language and imagery of these beautiful verses reflect the elegant diction and deep meaning of the text.

3. Introduction of the Translator

The work is a classic in lyrical prose. Mr. Zhu has thus acquired a reputation. The author has selected four representative translations of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*: Zhu Chunshen's 1992 version, Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidi's 1999 version, Li Ming's 2006 version, and David Pollard's 2007 version.

Zhu Chunshen taught at Fujian Normal University and National University of Singapore, was a professor of Chinese, translation and linguistics at the City University of Hong Kong, and now is a professor of translation at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Yang Xianyi was a famous Chinese translator, foreign literature researcher and poet. He translated many famous Chinese historical works with his wife Dai Naidie, including *Dream of the Red Mansions* and *The Scholars*, which were well received and had a wide influence abroad.

Dai Naidie was a veteran British specialist in Chinese literature, a translator of high international reputation and an activist for cultural exchanges between China and abroad.

Li Ming is the vice-president of the Institute of Advanced Translation at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. He has published more than 50 papers in core journals such as *Chinese Translators Journal*, *Shanghai Journal of Translators* and other academic journals.

David E. Pollard is one of the most respected interpreters and translators of Chinese prose and modern Chinese literature. He has been Professor of Chinese at the University of London and Professor of Translation at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is currently an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Translation Studies, Institute of Sinology, Chinese University of Hong Kong. His translations include *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*.

4. Lexical level

4.1 The title

Moonlight over the Lotus Pond (translated by Zhu)

Moonlight over the Lotus Pond (translated by Yang)

Moonlight over the Lotus Pond (translated by Li)

The Lotus Pond by Moonlight (translated by Pollard)

Analysis: Regarding the title of the essay, there are two kinds of translation. Author prefers the translations of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*. It is the more similar to the original. The original title is a partial phrase, "lotus pond" modifies "moonlight". "Moonlight" is the central word. The translation highlights this central word, while the second one has "lotus pond" as the central word, highlighting the element of "lotus pond", which is not consistent with the original text.

4.2 The reduplication

In *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*, there are a large number of reduplication, which play an important role in the composition prose^[1]. On the one hand, they serve an emphatic purpose. On the other hand, they can enhance the rhythm of the language and allow the reader to read it in a catchy way. For example, skirts, layers, high and low and so on. These reduplication make the language in prose harmonious and beautiful, with a strong sense of rhythm and sound beauty.

For the AABC-style words, Zhu and Li use "pass by every day" instead of "pass every day", which is one more word and one more syllable, making the form and rhyme of the word double equivalent, and reading it more similar to the original text.

For the AABB-style words, such as “high and low”, “far and near”, both words are repeated, use “and” to connect in the middle, which can better reproduce the neat structure of the original text, such as the translation of “thick and bosky”, “far and near”, “high and low” almost all the reduplication in the text are such a structure. The structure of the translation is handled to ensure the integrity of the translation. Li’s translation excels in the use of end rhyme to indicate the rhyme of the reduplication.

For the AAB-style words, this structure is mostly adjective phrases, so in choosing English adjectives, we have to choose those with a strong sense of pictorial, and all translators turn them into reality by citing the figurative “skirts”, compared with “flared skirts” The phrase “flared skirts” has a stronger sense of image. For the phrase “layers of”, Zhu, Li and Pollard use the method of alliteration, which is more in keeping with the original, and reflects the rhythmic beauty of the prose in the original.

For ABB-style words, which involve adjective phrases and quantifier phrases, the first two use adverbs to modify the structure of the adjective, which is more in line with the original ABB-style words^[2]. For quantifier phrases, there is no quantifier in English, so all four translators visualize quantifiers in the process of translation, and author think the first three translators use the form of “verb-ing”. And the first three translators use the form of “verb-ing”, which makes the translation more fluent and vivid at the same time, with the same artistic effect as the original.

5. Syntactic level

The syntax refers to the way the sentences are structured. In terms of sentence structure, there are a large number of attributive, adverbial and appositive words. Attributive modifies nouns or noun phrases, adverbial modifies adjectives or adverbs and appositive modifies verbs or adjective, etc.

Example:

Like the skirts of dancing girls in all their grace.(Zhu)

Like the flared skirts of dancing girls.(Yang)

The skirts of fair lasses dancing gracefully.(Li)

The skirts of a tall slim ballerina.(Pollard)

Analysis: The original text is a vivid description of lotus flowers using the rhetorical device of metaphor, where the subject is the lotus leaves above the water surface and the metaphor is the skirt of the dancer. Zhu uses the method of end-rhyme in word selection, which makes the translation more beautiful and highlights the quality of the issue while expressing the meaning of the original text. The supplementary phrases and prepositional phrases add to the effect of repetition respectively, and in addition, translation 1 uses “verb +ing” such as “reaching” Yang uses the fewest words to express the meaning of the original text, without making any effort in “sound and form”, so the “meaning” is not fully conveyed. Yang is similar to Zhu in that it uses end rhymes and verbs, which are more direct and do not reflect the literary merit of the literary work itself. Zhu and Li both aim to convey the meaning of the original text, and the translator focuses more on English expressions, so no effort is made to rhyme. The style of sentence is distinct and more intuitive, and the focus here is on the metaphor “dance’s skirt”, that is, the style of a dancer’s skirt, whether it is the skirt of an ordinary dancing girl, a little girl or a ballerina. The ballerina’s skirt, by contrast, comes closest to the original text. Zhu and Yang suggest that a dancer’s skirt can have various shapes, which is not sufficiently graphic and specific, while the lotus leaf is the closest to the shape of a ballerina’s skirt. Therefore, the translation of Pollard is faithful to the original in this respect, which is in accordance with Xu Yuanchong’s Three Beauties Principle: beauty in sense, sound, and style. It is further proved that the translation of metaphorical rhetoric may take the place of the metaphor, or make the metaphor concrete.

6. Rhetorical level

Rhetoric is an important component of language, and the relationship between rhetoric and language is mutually affecting and constraining. To a certain extent, rhetoric can reinforce language. Rhetoric as an art form, different genres often use different rhetorical techniques. In *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*, Mr. Zhu uses a lot of rhetorical devices that make the whole essay more interesting.

Example 1:

I like a serene and peaceful life, as much as a busy and active one; I like being in solitude, as much

as in company^[6].(Zhu)

I like both excitement and stillness.(Yang)

I enjoy a tranquil life as well as a bustling one; I enjoy being in solitude as well as being in company.(Li)

I like excitement, and also like calm; I love to be in crowds and also love to be on my own.(Pollard)

Analysis: Rhetoric is an important form of literary style expression. A large number of rhetorical devices are used in the original text of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*, and a translation that retains them reflects the principle of fidelity in translation standards. It is worth exploring whether it is better to translate rhetoric in terms of rhetoric or some other method of translation. The use of “as much as” in translations Zhu and Li contrasts the sentences and cleverly connects them, preserves the parallel structure of the original text, and expresses the author’s desire for peace and happiness. Li added “being”, which emphasizes a state of being and makes the reader resonate. Yang used a literal translation, which was not an appropriate choice. Pollard used “to be” to express a certain desire for the future, which is a neat form, but However, “love to” is used here in a somewhat superficial way, covering the effect of to be, and the two words are repeated, which is not concise enough. In contrast, we can see that, the translation of Zhu and Li can still be seen in both translations as using the rhetoric of parallelism, furthermore, Zhu’s translation strives to express the faithfulness, style and sound beauty of the original text, and intends to pursue the meaning of the native language as a whole, which is more infectious.

Example 2:

in demure bloom; in shy bud. (Zhu)

alluringly open; bashfully in bud. (Yang)

blooming gracefully;budding bashfully.(Li)

blooming glamorously;in shy bud^[3].(Pollard)

Analysis: The above example of the original text uses the rhetorical device of personification in Chinese. To translate Chinese into English, we have to take into account the grammatical rules of English, namely, that we often refer to adverbs as modifying verbs or adjectives, and that this preserves to the greatest extent the anthropomorphic rhetoric of the original text. Then how to transplant that rhetoric into translation presents a challenge for translators. The words “gracefully” and “bashfully” both describe human behavior, while “open” is also actions of human. In view of this, “gracefully” and “bashfully” are most appropriately translated as adverbs and are rhetorically faithful to the original text, while “open” should also be translated as verbs. For this rhetorical aspect, Li’s translation adopts the structure of “verb+ing” to translate it, therefore it is the most similar to the original text^[3].

7. Summary

Moonlight over the Lotus Pond is a well-known prose piece with high literary standing, both at home and abroad. From the stylistic perspective, this paper selects four translations for analysis and appreciates them from the lexical, syntactic and rhetorical levels, pointing out that when translating *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*, we should choose the appropriate translation according to the stylistic environment of the translated text and the acceptance level of readers. For example, Mr. Zhu Ziqing prefers to use metaphors and similes in his prose to make his language more vivid and imaginative. In translating *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*, we may consider retaining the rhetorical devices of simile and personification in the original, so as to bring the translation more in line with the Chinese habit of expression. The choice of translation should be reader-centric, and the translation should be closer to the linguistic style and expressive habits of the original text.

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