

Analysis of Lin Yutang's Translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* from the Perspective of Translation Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT

The prose in traditional Chinese literature is beautiful, the form is dispersed but the spirit is not dispersed. However, the prose written in classical Chinese is condensed and uses exact terminology, making the translation of this type of literature more challenging. It is important to assess literary texts using the aesthetics of translation since it serves as a useful guide for translating these literatures. While translation aesthetics refers to the outcome of fusing aesthetics and translation studies, aesthetics is the study of how humans perceive beauty. Liu Miqing suggests in his Introduction to Translation Aesthetics that prose translation should consider the beauty of both formal and non-formal systems. While the non-formal system emphasizes the beauty of emotion and images, the formal system emphasizes the beauty of speech, vocabulary, and grammar. In this paper, Lin Yutang's translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* will be analyzed in terms of both formal and non-formal system beauty. The beauty of Lin Yutang's translation as it preserves the original work and the beauty of invention based on it will also be examined.

Keywords: Translation aesthetics, Lin Yutang, *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*.

1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction section mainly includes an introduction to the translator Lin Yutang, the text *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, and the relationship between the two. A brief explanation of the aesthetic theory of translation is also given.

1.1 Lin Yutang and *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*

Not only was Mr. Lin Yutang an excellent writer, but he was also a superb translator. In his most methodical and well-known article, "On Translation," published in 1932, Lin Yutang offered three criteria: faithfulness, fluidity, and beauty. According to Lin Yutang, there are five different types of beauty: the beauty of sound, the beauty of meaning, the beauty of spirit, the beauty of air, and the beauty of form. At the same time, he requires that the translator should have three conditions: (1) "a thorough understanding of the text and content of the original text"; (2) "a good command of

Mandarin and the ability to write clear and fluent Chinese"; and (3) "training in translation" (Luo 417). From this, it can be learned that aesthetic principles are the highest level of Lin Yutang's translation work. Meanwhile, his aesthetic pursuit coincides with some views in translation aesthetics.

Shen Fu wrote a collection of autobiographical writings titled *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* during the Qing Dynasty. It tells what the author sees and hears in the everyday but fascinating home life of his travels throughout the world using the author's and his wife's lives as the main line. The book is about the author's and his wife Chen Yun's love for one another and their wish to live off of cloth and vegetables while pursuing their artistic endeavors. However, the dream was ultimately dashed by the oppression of feudal rites and the misery of a meager existence. The plot of the book is about the intense love between a husband and wife, which endures until death, and it is told in a straightforward and unadorned manner.

It is worth mentioning that *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* is one of Lin Yutang's favorite works and a collection of Lin Yutang's translations. In his translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, Mr. Lin Yutang mentions that "Yunniang is the most lovely woman in Chinese literature." In addition, his son Lin Taiyi wrote in his biography recalling his father, "The most ideal woman for my father was Yunniang of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, and Yao Mulan of *The Smoke and Mirrors of Beijing* resembles Yunniang in many ways." (Lin 38) It is clear that his love for *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* is extraordinary.

1.2 Theory of Translation Aesthetics

Translation aesthetics is described by Liu Miqing as an aesthetic model of translation that applies aesthetic appreciation theory to explain the fundamental principles and advancement tactics of translation. The model builds the fundamental structure of translation aesthetics under the dynamic interaction mode between the aesthetic object and the aesthetic subject, using the source and target languages as aesthetic objects and the translator as the aesthetic subject. The aesthetic subject and the aesthetic object both promote, integrate, and operate on one another as they are both opposed and unified in the translation aesthetic practice activities.

The formal system and the non-formal system both work together to construct the whole aesthetic object in terms of the aesthetic system. The term "formal system" refers to the original features of the target language, or its beauty as it is directly perceptibly and consciously perceived, such as its phonology, lexicon, and syntax. The non-formal system, which especially incorporates elements like vision and emotion, is the opposite of the formal system.

2. EXEMPLIFICATION

Next, four specific examples from the text are selected to analyze the translated text, which are divided into four main directions: the aesthetics of audio, the aesthetics of vocabulary, the aesthetics of syntax and the aesthetics of emotion. The first three belong to the formal system, and the last one belongs to the non-formal system.

2.1 The Aesthetics of Audio

Rhyme's beauty is indisputable when discussing the beauty of phonetics. Rhyme enhances the

reading experience whether it is in Chinese or English. Rhyme in traditional Chinese literature mostly relates to poetry's flat, constrained structure and rhyme schemes. This rhyme has been used in prose and other literary works, substantially influencing Chinese literature. Contrarily, in Western literature, rhyme refers to the fundamental rhyme scheme used in Western poetry, with head rhyme being one of the most widely used methods.

Mao Ronggui proposes that alliteration is peculiar in English, taking the responsibility of the aesthetics of musicality, promoting the musicality of words by which it can be read and recited easily. It also brings the aesthetic satisfaction to the readers. (Mao 114)

Example 1

当时六月，内室炎蒸，幸居沧浪亭爱莲居西间壁。

It was the sixth moon, then, and the rooms were very hot. Luckily, we were next door to the Lotus Lover's Lodge of the Ts'anglang Pavilion on the east. (Lin 18-19)

The original words "爱莲居" enable readers to sense the image of Chinese scholars because of the Chinese saying "gentlemen love lotus". When translating, Lin Yutang uses "Lotus Lover's Lodge" as alliteration to achieve the effect of acoustics and visual sense so that readers can feel the aesthetics while pronouncing consonants. (Baker 277)

2.2 The Aesthetics of Vocabulary

The translator's choice of word and usage of rhetorical devices lie at the heart of lexical beauty. A good vocabulary choice can accurately convey the author's original meaning and even the author's writing style, whereas a poor vocabulary choice can lead to misunderstandings and even ruin the original text's style. Furthermore, prose writing is full of rhetorical devices, and how the rhetoric is translated by the translator has a significant role in establishing the translation's aesthetic quality.

Example 2

倚窗俯视，风动竹梢，如翻麦浪。

As we leaned over the window and looked downwards, we saw the bamboo trees bent before the wind in swaying billows like a wheat field bowing before a summer breeze. (Lin 290-291)

"Bent" is the past tense of bend, which means "to form a curve". In this context, the word "bent" refers to motion caused by wind, capturing the

lively sensation of the wind blowing the bamboo. The word "bowing" usually refers to the human behavior of greeting with modesty and respect, but here the translator takes the initiative to use the rhetorical technique of anthropomorphism to show that the summer breeze is so gentle that the wheat fields are attracted by it, which conveys a rich sense of meaning and beauty.

2.3 The Aesthetics of Syntax

Sentences that are handled using prose and parallel sentences are frequently converted into beautiful sentences in terms of syntax. The source material for *Six Records of a Floating Life* frequently employs brief, four-letter sentences that are neatly shortened without losing their charm. Lin Yutang translates this beautiful beauty by using parallel sentences.

Example 3

足疲神倦，昏然睡去。My feet were sore and my spirit was tired and soon I dozed off. (Lin 164-165)

This is a parallel structure. The parallel translation, which displays stronger emotion than the plain sentence translation version, is symmetrical in form to four-character phrases in the source text. The author is simply so exhausted in the original text that he nods off immediately. While the words "疲" and "倦" are synonyms, Lin uses "sore" and "tired" to avoid duplication and emphasize this particular exhaustion. People can perceive the artistic qualities by reading this.

2.4 The Aesthetics of Emotion

The beauty of emotion is mainly reflected in the emotional connection between the translator and the author, which is also known as aesthetic empathy. The translator must first empathize with the author in order to understand the author's actual feelings and represent them in the translation in order to help the reader develop emotional empathy with the original author.

Example 4

夏蚊成雷，私拟作群鹤舞空。· · · · ·常蹲其身，使与台齐，定神细视，以丛草为林，以虫蚁为兽，· · · · ·神游其中，怡然自得。

When mosquitoes were humming round in summer, I transformed them in my imagination into a company of storks dancing in the air... with my eyes on the same level as the flower-bed itself, and there I would look and look, transforming in my

mind the little plot of grass into a forest and the ants and insects into wild animals....and my spirit wandered in that world at leisure.(Lin 82-83)

This passage captures the elegance of the original text and is Shen Fu's account of the fascinating events in his early life. Firstly, "夏蚊成雷" is not directly translated as "the summer mosquitoes were like a thunder", but use "humming around" to depict the scene vividly. Secondly, "定神细视" is not directly translated as "focus my eyes on...", but "I would look and look", showing the curious look, and expressing the author's strong love for nature and small animals. The ingenuity of these translations brought to the page the image of the innocent and relaxed young Shen Fu. And these translations cannot be separated from Lin Yutang's own perception of nature, which he expressed more than once in his own prose. In *Enjoyment of Nature*, he writes, "There is a perfect, almost mysterious harmony between the sights, sounds, scents and tastes of nature and our senses of sight, hearing, smell and taste."(Lin, "Enjoyment of nature" 2)

It is clear that the translator and the author share similar experiences and emotions, allowing them to fully satisfy their own artistic desires and aesthetics, complete their appreciation of themselves between the author's words and lines, and experience aesthetic empathy in the same way. This can help to a certain extent reproduce the original text's beauty.

3. CONCLUSION

This paper analyzes the aesthetic performance of Lin Yutang's translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* in terms of language and emotion in two primary aspects: formal and non-formal systems, based on Liu Miqing's theory of translation aesthetics. It is examined how Lin Yutang's translation method reproduces the aesthetics of the original text and how new beauty is created based on it through a comparison with the source and the search for typical examples. This offers advice on how to translate classic works and translations of prose.

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