

Poetry Translation From the Perspective of Creative Treason: Based on the Analysis of Xu Yuanzhong's Translation of *Spring View*

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Abstract

Concise and euphemistic, the poem *Spring View* shows the poet's deep emotions, both for his family and motherland, possessing strong high aesthetic values. Based on the theory of creative treason, this paper focuses on the version of Xu Yuanzhong to do an analysis of creative treason in his translation process, which demonstrates positive impacts of the theory creative treason in English translation of poetry.

Key words: Spring View; Creative treason; Xu Yuanzhong; English translation of poetry

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the reputation of the "Saint of Poetry", Du Fu has created affluent and prominent poems, which recorded the historical situation and expressed his inimitable deep emotions. Having encountered the chaos of rebellion of An and Shi, Du Fu underwent a disintegrated country and separation with his family. Therefore, *Spring View* was produced naturally. This poem is praised quite a lot. Chen Yan, a scholar of the Qing Dynasty, strongly praised this poem in the *Shi Yishi Poetry Critique*, deeming that in Dufu's poems with five-syllable regulated verse, *Spring View* could be considered as the most outstanding one,

which would rival other excellent poems in grandeur and frame of mind written by masters of the early Tang Dynasty (1998, p.568). Because of the rigorous antitheses and regular rhythms, *Spring View* possesses significant aesthetic and artistic value. This paper will analyze the translator's creative treason from Xu Yuanzhong's translation *Spring View*.

2. CREATIVE TREASON

The term "Creative Treason" was first coined by the French literary sociologist Robert Escapit in his book *The Sociology of Literature*. He believed that translation is always a creative treason. He proposed that translation was treacherous because of the fact that it would place the work in a completely unexpected frame of reference, that is to say, language; in addition, the translation was creative because of the fact that it would bring the work a brand new impression and it would have the opportunity to communicate with more worldwide readers, which can not only prolong the work's life, but also give a second life to the work (Robert Escapit, 1987, p.274). Thus, creative treason has become a new research in academic circles. Creative treason is of great significance and has super value: The use of creative treason is unavoidable when literal translation can not perfectly show the exact purpose of texts (Weinstein, 1987).

Later, Xie Tianzhen, the first scholar in China who systematically introduces medio-translatology, put forward his own opinion on creative treason in his book . He pointed out that the creativity in literary translation shows an effort that the translator rely on his artistic ability to approach and reproduce the original text, and the treason of literary translation reflects an objective deviation from the original work, caused by the translator's certain subjective desires in the translation process(Xie, 2013, p.106). That is to say, creativity and treason must be inseparable in literary translation. To some extent, creative

treason can be regarded as a method that translators adopt. Translators are eager to change several contents to make his readers more intelligible and acceptable for the translation.

Since Xie Tianzhen's book *Medio-Translatology* has been published, creative treason has gradually become a spotlight of scholars, especially those who are interested in comparative literature. Many scholars state the theory and based on this theory analyze translated works, especially from literary works and advertisements. In literary works, poetry has always been a unique genre, including images, rhythms, condensed languages, profound emotions and other important elements, so that its translation contains the most prominent creative treasons. Under this background and trend, more and more scholars and students focus on the creative treason of poetry translation, such as from the perspective of creative treason on Su Manshu, Arthur Weley, Xu Yuanzhong and other translators. Some scholars agree with creative translation, but question the term "creative treason". For example, Professor Wang Zhenping argues: "There can be creativity in translation, but not treason" (2016, p.116).

But more scholars are positive for this theory.

3. THE CONCRETE ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSLATION OF SPRING VIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CREATIVE TREASON

3.1 Rhythm and Rhymes

Rhythm and rhymes play a very important role in poetry, and their existences can enhance the musicality. Therefore, when writing poetry, poets will use the rhythm and rhymes deliberately. Similarly, in addition to expressing the full meaning of the original poem, a relatively good translation must concentrate on the use and transformation of rhythms and rhymes. Xu Yuanzhong has clearly put forward: "'rhyme', its requirement is to convey the original poem's 'beauty in sound'" (1979, p.9). Therefore, Xu Yuanzhong pays special attention to the rhythm and rhymes when carrying on the practice of poetry translation.

The poem *Spring view* contains five-syllable regulated verses and adopts the "2/3" sentence pattern, that is, "国破/山河在, 城春/草木深。感时/花溅泪, 恨别/鸟惊心。烽火/连三月, 家书/抵万金。白头/搔更短, 浑欲/不胜簪". The translator chose the same method to break this poem, that is, "On war-torn land/ streams flow and mountains stand; In towns unquiet/ grass and weeds run riot. Grieved o'er the years, / flowers are moved to tears; Homes cut apart, / birds cry with broken heart. The beacon fire/ has gone higher and higher; Words from household/ are worth their weight in gold. I cannot bear/ to scratch my grizzling hair; It grows too thin/ to hold a light hair-pin."

Based on the analysis of the eight verses, this poem can be considered as a iambic pentameter. Among those verses, the most typical verses are: On war-/torn land/ streams flow/ and moun/tains stand. I can/not bear/ to scratch/ my gri/z-zling hair; It grows/ too thin/ to hold/ a light/ hair-pin. Even though several other verses are trochee, the poet made his efforts on pentameter. And this handle makes the poem rhythmic and catchy, increasing its tone and readability.

At the same time, in order to achieve a better effect on "sound in beauty", Xu Yuanzhong changed the structure of the sentence-- the poem's eight short sentences have become complete verses. Taking the first verse as an example, Xu Yuanzhong translated it as "On war-torn land streams flow and mountains stand". There is no doubt that the original poem "国破" and "山河在" are antithetical in form and opposite in meaning. However, in the poetry's translation, "war-torn land" has become an adverbial modifier of the "streams flow and mountains stand". To a certain extent, this is a departure from the form of the poetry, that is, treason, but, in fact, this method becomes an important element to form rhythmic verses. This poem contains eight internal rhymes and two alternating rhymes, so that the whole poem possesses rhythmic beauty. From this point of view, this poem's translation fully considers the rhythm and rhymes.

To make the rhymes more obvious to see, the irrelevant words would be replaced by "□", the internal rhyme would be signed by "underscore", and the alternating rhymes would be signed by magnifying the letter.

□□ land	□□□□ stand
□□unquiet	□□□□ riot
□□□ years	□□□□ tears
□□ apart	□□□□ heart
□□ fire	□□□□ higher
□□ household	□□□□gold
□□ bear	□□□□ hair
□□ thin	□□□hairpin

3.2 Lexical Usage

Xu Yuanzhong has numerous skills on vocabulary, including discretion of words and phrases, filling in words to support rhyme, creating words and sentences, and using end rhymes, etc. (Xu, 2014, p.31). When translating this poem, Xu Yuanzhong did not confine to the original text, but used more ingenious forms, such as naturalization, conversion and omission to better convey explicit meanings and connotative meanings of the poetry, achieving the "beauty in meaning". Several brief analysis of the verses are as follows:

3.2.1 国破山河在, 城春草木深。

On war-torn land streams flow and mountains stand;

In towns unquiet grass and weeds run riot.

"破" and "在" are the main point of those two verses in that they have showed two completely different states,

emerging the social background and situation at that time. In the translation, “国破”, a phrase with subject-predicate structure is transformed as a partial positive structure phrase “war-tore”, and this “war-tore” can not only indicate a state: falling to pieces of the country, but reveal a fact that the situation can be attributed to “war”. This handle can be named as a treason, but actually helps readers to understand the meaning of “破”. From the Chinese meaning of notion “在”, its meaning was similar to “remain”, whose state would be permanent and could not change due to the influences of external affairs. If the notion is translated as “exist” casually and straightforwardly, its meaning between Chinese and English lacks coherence; furthermore, the lack of implication may lead to the disappearance of the original flavor contained in the poem. In fact, an excellent translation should be appropriately explicit and implicit, so the translator explains it as “flow” and “stand”, indicating the ripple with a murmuring sound of the river and the state of mountain soaring into the sky. Obviously, this treason accurately conveys the original meaning “在”, in addition, it perfectly shows the state of mountain and river. Meanwhile, with a sophisticated structure, “streams flow” and “mountains stand” increase much more readability.

The term “春”, together with the previous concept “国破” and the later notion “草木深” forms an effective contrast (Xu, 1997); therefore, the term should be important. An appropriate translation lacks, but translator chose the method of omission and filling in words. The absence of time information results in the short of fidelity of the original text, but translator adds a word “unquiet”, which offers an opportunity to achieve internal rhyme “t” and further unfold the country’s situation of that time, which makes a solid foundation of causation for “草木深”. Owing to those specialized purposes of the translator, this kind of treason is quite acceptable. The naturalization of “深” precisely reflects the situation of grass and weeds under the attack: Without carefully weeding by human beings, they grow outrageously. What’s more, an alliteration “run riot” increasingly raises tone and rhyme, enhancing the whole abundance of rhymes and readability of the poem.

3.2.2 感时花溅泪，恨别鸟惊心。

Grieved o’er the years, flowers are moved to tears;

Homes cut apart, birds cry with broken heart.

Those two verses focus on “感” and “恨”, which exposes poet’s feelings: being sentimental for that political situation and annoyed for the departure among families. The “时” is translated as “the years”, while enriches new contents to “感”: The war, the hardships, and the pains in those years. Fully taking the poet’s life experiences and implicit connotations of the poem into consideration, the translator courageously recreated the poem, hence, meanings of the poem are improved and the whole pattern is strengthened.

Chinese Aesthetics devotes particular care to implicitness and euphemism (Wang, 2006, p.61), hence, the requirements of classical poetry translation does not merely stress on the accuracy of meaning, but also avoid too plain lexicon, or it would convey incorrect meaning and the loss of implicit flavor of the poetry itself. In terms of “恨别”, the translator just translate “别” accurately and choose subjectively missing the translation of “恨”. Hatreds of the poet have to be deliberated and pondered to get. The family is separated and the birds sob with heartbreak. Even the birds living here are mirthless and heartbroken, not to mention the one who have experienced this situation! On the other hand, the translator used anthropathy language, posing the feelings of “花” and “鸟” transformed as the poet’s emotion. There is no vocabulary or concrete description about “恨”, but the hateful emotion could not be more obvious. In this way, the meaning of the verse could be more subtle and veiled, making the verse more thoughtful, which is conducive to motivating more thoughts and mindset of the readers. At the same time, affluent connotations of the poem could emerge spontaneously. Verse is limited, while the expressed meanings can be incessant.

3.2.3 烽火连三月，家书抵万金。

The beacon fire has gone higher and higher;

Words from household are worth their weight in gold.

The exact meaning of “三月” is controversial. Even though its meaning has been heated argued, the final conclusion cannot be decided. Several scholars consist that “三月” refers to three consecutive months that is January, February and March. Consequently, “连三月” means that the war continually happened in January, February and March. Nevertheless, some scholars assume that “三月” should be regarded as a time in which Du Fu wrote this poem. Consequently, “连三月” stresses on the length of the war. The war has never stopped, and has lasted until Du Fu write this poem—March. Other scholars suppose that “三月” means twice March, that is, one year. Consequently, “连三月” actually refers that the war has continued one year. In the light of history, Du Fu was trapped Chang’an nearly seven or eight months, therefore, “三” is not an actual amount, but a general reference of number, which means “some” or “many”, in other words, “三月” is actually several months.

Because Xu Yuanzhong fully takes into account the meaning of “三月” and the necessity of rhymes, he translated it vaguely “higher and higher”. This is an elaborate way. Supposing that translating the phrase literally, that is “several months”, there is no doubt that it is indeed faithful to the original poem, but the requirements of poetry translation cannot be merely measured by fidelity. Simple and easy to understand as they are, over straightforward language may pose the readers to the opposite side: the loss of implicitness and euphemism of poetry might lead to the lack of interest

in inquiring. While “higher and higher” can both fully express the original intention of the poem and realize the internal rhyme and alternating rhyme, triggering readers to explore the unique flavor and beauty of poetry consciously.

The short sentence “家书抵万金”, which emphasizes on the deep emotion for the family members, has obtained numerous praises from the scholars. The translation helps to expand this emotion, conveying the ultimate embodiment of Du Fu’s inner feelings. “家书” is generally referred to the letters sent by relatives, but without sticking to the original intention, the translator translated it into “words from household”, broadening the scope and changing into “family’s words”:

Whether it is a content coming from letters or verbal instructions; and whether it is a care coming from now or the past, in the view of the poet, they are infinitely fondness. How could the weight of a family book worth ten thousand gold? The poet displayed the emphasis on the family book in an exaggerated way to reflect the miss and worries about his loved ones. Similarly, the translator overstate the “抵”, translating it into “are worth their weight”. The usage of “weight” can not only show the weight of the family book in poet’s heart, but imply the disorder caused by continuous military operations of that time. Filling with mess and disintegrating of the country, no post house could pass family greetings and other messages as soon as possible. Not to mention that the post needed to pass urgent reports about the war. In this background, even though someone possess “万金”, It is still difficult to receive letters from his households. At the same time, the correspondence between “家书抵万金” and the previous phrase “烽火连三月” highlights the chaos of the time and deep missing for the relatives again! The translator fully conveys the content and emotion that the poet wants to express, and adds a number of contents to the poem from the perspective of a bystander’s viewpoint. Accordingly, the translation further expresses Du Fu’s emotions for the his country, households and even more ordinary people in the low class, and provides more space for target language readers to think about the whole poem.

3.2.4 白头搔更短, 浑欲不胜簪。

I cannot bear to scratch my grizzling hair;

It grows too thin to hold a light hair-pin.

The notion “白头” stresses on a change of hair color, showing that a man steps into old age with time elapsing. The word “grizzle” can be considered as a noun, which means a grey wig; and as a verb, which means in a buff or complaining whiningly. The translator used this “grizzling hair” can both indicate the hair color’s changing due to the passage of time, but express his deep sorrows because of the hair, and the situation he encountered in his life caused by war. Owing to mean more than the word tells, contents of the poem have been enriched.

The term “簪” is generally referred as a prolonged pin used to hold women’s hair. In accordance with this meaning, it is translated as hair-pin. In addition, in consideration of a more deep feeling, translator adopts the method of amplification, adding the weight of the hair-pin “light”. The meaning of light is an affair with comparatively little physical weight or density. Perhaps some men’s hair can not be tied with hairpin, but if a light hairpin can not hold their hair, there is no wonder that readers can find the quantities of the poet’s worries and pains in his heart. The lonely poet lived alone and all his sorrows couldn’t express to others, but bear in mind—the depressions and resentments of the departure of family and the filling apart of the country lead to the transformation of black hair into grey hair and the changing of the amount of his grey hair. The amplification of hair strengthens the emotion of the poem, and even the target readers who do not know the background of this verse can obtain the same or similar experience and feelings as the original poet and readers, enhancing their understandings and affections of the poem.

3.3 Cultural Connotation

Abundant cultural and historical connotations are included in Chinese classical poetry. Perhaps some ordinary words with no special meanings, which just belongs to objective things at that time has been evolved due to the changes and developments of years, adding new meanings and connotations. For instance, “长亭”, a term refers to small buildings, ten miles between another, constructed by officials to provide rest and recuperative services for the messengers, then gradually evolved into a place to say goodbye and leave for relatives and friends, and later “长亭” as an image is eulogized everywhere by considerable literati, posing that “长亭” has become a symbol of farewell. Therefore, the poetry translation should pay special attention to those proper nouns with cultural information and profound connotations.

“长安”, the English term Chang’an has been evolved gradually, from the earliest a name of township, to a name of the capital of Han and Tang Dynasty, and further to the general reference: the capital city of the further feudal dynasties (Li, 2013, p.19). In other words, as the most prosperous city of Tang Dynasty, Chang’an can be regarded as a geographically proper noun; meanwhile, historically, Chang’an, the ancient capital of 13 dynasties and the birthplace of Chinese civilization, has accumulated the very ancient history and gorgeous culture. Hence, the significant and glorious culture makes Chang’an become a special cultural proper noun.

After the chaos of Anshi, Chang’an has been occupied by rebels and this kind of event can be considered as a broken country in that Chang’an is the capital city of Tang. Therefore, the “国” and “城” in this poem are specifically referred to Chang’an and the translator chose a direct translation “land” and “town” in the light of this

information. It perhaps makes sense if skimming through the translation, but elaborately inspecting the translation of this verse, the translation of the proper noun seems less appropriate in that the pursuit of literal homogeneity has ignored its cultural connotation. Chang'an at any time, especially during the early Tang Dynasty, can be regarded as a perfect international metropolis with quite prosperous economy, highly stable social and rapid cultural developments. However, the translation of "land" and "town" can not bear the weight of this precise connotation, and blur the differences between Chang'an and other general cities, resulting in the destruction of the poet's artistic creation.

Perhaps in the consideration of "beauty in meaning", Xu Yuanzhong put the proper noun in a simpler form. Strictly speaking, it can be regarded as mistranslation in that many target language readers do not know the background of Chang'an's capture, naturally they can not understand the extent of a defeated country and the poet's grieves, which will indeed hinder the communications and understandings between the Chinese and Western cultures. There is no difficulty in understanding that the translation of this kind of proper nouns with evident cultural connotations needs more thoughts and elaboration to find a more practical method as far as possible. The only suggestion writer can provide is to add footnotes. Taking the Chang'an as an instance, the noun Chang'an has no necessity to emerge in the verse, but its connotation, such as the capital of Tang Dynasty, the most prosperous city in which the emperors and aristocrats live, and its defeat being a symbol of the failure and disillusion of Tang Dynasty, etc, should be added as a footnote.

CONCLUSION

The particular characteristics of poetry makes creative treason in translation quite prominent and obvious. This paper briefly analyzes verses and the final effects of Xu Yuanzhong's translation *Spring View* from the perspective of creative treason, finding that creative treason plays an active and important role in rhymes, rhythm, and exact meanings of the verses in poetry translation. However, the translator needs to carefully ponder how to translate

proper nouns with rich cultural connotations and moderately achieve creative treason, that is, we must fully consider its connotative meaning, the relationship among the noun, other nouns, and other sentences and the handle of rhythm and rhymes, otherwise it will invisibly hinder the understandings between different cultures. To some extent, in terms of proper nouns, one method to show its connotation is to add footnotes, which helps target language readers to better understand the background of the poem and the emotion of the poet, which can indeed enhance communications between the Chinese and Western.

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