Innovation Humanities and Social Sciences Research (IHSSR)
Volume 22, Issue 6(2026). ISSN：2949-1282

A Comparative Study on C-E Translation of *GuanJu* from the Perspective of Three Beauties Theory

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ABSTRACT

As a famous contemporary Chinese translator, Xu Yuanchong has had his translations and theories studied by many scholars, especially his classical poetry translation. However, research on the English translation of *Guan Ju* remains insufficient. As the opening poem of *The Book of Songs*, *Guan Ju* is a brilliant pearl in Chinese poetry, with profound and implicit language, precise expression, rich rhythm, and profound artistic conception. It embodies beauty in meaning, sound, and form, and deserves thorough exploration. Inspired by Xu Yuanchong's Three Beauties Theory, this paper comparatively analyzes three English versions of *Guan Ju* by Xu Yuanchong, James Legge, and Arthur Waley from the perspectives of beauty in meaning, sound, and form. Although *The Book of Songs* has been translated into English for centuries, systematic and profound research remains lacking, manifesting in insufficient study of specific poems and the absence of comprehensive understanding from certain translation theories. Further systematic research is therefore urgent and necessary. Based on the Three Beauties Theory, this paper compares the three versions in meaning, sound, and form. The analysis shows that the original poem gains a second life through different rhetorical devices in translation. Translators employ diverse strategies and techniques to help target readers understand the uniqueness and diversity of Chinese culture. In translation, personification, metonymy, and pun are used to achieve beauty in meaning; rhyme, rhythm, and repetition to preserve beauty in sound; and parallelism, antithesis, and alliteration to realize beauty in form. This study verifies that certain viewpoints of Xu Yuanchong's Three Beauties Theory have explanatory power and practical significance in poetic translation.

Keywords: *Xu Yuanchong's Three Beauties Theory, Beauty in meaning, Beauty in sound, Beauty in form, C-E translation of GuanJu.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since entering the 21st century, China has put forward a series of initiatives, including the "community with a shared future for mankind" and the Belt and Road Initiative. While engaging with the world, China absorbs foreign cultures and promotes Chinese culture. Chinese poetry, a priceless pearl of Chinese civilization, is central to this dissemination. Xu Yuanchong, a master translator of classical Chinese poetry, combined broad knowledge, deep cultural understanding, and English proficiency with a pursuit of literary beauty. Xu synthesized existing translation theories and developed a distinct translation philosophy, translating over 60 literary masterpieces from Chinese, English, and French and earning wide acclaim worldwide.

Translation is not merely a linguistic matter; translation is shaped by the translation object, purpose, function, context, and social-cultural factors. Thus translators render the same poem differently, and even the same method yields different results because of "philosophical tradition, thinking mode, ideological source, social background, cultural soil, language differences and so on" (Tan Hua, 2019:123). These differences affect the enrichment and dissemination of Chinese culture. *The Book of Songs* is China's earliest poetry collection and a major influence on Chinese literature; *Guan Ju* is one of the most representative poems. The English translation of *Guan Ju* directly shapes foreign readers' understanding and

acceptance of classical Chinese poetry. This paper therefore analyzes the English translation of *Guan Ju* under Xu Yuanchong's Three Beauties Theory, aiming to offer a useful reference for translating classical Chinese poems.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Previous Study on C-E Translation of GuanJu

Studies on the English translation of *Guan Ju* have long been increasing in China. Scholars have analyzed and compared English versions from various perspectives. Chen Jianzhong (1999: 39) commented on the English translation of *Guan Ju* by Wang Rongpei as "Between interpretation and imitation," showing the "true realm method" of Wang Rongpei, which blends artistic conception with structure. Li Yuliang (2017: 30), in A Literary Approach to *the Translation of the Book of Poetry*, focused on the translation of rhyme, rhetoric, and image, offering an objective and in-depth analysis of literariness, the relationship between translation and history and culture, and the foreign translation and dissemination of the cultural tradition of *The Book of Songs*. Li Linbo (2011: 8), in *The Current Situation and Problems of Foreign Translation of Chinese Classics from the Multiple English Translation of Guan Ju*, discussed differences in structure, theme, narrative perspective, and meaning. Wang Keming (2011: 97) analyzed the English translation of *Guan Ju* from deconstruction, showing that the translator is inevitably affected by the social, political, and economic environment, self-identity, and other factors of the era.

From the perspective of skopos theory, Zhang Xi (2011: 273) studied the English translation of *Guan Ju* to prove that the goal of Xu Yuanchong—"beauty in meaning, beauty in form, and beauty in sound"—plays a decisive role in translation strategy. Jiao Nianhua (2012: 123) analyzed translator subjectivity in poetry translation through the English translation of *Guan Ju*, concluding that subjectivity enables translators to perceive the beauty of meaning, sound, and form in creative translation. Yin He (2013: 139) interpreted two English translations of *Guan Ju* from post-colonialism, arguing that translators should choose "Faithfulness" over "Fluency" in dealing with major cultural differences. The above survey shows that a gap remains in studying the English translation of *Guan Ju* from the perspective of the Three Beauties Theory. This paper therefore selects three English translations by James Legge, Arthur Waley, and Xu Yuanchong to demonstrate that, under the guidance of the Three Beauties Theory, the translator can better retain the beauty of meaning, sound, and form of the original poem, convey the emotion and meaning of the original poem completely and accurately in art, promote cross-cultural communication and understanding, and enrich Chinese aesthetic theory and translation theory.

2.2 Previous Studies on Xu Yuanchong's Three Beauties Theory

Studies on the English translation of *Guan Ju* have long been increasing in China. Scholars have analyzed and compared English versions from various perspectives. Chen Jianzhong (1999: 39) commented on Wang Rongpei's translation as "Between interpretation and imitation," revealing the "true realm method," which blends artistic conception with structure. Li Yuliang (2017: 30), in *A Literary Approach to the Translation of the Book of Poetry*, focused on rhyme, rhetoric, and image, analyzing the literariness of the translation, its relation to history and culture, and the foreign translation and dissemination of the cultural tradition of *The Book of Songs*. Li Linbo (2011: 8), in *The Current Situation and Problems of Foreign Translation of Chinese Classics from the Multiple English Translation of Guan Ju*, discussed differences in structure, theme, narrative perspective, and meaning. Wang Keming (2011: 97) analyzed the English translation from deconstruction, showing that translators are inevitably affected by the social, political, and economic environment, self-identity, and other factors of the era.

From skopos theory, Zhang Xi (2011: 273) studied the English translation of *Guan Ju*, proving that Xu Yuanchong's goal of "beauty in meaning, beauty in form, and beauty in sound" plays a decisive role in translation strategy. Jiao Nianhua (2012: 123) analyzed translator subjectivity in poetry translation through the English translation of *Guan Ju*, concluding that subjectivity enables translators to perceive the beauty of meaning, sound, and form in creative translation. Yin He (2013: 139) interpreted two English translations from post-colonialism, arguing that translators should choose "Faithfulness" over "Fluency" in dealing with major cultural differences. This survey shows that a gap remains in studying the English translation of *Guan Ju* from the Three Beauties

Theory. This paper therefore selects three translations by James Legge, Arthur Waley, and Xu Yuanchong to demonstrate that, under the Three Beauties Theory, translators can better retain the beauty of meaning, sound, and form of the original poem, convey the emotion and meaning completely and accurately in art, promote cross-cultural communication and understanding, and enrich Chinese aesthetic theory and translation theory.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Xu Yuanchong's Views on Translation

Xu Yuanchong stands out as a preeminent figure in translation. He won the highest honor in the field and devoted himself to translating ancient Chinese poems into English and French. Through painstaking research, he and his works gained worldwide recognition. In Xu's view, translated literature is an exquisite art offering beauty to the world. He pursued linguistic beauty and committed himself to creating literary connections between languages and cultures. His works serve as cultural bridges linking East and West, helping modern Western readers better understand ancient Chinese culture. After assiduous translation practice, Xu formed his own translation theory at two levels: "the art of beautification" and "creation of the best version like participating in competition" (Jiang Yunyun, 2015: 12), which means making full use of the advantages of two languages and pursuing cultural unity to improve translation quality. Xu first advanced this theory in 1978 in "Several Contradictions in Translation", and in 1979 he developed it further in "On Poetry Translation—Comment on the English and French Translation of Zhou En-lai's Verses".

In addition, many collections of his translations have appeared in print, among them 300 of China's Immortal Poems and Selected Poems of Li Bai. Extensive practice led Xu to put forward a set of translation theories, of which the "Three Beauties" theory forms an indispensable part. Apart from the "Three Beauties," his proposals also include "rivalry between two cultures," "make use of the good expressions of the target language," "resemblances", "particularization, generalization", "equalization", "understandable, enjoyable and delectable", "optimization theory", and "creativity translation" (Jiang Yunyun, 2015: 15). In poetry translation, the "Three Beauties" theory occupies a pivotal place. In Xu's hierarchy, beauty in meaning takes precedence, with beauty in sound following, and beauty in form coming last. He emphasized that this theory emerges from practice and is tested by it, stressing "the interconnectedness between theory and practical application" (Xu Yuanchong, 2006: 3). This is the philosophy of the "Three Beauties" theory.

3.2 Three Beauties Theory

For Xu Yuanchong, the "Three Beauties" in translation can be interpreted as follows: a translated poem ought to affect its reader as strongly as the original does—this is beauty of meaning; it ought to carry the same pleasing melody as the original—this is beauty of sound; In addition, the formal features of the original—length and counterpoint among them—should be retained as far as possible; this is what is meant by beauty of form. This is the beauty of sound, and the original poem's form (such as duration, counterpoint, and so on) should be preserved to the greatest extent feasible, as this is the beauty of form"(Jiang Meng, 2022: 18).

3.2.1 Beauty in Meaning

Regarding the "Three Beauties" theory, Xu holds that "beauty in meaning" is most significant, meaning preservation of the original meaning. In translating a poem, translators should retain as much of the original meaning's beauty as possible. Western poetry tends to be simple and direct, while classical Chinese poetry is rich in meaning. Chinese characters are often multifaceted and carry numerous meanings depending on context. Thus poetry is not just about what to say but how to say it appropriately. Translators should choose meanings infinitely close to the poet's inner emotions. Xu Yuanchong wrote in Art of Translation that "beauty in meaning" means expressing the original meaning of the poem without mistranslation and omission.

3.2.2 Beauty in Sound

Rhythm, rhyme, repetition, and similar elements give shape to the beauty of sound, and through them the musicality of the original becomes apparent. A poetry translator, accordingly, should preserve the original rhyme and sentence pattern; blank verse can sometimes serve to retain the source text's rhyme. Xu Yuanchong (2010: 18) maintains that "beauty in sound" in poetry is mainly a matter of rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration. These two—rhythm and rhyme—do much to enrich

musicality. Rhythm can evoke pleasant aesthetic sentiments and meet daily and psychological needs; repeated rhythm creates familiarity, like meeting an old friend. Rhythm is the pattern of stress, while rhyme involves words whose final syllables share the same vowel and consonant sounds. The repetition of accented vowel sounds and subsequent consonants characterizes rhyme, and end rhyme occurs when the final sounds of line-end words are identical. Hearing rhyming words often gives pleasure through perceived congruity, which generates a sense of wholeness and completion. Repetition also contributes to beauty in sound: repetitive words are straightforward, sweeten verses, and stress meaning. Sonic beauty is pursued so that beauty in meaning may be preserved. Zhu Guangqian (2007: 190) regards the mutual coordination of sense and sound in each word as the highest ideal.

3.2.3 Beauty in Form

The beauty of form encompasses line length, poetic rhythm, contrast in ideas, repetition of consonant sounds, and the parallel arrangement of ideas or phrases. Guo Jianzhong argues that “form is the carrier of meaning” (Guo Jianzhong, 2000:66). Xu Yuanchong (2010: 20) warns against changing line length in translation: “If the original line is long, the translator should not shorten it in his version nor lengthen it if the original is short.” For him, formal elegance falls into two aspects: line length and symmetry. In his view, translators should faithfully reproduce comparable poetry and achieve coherence and tidiness commensurate with the original text. In short, translators should consider the beauty in form of the original text. The translation ought to replicate the same rhythmic pattern and structural regularity as the original so as to preserve formal elegance. The language should be concise, and the sentence pattern should be simple and clear.

4. A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE REALIZATION OF THREE BEAUTIES THEORY

4.1 Three Different Versions of C-E Translation of GuanJu

Original text:

关雎

先秦·无名氏

关关雎鸠，在河之洲。窈窕淑女，君子好逑。参差荇菜，左右流之。窈窕淑女，寤寐求之。

求之不得，寤寐思服。悠哉悠哉，辗转反侧。参差荇菜，左右采之。窈窕淑女，琴瑟友之。

参差荇菜，左右芼之。窈窕淑女，钟鼓乐之。

Version 1:(from Xu Yuanchong)

Cooing and Wooing

By riverside are cooing,

A pair of turtledoves;

A good young man is wooing,

A fair maiden he loves;

Water flows left and right,

Of cresses here and there;

The youth yearns day and night,

For the good maiden fair;

His yearning grows so strong,

He cannot fall asleep,

He tosses all night long,

So deep in love, so deep!

Now gather left and right,

The cresses sweet and tender!

O lute, play music bright,

For the bride sweet and slender!

Feast friends at left and right.

On cresses cooked tender!

O bells and drums, delight,

The bride so fair and slender!

(Xu Yuanchong)

Version 2: (from James Legge)

Kwan Ts’eu

Kwan-kwan go the ospreys,

On the islet in the river.

The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady.

For our prince a good mate she.

Here long, there short, is the duckweed,

To the left, to the right,

borne about by the current.

The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady:

Waking and sleeping, he sought her.

He sought her and found her not,

And walking and sleeping

he thought about her.

Long he thought; Oh! long and anxiously;

On his side, on his back, he turned, and back again.

Here long, there short, is the duckweed;

On the left, on the right, we gather it.

The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady;

With lutes, small and large,

let us give her friendly welcome.

Here long, there short, is the duckweed;

On the left, on the right,

we cook and present it.

The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady;

With bells and drums let us show our delight in her.

(James Legge)

Version 3: (from Arthur Waley)

“Fair, fair” Cry the Ospreys

“Fair, fair” cry the ospreys

On the island in the river.

Lovely is this noble lady,

Fit bride for our lord.

In patches grows the water mallow;

To left and right one must seek it.

Shy was this noble lady;

Day and night he sought her.

Sought her and could not get her;

Day and night he grieved.

Long thoughts, oh, long unhappy thoughts,

Now on his back, now tossing on to his side.

In patches grows the water mallow;

To the left and right one must gather it.

Shy is this noble lady;

With great zither and little we hearten her.

In patches grows the water mallow;

To left and right one must choose it.

Shy is this noble lady;

The With bells and drums we will gladden her.

(Arthur Waley)

4.2 Comparison of Beauty in Meaning

The beauty of meaning is the highest state of poetic beauty. “Meaning” is the core of poetry; therefore, translating meaning is fundamental to reproducing the original poem. As the saying goes, “artistic conception is the foundation, temperament and metre is the end” (Zeng Xianghong, 2012: 247), so attention to the beauty of meaning is key to poetry translation. Translators should accurately convey both the explicit meanings and the implicit meanings and emotions between the words, reproducing the original artistic conception and sentiment so that target readers experience emotional resonance similar to that of source readers. Regarding the “beauty of meaning,” Xu Yuanchong maintains that a translation capturing the original poetic essence but lacking sonic and formal elegance may still be considered a well-crafted poem. “However, a translation that just excels in sound and form but lacks depth in meaning falls short of being a satisfactory translation” (Xu Yuanchong, 2006: 146). Thus, the beauty of meaning is the ultimate goal and destination of the beauty of sound and form.

4.2.1 Personification

Personification, a rhetorical device, involves giving human characteristics or emotions to non-human entities or abstract ideas. This technique, which is similar to a subtype of metaphor, enables writers to infuse life and vitality into inanimate objects, animals, and abstract concepts by endowing them with recognizable human behaviors and sentiments. Through personification, a writer can bring a sense of dynamism and emotion to otherwise static or abstract elements.

Example 1: 琴瑟友之

Version 1: O lute, play music bright. (Xu Yuanchong)

Version 2: With lutes, small and large, let us give her friendly welcome. (James Legge)

Version 3: With great zither and little we hearten her. (Arthur Waley)

In the original poem, the poet does not specify who plays the lute; Xu therefore adopts personification, leading target readers to imagine the instrument playing music voluntarily and creating a vivid picture. In Versions 2 and 3, "with" introduces an accompanying adverbial and "we" serves as the subject. Compared with Version 1, Versions 2 and 3 lack imaginative space and fail to convey the beauty in meaning of the original. Since the original does not mention who plays the music, Xu's translation avoids mistranslating the musician.

4.2.2 Metonymy

Metonymy, a figure of speech, entails the substitution of one object or concept for another that is closely associated. Essentially, it signifies a "substitution of names". As a literary device, metonymy serves as a means of expressing an object or idea through something closely related, rather than stating the intended meaning explicitly. By utilizing metonymy, writers can employ closely related terms to articulate words or thoughts in an alternative manner. Consequently, this technique allows writers to vary their expressions and create a more vivid impact on the reader.

Example 1: 关关雎鸠

Version 1: A pair of turtledoves. (Xu Yuanchong)

Version 2: Kuan-Kuan go the Ospreys. (James Legge)

Version 3: "Fair, Fair" cry the Ospreys. (Arthur Waley)

First, for the translation of "雎鸠", Xu translates it as "turtledoves," while the other two versions use "ospreys." Turtledoves are wild pigeons with soft, pleasant calls and are regarded as affectionate, loyal birds. Ospreys are large fish-eating birds of prey. Since Guan Ju is a love song, using "ospreys" to render "雎鸠" is improper. Turtledoves are loyal to love, make soft calls, and remain inseparable once a pair bonds. To preserve the original deep implication, Xu Yuanchong uses metonymy. In English, "turtledoves" readily evokes love, and "a pair of turtledoves" actually refers to the man and woman in love. This effectively reveals the theme and accurately expresses the original meaning.

Example 2: 参差荇菜

Version 1: Of cress long here, short there. (Xu Yuangchong)

Version 2: Here long, there short, is the duckweed. (James Legge)

Version 3: In patches grows the water mallow. (Arthur Waley)

In China, "荇菜" is an aquatic plant similar to lotus, with soft, tender stems and leaves; it can be eaten or used as medicine for humans and poultry. In Guan Ju, the repetition of "荇菜" twice suggests that picking it is difficult, akin to love between man and woman. "Cress" is a diminutive plant with delicate stalks and tiny leaves; in Western cultures, it is often eaten in salads or sandwiches, adding flavor and texture. "Duckweed" is a very small plant floating on water and constantly swayed by currents. "Water mallow" has hairy stems and pink, purple, or white flowers. In Version 2, James Legge uses metonymy to touch target readers. On reading "duckweed," readers easily associate it with erratic love between man and woman, making the English translation lively and achieving the effect of "beauty of meaning."

4.2.3 Pun

A pun, also called a "play on words," is a literary device using words with similar or identical sounds but distinct meanings. Its humor and wit arise from exploiting the multiple meanings of a word or phrase, creating a humorous effect through linguistic ambiguity. Puns may usually be meant to amuse, yet in literary works they often fulfill a serious function.

Example 1: 参差荇菜，左右流之.

Version 1: Water flows left and right, Of cresses long here and short there; (Xu Yuangchong)

Version 2: Here long, there short, is the duckweed; To the left, to the right, borne about by the current. (James Legge)

Version 3: In patches grows the water mallow; To left and right one must seek it. (Arthur Waley)

The comparison shows that all three versions translate "左右" as "the left and right." Literally, "左右" refers to orientation, but "the left and right" is also slang meaning everywhere. This shows cress swaying side to side with the water and growing everywhere. Such a characteristic suggests that the plant is hard to gather. At the same time, it

expresses the elusive feelings of love between men and women, like cress difficult to collect fully. In this way, poetry is not limited to the surface but worthy of readers' in-depth thinking and exploration. This fully demonstrates the beauty of meaning in poetry translation.

Example 2: 窈窕淑女，君子好逑.

Version 1: A good young man is wooing, a fair maiden he loves. (Xu Yuanchong)

Version 2: The modest, retiring, virtuous young lady. For our prince a good mate she. (James Legge)

Version 3: Lovely is this noble lady, fit bride for our lord. (Arthur Waley)

In the era of The Book of Songs, "君子" was a general term for the aristocracy. At the end of the poem, "钟鼓" is mentioned; it was a precious musical instrument possessed only by people of higher social status. In present usage, "君子" not only means noble but also describes good character, kindness, and justice. Translation should therefore consider both surface and deep meanings. Arthur Waley renders "君子" as "lord," Xu Yuanchong as "young man," and James Legge as "prince." "Lord" implies a high-ranking noble or one honored with the title; "prince" refers to a male royal descendant, specifically a king's or queen's son or grandson, holding distinct royal status. Compared with Xu's version, "lord" and "prince" are closer to the original meaning. Moreover, the pun in "lord" and "prince" helps readers understand more deeply that the story concerns love between aristocrats rather than common people.

4.3 Comparison of Beauty in Sound

The "Three Beauties Theory" advocates preserving the metrical rhythm of poems and songs, enabling translators to reproduce the unique rhythmic flavor of ancient poems and improve the readability and appreciation of translations. Poetry is a musical artistic expression of language, and its appreciation involves a celebration of rhythmic harmony. In poetry translation, maintaining beauty in sound is paramount; thus, the rhyme and rhythm of the original poem should be preserved. Xu Yuanchong once said, "If the writer of poetry is willing to dance with the shackles of rhyme, what reason should the translator of poetry drop these shackles?" (Xu Yuanchong 2003:118). It can be seen that the smooth transmission or creation of sound beauty is a necessary condition for the success of Chinese poetry translation into English. The aesthetic value of sound beauty lies in its capacity to evoke fulfillment and joy in readers. Hence, the fundamental principle of verse translation is to uphold the original's inherent musicality or auditory charm. Since classical Chinese poetry is inherently rhymed, an English rendition lacking rhyme cannot replicate the original's impactful effect.

4.3.1 Rhythm and Rhyme

Version 1: (from Xu Yuanchong)

Cooing and Wooing

By riverside are *cooing*

A pair of *turtledoves*;

A good young man is *wooing*

A fair maiden he *loves*.

Water flows left and *right*

Of cresses here and *there*;

The youth yearns day and *night*

For the good maiden *fair.*

His yearning grows so *strong,*

He cannot fall *asleep,*

He tosses all night *long,*

So deep in love, so *deep!*

Now gather left and *right*

The cresses sweet and *tender!*

O lute, play music *bright*

For the bride sweet and *slender!*

Feast friends at left and *right*

On cresses cooked *tender!*

O bells and drums, *delight*

The bride so fair and *slender!*

(Xu Yuanchong)

A rhyme comes into being when two or more words repeat the same sounds — often identical phonemes—in the final stressed syllable and in any syllables following it. As Li Hezi (2023: 16) observes, "Rhyming is usually consciously employed at the end of lines in poems in order to produce an aesthetic or musical effect.". When translating the poem Xu adopt the End Rhyme method. "End Rhyme" means the final sound of the

last word in the line is the same. For example, we can see the italics in the example above. “cooing['ku:ɪŋ] → wooing[ˈwu:ɪŋ], turtledoves[ˈtɜ:tldʌvz] → loves[lʌvz], right[raɪt] → night[naɪt], there[ðeə(r)] → fair[feə(r)], strong[strɒŋ] → long[lɒŋ], asleep[ə’sli:p] → deep[di:p], right[raɪt] → bright[braɪt], tender['tendə(r)] → slender[ˈslendə(r)], right[raɪt] → delight[dɪˈlaɪt]”. The function of the end rhyme is to enhance the sense of the language and make the sound harmonious and pleasant. It can create a musical rhythmic effect by repeating the same final consonant in a phrase, sentence or line. However, in order to keep the meaning of the original poem the James Legge’s and Arthur Waley’s versions forgo the usage of rhyme.

Example 2:

参差荇菜，左右流之

Here long, there short, is the duckweed, *To the left, to the right*, borne about by the current.

悠哉悠哉，辗转反侧

On his side, on his back, he turned, and back again. (James Legge)

James Legge was skilled in using the anapaest (ti-ti-tum / unstressed-unstressed-stressed), as in “To the left, to the right,” “On his side, on his back,” and “on the left, on the right.” This rhythm resembles a running horse and is often used to create speed and movement. The anapaest first appeared in ancient Greek poetry to convey the rhythm of battle and was later used by the Romans in drama. In this way, the translator enhances the poem’s rhythm, making it catchy and rhythmic for readers.

4.3.2 Repetition

Repetition is a pivotal and common rhetorical device in English. It primarily involves recurring words, phrases, and sentences, either consecutively or intermittently, to emphasize the repeated elements. It can highlight key points, deepen impressions, express feelings, and connect the preceding and following parts.

Example 1:

求之不得，寤寐思服。悠哉悠哉，辗转反侧。参差荇菜，左右采之。窈窕淑女，琴瑟友之。

His yearning grows so strong,

He cannot fall asleep,

He tosses all night long,

So deep in love, so deep!

Now gather left and right

The cresses sweet and tender!

O lute, play music bright

For the bride sweet and slender!

Feast friends at left and right

On cresses cooked *tender*!

O bells and drums, delight

The bride so fair and slender!

(Xu Yuanchong)

In Version 1, Xu repeats “sweet” and “slender” to stress the bride’s beauty; the repeated consonant [s] also enhances sound beauty. In addition, when expressing the young man’s love and its lack of acceptance, Xu uses the repetition “so deep in love, so deep!” to emphasize the man’s deep love for the maiden. These repetitions strengthen the rhythm of the article and the author’s feelings.

Example 2:

Version 2: (from James Legge)

Kwan Ts’ eu

Kwan-kwan go the ospreys,

On the islet in the river.

The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady.

For our prince a good mate she.

Here long, there short, is the duckweed, *To the left, to the right,*

borne about by the current.

The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady:

Waking and sleeping, he sought her.

He sought her and found her not,

And walking and sleeping he thought about her.

Long he thought; Oh! long and anxiously;

On his side, on his back, he turned,

and back again.

Here long, there short, is the duckweed;

On the left, on the right, we gather it.

The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady;

With lutes, small and large,

let us give her friendly welcome.

Here long, there short,

is the duckweed;

On the left, on the right,

we cook and present it.

The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady:

With bells and drums let us show our delight in her.

(James Legge)

In Version 2, James Legge repeats "The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady" and frequently uses prepositional phrases to express the state of a person or thing, such as "On the left, on the right, we gather it," "On his side, on his back, he turned, and back again." These repetitions give readers a stronger sense of rhyme and emphasize the hard-won nature of this love and the man's affection for the woman, serving the beauty of meaning.

Example 3:

Version 3: (from Arthur Waley)

"Fair, fair" Cry the Ospreys

"Fair, fair" cry the ospreys

On the island in the river.

Lovely is this noble lady,

Fit bride for our lord.

In patches grows the water mallow;

To left and right one must seek it.

Shy was this noble lady;

Day and night he sought her.

Sought her and could not get her;

Day and night he grieved.

Long thoughts, oh, long unhappy thoughts,

Now on his back, now tossing on to his side.

In patches grows the water mallow;

To the left and right one must gather it.

Shy is this noble lady;

With great zither and little we hearten her.

In patches grows the water mallow;

To left and right one must choose it.

Shy is this noble lady;

The With bells and drums we will gladden her.

(Arthur Waley)

In versions 3, Arthur Waley repeats the description of the lady "shy was this noble lady" and the depict of the water mallow "In patches grows the water mallow" which can also strengthen the rhythm. In this repetition, the translator corresponds to the original text and retains the sound beauty of the original poem.

4.4 Comparison of Beauty in Form

As the foundation of poetic creation, the beauty of form is significant. It refers to the aesthetic sensations and delights that the external structure of poetry evokes in readers. During translation, the original style should be closely followed to faithfully represent the poem's essence and style. For example, free poetry should be translated with free poetry and metrical poetry with metrical poetry, which helps form a poem consistent with the original in readers' acceptance and aesthetic effect.

4.4.1 Parallelism

Parallelism involves placing phrases or sentences side by side that are similar in structure and meaning, so that they balance and reinforce one another. This literary device is used to create harmony and rhythmic flow within the text. In this way, it can enrich the overall reading experience.

Example 1:

Version 1:

关关雎鸠，在河之洲。窈窕淑女，君子好逑。参差荇菜，左右流之。窈窕淑女，寤寐求之。

By riverside are cooing

A pair of turtledoves;

A good young man is wooing

A fair maiden he loves.

Water flows left and right

Of cresses here and there;

The youth yearns day and night

For the good maiden fair. (Xu Yuanchong)

.....

Xu keep the translation in line with the original poem format. "By riverside are cooing, A pair of

turtledoves", "Water flows left and right, Of cresses here and there....." Each sentence has the same structure, which keep the beauty in form and look very clear and orderly.

Example 2:

Version 2:

悠哉悠哉，辗转反侧。参差荇菜，左右采之。

Long he thought; Oh! long and anxiously;

On his side, on his back, he turned, and back again.

Here long, there short, is the duckweed;

On the left, on the right, we gather it.

The *modest, retiring, virtuous,* young lady. (James Legge)

James Legge uses the prepositional phrase to express the man's torture in his heart and his desire for love. He also created the sentence parallelism which will give people a feeling of fluency and can make the beauty in form. "Modest, retiring, virtuous" three adjectives as the words parallelism show the men's appreciation of lady. It gives a sense of balance in form.

4.4.2 Antithesis

Antithesis means contrasting ideas sharpened by the use of opposite meanings. This rhetorical device involves the writer intentionally employing opposing or diverse words, phrases, or clauses in a parallel configuration, thereby revealing and stressing the contrast or contradiction that exists between two distinct entities or parts of the same entity.

Eample 1: 参差荇菜，左右流之。

Version 1: Water flows *left and right*, Of cresses here and there; (Xu Yuanchong)

Version 2: *Here long, there short*, is the duckweed, *To the left, to the righ*t, borne about by the current. (James Legge)

Version 3: In patches grows the water mallow; To *left and right* one must seek it. (Arthur Waley)

Example 2: 窈窕淑女，寤寐求之。求之不得，寤寐思服。

Version 1: The youth yearns *day and night*, For the good maiden fair.

His yearning grows so strong, He cannot fall asleep, He tosses all night long, So deep in love, so deep! (Xu Yuanchong)

Version 2: The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady: Waking and sleeping, he sought her.

He sought her and found her not, And walking and sleeping he thought about her.

Long he thought; Oh! long and anxiously; On his side, on his back, he turned, and back again.

(James Legge)

Version 3: Shy was this noble lady; *Day and night* he sought her. Sought her and could not get her; *Day and night* he grieved. (Arthur Waley)

Example 3: 窈窕淑女，琴瑟友之

Version 1: O lute, play music bright, For the bride sweet and slender! Feast friends at *left and right*. (Xu Yuanchong)

Version 2: With lutes, *small and large*, let us give her friendly welcome. (James Legge)

Version 3: Shy is this noble lady; With great zither and little we hearten her. (Arthur Waley)

Comparing the three versions, each contains antithesis, such as "left and right," "day and night," "long and short," "here and there," and "small and large." "Left and right," "long and short," and "here and there" describe "荇菜", indicating that love and the lady's heart are difficult to obtain. "Small and large" represents the sound the man plays to attract a girl with music. Such antithesis makes contrasting ideas stand out, emphasizing differences and clarifying complex concepts. The sentence constructions are exceptionally tidy and methodical, enabling readers to perceive formal elegance explicitly and intuitively, just as readers of the original poem do.

4.4.3 Alliteration

Alliteration refers to the use of the same consonant phonemes or similar phonemes at the beginning of a word in order to emphasize, attract attention, or increase the force of expression. The initial letters or phonemes of these words have similar phonological characteristics, thus creating a sense of rhythm in the target reader's mind.

Example1: 窈窕淑女，琴瑟友之。

Version 1: O lute, play music bright, For the bride *sweet and slender! Feast friends* at left and right. (Xu Yuanchong)

Version 2: With lutes, small and large, let us give her friendly welcome. (James Legge)

Version 3: With great zither and little we hearten her. (Arthur Waley)

Example 2: 窈窕淑女，钟鼓乐之。

Version 1: O bells and *drums, delight*, The bride so fair and slender! (Xu Yuanchong)

Version 2: With bells and drums let us show our delight in her. (James Legge)

Version 3: The With bells and drums we will gladden her. (Arthur Waley)

Xu's translation contains evident alliteration. "Youth yearns" depicts the man's longing for the maiden day and night; "sweet and slender" portrays the woman's lovely appearance; "feast friends" suggests intimate, inseparable companions and reflects the man's trust and love for the maiden as well as the grand banquet celebrating the happiness of love after winning her; "drums, delight" makes the conversion of parts of speech more natural and the form more fluent. Compared with other versions, Xu's alliteration makes word forms symmetrical, rhythm harmonious, and reading easy. The translation summarizes formal elegance and phonetic harmony, combining sound with emotion and sound with meaning, thus achieving profound expression and irresistible allure.

5. CONCLUSION

Classical Chinese poetry is an invaluable gem of traditional Chinese culture and an effective avenue for foreigners to understand ancient Chinese culture and literature. Due to Chinese-English language barriers, translation is difficult: translators must preserve the original artistic conception and rhythm and enable target readers to comprehend traditional Chinese culture, requiring scientific translation theory. This study follows Xu Yuanchong's "Three Beauties" theory to compare and analyze differences among three English versions of the same poem in meaning, sound, and form, yielding noteworthy insights and suggestions for future research.

Beauty of meaning is most important, but beauty of sound and form are also significant and greatly influence poetic beauty. Translators should therefore prioritize meaning while attending to sound and form. Translation emphasizes faithfulness, but complete reproduction of original beauty is sometimes impossible. Translators should use various methods to approximate the original sound and form, such as parallelism, antithesis, or repetition. Over-explanation causes redundancy and fails to reproduce original beauty; fewer words and similar line numbers are preferable. Since the three beauties cannot always be realized simultaneously, meaning has top priority. Personification, metonymy, and pun can better convey meaning; in some cases, meaning may be sacrificed for form and sound, while in others form and sound give way to meaning. Approximating original meaning, form, or sound helps preserve "Chinese flavors." Under the Three Beauties Theory, translators use personification, metonymy, and pun for meaning; rhyme, rhythm, and repetition for sound; and parallelism, antithesis, and alliteration for form.

Nowadays, China promotes the globalization of Chinese culture to spread traditional Chinese literature and culture worldwide. Therefore, it is necessary to learn how to retain as much "Chinese flavor" as possible in poetry translation.

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