

The English Translation of Indeterminacies in Tao Yuanming's Poetry from the Perspective of Reception Aesthetics Theory

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Abstract

Tao Yuanming, known as "the ancestor of reclusive poets" and "the originator of pastoral poetry", occupies an important position in the history of Chinese poetry. Like many excellent poems, Tao's poems also use a large number of blank spaces, which makes his poems concise but meaningful. From the perspective of the concept of "indeterminacies" in the theory of reception aesthetics, combined with the characteristics of the blank spaces in Tao's poems, this paper classifies them into linguistic indeterminacies, syntactic indeterminacies, imagery indeterminacies, and cultural indeterminacies, analyzes and compares it with the original text and translation, and discusses the English translation methods of blank in ancient Chinese poetry.

Keywords: English translation of Tao Yuanming's poems, reception aesthetic theory, blank

1. Introduction

Poetry is a brilliant pearl in literature, and poetry translation is a bridge to convey excellent cultures from abroad. Poets express their emotions through the exquisite use of language, which is the most concise form of literature. It is a highly refined and condensed representation of real life in various ethnic language systems around the world. Poetry from different countries has its unique charm. Due to differences in geographical location, local customs, lifestyle habits, language, and other factors, Chinese and Western poetry differs greatly in terms of form, style, theme, and other aspects. Poetry translation brings vitality to literary creation in the target language country and brings novel literary experiences to readers in the target language country.

Classical poetry is a treasure of Chinese culture, and effectively conveying classical poetry is crucial for cultural exchange between China and the West. Whether readers can feel and recognize the beauty of poetry translations is the key to poetry aesthetic translation. Only when the beauty of the source language poetry appears in a form that the target reader can accept and identify with, can it stimulate the reader's subjective initiative in reading and enable them to experience aesthetic effects similar to those of the original text. Liu Bai (vacancies) is a major feature of Chinese poetry and a major difficulty in translating Chinese poetry. It shares similarities with the "indeterminacy" in reception aesthetics. This paper takes Tao Yuanming's poetry as the corpus, and based on the theory of reception aesthetics, analyzes and compares the translation of Liu Bai (vacancies) in Chinese classical poetry from four aspects: linguistic indeterminacy, syntactic indeterminacy, image indeterminacy, and cultural indeterminacy.

2. "Indeterminacy" in the Theory of Reception Aesthetics

The theory of reception aesthetics, which originated in the 1960s, has changed the vision of literary research from author-centered and work-centered to reader-centered through the investigation and reflection of previous literary theories, thus improving the status of readers and enriching the connotation of literary works. Robert Jauss, one of the founders of reception aesthetics and a famous German literary theorist, published the article "The History of Literature as a Challenge to the Science of Literature" in 1967, marking the birth of reception aesthetics, whose theoretical basis is phenomenal aesthetics and interpretive aesthetics. Wolfgang Iser is another important representative of reception aesthetics. Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser together are known as the "two stars of reception aesthetics".

According to reception aesthetics, literary texts are not a close whole but tend to provide "schematized aspects" (Iser, 1978:21). In other words, there are many implications or meaning gaps in literary texts, which are not clearly expressed in words and should be discovered and filled by readers. This is why, according to the view of reception aesthetics, literary works are not equal to literary texts, while other theories regard these two concepts as the same. Literary works are full of uncertain factors or gaps. What readers need to do when reading is to fill these gaps with their vision of expectation, which is called concretization in reception aesthetics. In a narrow sense, concretization refers to any actions and efforts taken by readers to fill in every uncertain factor. In a broad sense, it refers to the actualization of the text. In other words, a literary work includes not only the literary text, but also the concretization of readers, and the latter part is more important.

"Indeterminacy" is an essential part of literary works. Iser (1979, p. 125) claimed that meaning is not embodied in the text, but generated in the process of reading. They are not entirely subjective or pure texts, but the result of interaction between

readers and texts. Therefore, the translator, as a reader, fills in these indeterminacies by making full use of proper imagination and creativity. Then, the target readers complete the uncertainties in the translated works through their imagination and creativity. Iser (1979, p. 55) said that the more uncertain factors are, the more diverse the image the reader constructs.

Reception aesthetics was applied to Western translation studies in the late 1970s. In the 1980s, some Chinese scholars also began to apply reception aesthetics in translation study. Reception aesthetics is successful and effective in guiding and studying translation, and provides new perspectives and ideas for translation and translation studies.

3. Liu Bai in Ancient Chinese Poems

Ancient Chinese poetry is the quintessence of Chinese culture. Most of its length is limited, but its meaning is often endless. Today, despite the changes of times, it still has unattainable and unrepeatable artistic and cultural values, of which "Liu Bai" is one of its major characteristics. "As the internal essence of Chinese poetry culture, the vacancies and indeterminacies of meaning in ancient art have some holographic characteristics of Chinese cultural spirit. It is also the core topic of the aesthetic hermeneutics of ancient Chinese literature, and is the generation and operation mechanism of Chinese artistic meaning in the form of artistic conception." (Jin, 1995). Liu Bai, that is, leaving corresponding blank spaces in the work. What is left behind is a kind of wisdom, a realm, the end of visualization, the beginning of imagery. Leaving vacancies can be seen as the process of writing realistically and seeking virtuality. The language of poetry is highly concise, leaping, and implicit. A good poem can often show a grand scene or reach a lofty artistic conception through a few words of description, and achieve the artistic height of endless meaning. Yan Yu once said in *The Ts'ang Lang Poetry Critique* (沧浪诗话): "...Therefore, its beauty is thorough and exquisite, and it cannot be touched. It is like the sound in the air, the color in the picture, the moon in the water, and the image in the mirror. The words are limited but the meaning is endless.", indicating the beauty of blank space in poetry and prose.

The meaning of vacancies is also mentioned in reception aesthetics. It shares similarities with the "indeterminacy" in reception aesthetics. Iser (1974) said: "If the reader has been given the whole story, leaving with nothing to do, then his imagination will never enter the field, and the result will be that everything is readily set out in front of the reader, and then inevitably boredom will set in." Liu Bai in ancient poetry is ubiquitous, and the forms it takes are diverse. At the micro level, it includes rhythm, linguistic words, syntactic structure, and rhetorical devices; at the macro level, it includes imagery and connotation.

4. English Translation of Indeterminacies in the Poems of Tao Yuanming

Tao Yuanming (c. 365-427) was a distinguished poet, rhetorician, and essayist from the late Eastern Jin Dynasty to the early Liu Song Dynasty. He is known as "the patriarch of the hermit poets" and "the progenitor of the idyllic poetry school". Tao wrote 125 poems and 12 essays, which were compiled by later generations as the *Tao Yuanming Collection*.

The main types of his works are: drinking poems, chanting poems, pastoral poems, and prose. Tao is the first poet who wrote a lot about drinking in the history of Chinese literature. His drinking poems are rich in life, profound in philosophical connotation, and highly accomplished in art, which are masterpieces in the history of Chinese poetry. Tao's spirit of drinking had a great impact on the creation of drinking poetry in the Tang and Song dynasties. As a huge spiritual force, he inspired scholars and literati in the depths of adversity, and his life of poetry and drinking has become an ideal life mode for many poets. Tao's drinking spirit has been inherited through the creation of poets of all ages and has given out eternal artistic brilliance in the history of literature. In addition, his idyllic poems are the most numerous and the most accomplished. These poems fully express the poet's noble moral integrity of keeping his will; his love for simple rural life, his knowledge of labor and his friendly feelings toward the working people; and his pursuit and aspiration for an ideal world. As a literati doctor, such thoughts, feelings, and contents are unprecedented in the history of literature, especially in a society with strict patriarchal systems and concepts. Tao is the pioneer of pastoral poetry. His pastoral poems, with simple and natural language and lofty artistic conception, opened up an unexplored land for Chinese poetry and directly affected the pastoral poetry school of the Tang Dynasty. In his idyllic poems, his weariness of the dark reality and his love for the quiet idyllic life can be seen everywhere.

Tao's works have attracted the attention of not only Chinese scholars and readers but also countless poets, literary enthusiasts, and researchers from abroad. Not only has scholarship on Tao and his works been noted in the history of Chinese literature, but overseas interest and research on him have continued for many centuries, with a wealth of related writings. Overseas readers, especially in the English-speaking world, became acquainted with Tao mainly through the English translations of his works. Modern readers in the English-speaking world have come to know the poet and his life through the translations of poems by Sinologists or translators from different periods.

Like many traditional Chinese poems, Tao's poems also use a large number of vacancies. According to the characteristics of the blank spaces in his poems, this paper divides it into four parts: linguistic indeterminacies, syntactic indeterminacies,

imagery indeterminacies, and cultural indeterminacies. It analyzes and compares the indeterminacies in the original text and the translated text, and discusses the English translation methods of the blank space in ancient poems in different categories.

4.1 Linguistic indeterminacies

At the linguistic level, indeterminacies refer to the omission of some words that lead to incomplete sentences, including subjects, predicates, prepositions, modifiers, and conjunctions. These ellipsis will contribute to the conciseness and retention of poetry, and also help to form the imagination space in the reader's mind. Chinese classical poetry is a literary genre that is full of blanks and fuzziness in all directions and at all levels, leaving a huge space for readers to appreciate. Rhetoric is the main form of text blank, that is, linguistic indeterminacies are formed through pun, metaphor, implication, metonymy, irony, repetition, etc. The following examples are linguistic indeterminacies caused by reduplicated words.

Reduplicated words are an aesthetic feature of Tao's poems. In many of Tao's poems, verbs appear as reduplicated words. Dealing with the reduplication is an important part of preserving the language style and reproducing the poetic meaning of Tao's poems, but due to the differences between the Chinese and Western languages, it is not advisable to translate the reduplication directly into English, as it will not only create an obstacle to the understanding of the target language readers but will also make the grammatical structure of the translation confused. Therefore, for this kind of semantic gap, the translator needs to give full play to his initiative and creativity and make appropriate rewriting to help the readers of the target language understand the content and meaning of the poem without compromising the original meaning.

Example 1

Source Text: 靡靡秋已夕，凄凄风露交。

—《己酉岁九月九日》

Target text:

Late autumn now provides a dreary view,

Amid the chilly wind and heavy dew.

—Tr. by Wang Rongpei (2003:66)

Slowly the autumn has come to its close;

Chilly the wind and dew mingle.

—Tr. by Albert Richard Davis (1984:78)

Little by little autumn has come to an end

Chill, chill the wind and dew combine.

—Tr. by James Robert Hightower (1970:119)

The poem is about the arrival of the bleak wind and dew in the late autumn of September. The use of the words '靡靡' and '凄凄' seem to convey the special atmosphere of late autumn. The superlatives here act as adjectives in the original text to modify autumn and wind respectively, but Wang translates them as the adjectives 'late', 'dreary' and 'chilly' and 'heavy', which form a couplet, conveying the original meaning and fills in the missing first rhyme with the final rhyme. The only minor flaw is that the phonetic beauty of reduplicated words is not conveyed to readers. Davis converted these two reduplicated words into adverbs, which is a great translation method because reduplicated words mostly have a modifying effect in poetry and prose. While filling in the meaning gap, Davis made the translated text very close to the original text, providing readers with a similar aesthetic experience and meeting their expectations.

Example 2

Source Text: 遥遥万里辉，荡荡空中景。

—《杂诗八首》（其二）

Target text:

The moon sheds light o'er ten thousand li.

Visible its glow o'er land and sea.

—Tr. by Wang Rongpei (2003:90)

Far, far the rays extend a million miles,

Wide, wide the lights spread out through space.

—Tr. by James Robert Hightower (1970:196)

Tao Yuanming's poetry often reveals a profound experience of life. This experience is a profound introspection of life itself. For human life, its meaning is evergreen. In the second poem of the *Miscellaneous Poems*, Tao Yuanming writes of his sense of worry that time is running out and that his life is already limited, that he has not yet achieved his ambition, and that the value of his life has not yet been realized. The poem depicts the scene between heaven and earth at sunset and moonrise, which then leads to the poet's feeling that life is short and that it is difficult to achieve one's ambition. Wang's translation uses

'o'er' to convey the implication of the two superlatives '遥遥' and '荡荡', which is simple and concise. Although it does not reproduce the style of the superlative at the beginning of the stanza, the two lines echo each other in form, and the end rhyme largely fills in the gaps in the superlative.

Example 3

Source Text: 眇眇孤舟逝，绵绵归思纡。

—《始作镇军参军经曲阿作》

Target text:

The farther from home in my boat I go,
The stronger my thoughts for the country grow.

—Tr. by Wang Rongpei (2003:46)

Far into the distance the lonely boat departed,
Continuous and constant the thought of returning home.

—Tr. by William Acker (1952:87)

Into the distance the solitary boat goes;
Endlessly my thoughts of returning wind.

—Tr. by Albert Richard Davis (1984:120)

Wang uses the basic pattern of the common sentence pattern "the more, the more" in the English language to replace Tao Yuanming's technique of reduplication. This translation method retains the rhetorical features and aesthetic taste of the original poem to a large extent and also conforms to the expectations of the target language readers. It is a "win-win" translation method, and it is the re-creation and filling of the language gap. In comparison, although William Acker's translation conveys the meaning of the original poem, it is still lacking in rhyme and sound. However, it can be seen that he has taken some consideration in this regard, such as translating "绵绵" as "continuous and constant", which is a common alliteration in English poetry rhetoric. It is obvious that both translators have their ways of thinking and translating, and I reckon that Wang's version is more in line with readers' expectations.

4.2 Syntactic indeterminacies

Syntactic indeterminacies are produced by the breakthrough or backwash of poetic language to the rules and collocations of everyday language. It can create an undetermined state through the absence of sentence elements (lack of subject, predicate, and object), produce a compound sense or ambiguity effect through word usage, or change the meaning gap through abnormal collocation (such as preposition of object, inversion of subject and predicate, etc.).

Example 4

Source Text: 结庐在人境，而无车马喧。

问君何能尔，心远地自偏。

—《饮酒二十首》（其五）

Target text:

My house is built amid the world of men,
Yet with no sound and fury do I ken.

To tell you how I can keep deaf and blind,
Any place is calm for a peaceful mind.

—Tr. by Wang Rongpei (2003:113)

I built my house near where others dwell,
And yet there is no clamor of carriages and horses.
You ask of me "How can this be so?"

"When the heart is far the place of itself is distant."

—Tr. by William Acker (1952:117)

I built my hut beside a traveled road
Yet hear no noise of passing carts and horses.

You would like to know how it is done?

With the mind detached, one's place becomes remote.

—Tr. by James Robert Hightower (1970:130)

Tao pioneered drinking poetry, and his drinking poem is a masterpiece in the history of Chinese poetry, with its rich life content, profound philosophical connotations, and high artistic achievement. This poem lacks a subject in sentence structure, which is very common in classical Chinese poetry. The charm of ancient Chinese lies in its flexible structure and scattered

sentence patterns. The poet uses subject-free sentences with verbs as the core to describe the scenery and create vivid images. However, English is a hypotactic language and its structure is rigorous. Therefore, to ensure the accuracy of grammar, the translator needs to fill in the missing content in Chinese according to English grammar rules. Here, all three translators add the subject "I" and translate the ownership of "庐" (the place where the poet lived), thus the meaning of the original poem is truly conveyed. In the process of translating poetry into English, the completion of the syntactic structure of the original poem coordinates the pragmatic differences between Chinese and Western poetry and clears cognitive barriers for readers.

Example 5

Source Text: 少无适俗韵，性本爱丘山。

误入尘网中，一去三十年。

—《归园田居》

Target text:

I've loathed the madding crowd since I was a boy
While hills and mountains have filled me with joy.
By mistake I sought mundane careers
And got entrapped in them for thirty years.

—Tr. by Wang Rongpei (2003:52)

Nothing like the others, even as a child,
rooted in a love for hills and mountains,
I fell into their net of dust, that one
departure a blunder lasting thirteen years.

—Tr. by David Hinton (1993:43)

In this poem, as in the previous one, the subject is not mentioned, and the two translations add the subject 'I' to the original poem. In such cases, the translator needs to analyze and fill in the omitted syntactic elements and words according to the characteristics of the source and target languages.

4.3 Imagery indeterminacies

“意象” is a unique and typical concept in Chinese classical poetry, which involves an artistic image and its implication. The concept of it in Chinese poetry is different from that of "image" in English, because "image" does not have as many meanings as “意象”. When writing poems, the poet will choose some specific images to describe the picture and convey his feelings. “意象” is the external object that the poet chooses and endows with internal emotions and feelings. It is the combination of exterior and interior with aesthetic value. Therefore, the reader must grasp these images to understand and appreciate the poet's feelings and emotions.

Example 6

Source Text: 相见无杂言，但道桑麻长。

—《归园田居五首》（其二）

Target text:

When we meet, a few remarks will go;
How fast the hemp and mulberry leaves grow!

—Tr. by Wang Rongpei (2003:54)

On overgrown paths, I meet neighbors
Without confusion: we only talk about
how the crops are doing, nothing more.

—Tr. by David Hinton (1993:45)

This poem was written the second year after Tao resigned. He was immersed in farming life at that time and often communicated with his neighbors about the growth of crops. From the pictures of "no miscellaneous words" and "mulberry hemp", we can understand how Tao's social life is. Wang translated "桑麻" literally as "hemp and mulberry", but Hinton did not translate it literally as "hemp and mulberry", but changed it to "crops". Due to the different geographical environments in China and the West, the cultivated food crops are also different, so Western readers may not know much about mulberry and hemp, but Wang's translation can expand the horizon of expectations of Western readers to some extent, stimulate their thinking, and generate interest in customs and habits beyond poetry. Hinton's translation is also justifiable, which is more conducive to readers' understanding of poetry, but it may also be detrimental to the reader's initiative and leave little room for reflection.

Example 7

Source Text: 荣荣窗下兰，密密堂前柳。

初与君别时，不谓行当久。

—《拟古》（其一）

Target text:

The orchids blossom lush beneath the windows;

Before my parlor grow so dense the willows.

When you departed from me, my dear friend,

I did not know how many years you'd spend.

—Tr. by Wang Rongpei (2003,152)

Below my window orchids show their colors,

Before the hall the willow tree is dense.

When first my friend and I were separated

I had not thought he would be long away.

—Tr. by James Robert Hightower (1970:169)

Willow (柳) in Chinese is pronounced similarly to the character stay (留), meaning to stay or to wish for someone to stay. This special pronunciation gives Willow's image the feeling of missing someone or the sadness of departure. Willow is usually the carrier of the poet's emotion. It is therefore often used by poets to express their homesickness in the face of parting. The same is true of Tao's poems. The willows in his poems also have profound meanings. The literal translation method adopted by Wang here does not explain the connotation of the willow tree much, but the whole poem is composed of two sentences of scenery and the last two sentences of lyricism. The target language readers may not understand the deep meaning behind the "willow" at the beginning, but this is also the beauty of the translation. As the readers further understand and take the initiative, it is not difficult to establish the relationship between the image words and emotions, and then explore the connotation behind it. In this case, the expectations of target language readers are expanded and cultural exchanges are highly realized. Therefore, by adopting this translation method, the original image is retained to the maximum extent, and its aesthetic value is well preserved in the target text. Hightower's translation also retains the two imagery words in the poem, and he noticed the rhythmic beauty of the two reduplicated words in the poem. Therefore, he used the alliterations of "below" and "before" in his translation, conveying both the imagery beauty and the phonological beauty of the original text.

Example 8

Source Text: 芳菊开林耀，青松冠岩列。

怀此贞秀姿，卓为霜下杰。

—《和郭主簿》（其二）

Target text:

In verdant woods, chrysanthemum now glows;

On rocky slopes, green pine-trees line in rows.

Lofty are chrysanthemums and pines,

Which in the frosty weather show best signs.

—Tr. by Wang Rongpei (2003:20)

Fragrant chrysanthemums ablaze in woodlands

blooming, green pines lining the clifftops:

Isn't this the immaculate heart beauty,

this frost-deepened austerity?

---Tr. by David Hinton (1993:50)

Chrysanthemums (芳菊) and pine trees (青松) are cultural symbols with special meanings in Chinese culture. In the late autumn when everything is withering, the fragrant chrysanthemum and the green pine are unafraid of the cold, unyielding, blooming proudly and standing firmly, symbolizing noble and tenacious character and integrity. Here, although the poet describes scenery, he uses things to describe people, to express his feelings of staying away from the dark officialdom and sticking to the noble and upright spirit. Even though foreign readers are familiar with chrysanthemums and pine, they may not know the connotation of these two images in traditional Chinese culture. Wang chooses to retain the surface image and modifies it with "lofty" in the following so that the reader can find the deep meaning. Readers could acknowledge that chrysanthemums and pine trees may not only represent plants and flowers in the poem. Likewise, David also reflects this in his translation, as "immaculate heart beauty" and "austerity" are both words used to describe human beings, and readers will realize that in Chinese traditional poetry and prose, chrysanthemums and pines are imbued with human emotions and are symbols of purity and nobility. Proper filling by the translator can stimulate the target readers to explore the deep meaning

behind the representation, thus broadening their horizon of expectations.

4.4 Cultural indeterminacies

To understand the connotation and artistic conception of Chinese poetry, one must have a comprehensive understanding of the Chinese cultural background it involves, because language and culture are closely related to each other. "There exists no language that is not steeped in the context of culture, no culture that does not have at its center in the structure of natural language." (Lotman, 1978: 211-212). The image of Chinese poetry is rooted in Chinese culture, influenced and shaped by it. The special connotation of some images in Chinese culture is determined by the uniqueness of Chinese culture. Peter Newmark once said, "Frequently where is the cultural focus, there is a translation problem due to the cultural 'gap' or 'distance' between the source and target languages." (Newmark, 2001: 94). Even the same thing will have different connotations in different cultures.

Example 9

Source Text: 路边两高坟，伯牙与庄周。

此士难再得，吾行欲何求？

—《拟古》（其八）

Target text:

Gone is Bo-ya, who played the zither for his friend;

Gone is Zhuangzi, who talked truth with his friend.

Since there's no man with such a noble mind.

Where should I roam and what am I to find!

—Tr. by Wang Rongpei (2003:160)

Two high graves by the side of the road,

Po Ya in one, the other Chuang Chou.

Men like these are hard to find

If I went now, what would I seek?

---Tr. by James Robert Hightower (1970:182)

"Bo-ya" (伯牙) and "Zhuangzi" (庄周) are household names in Chinese culture, but they may not be well known to Western readers. The cultural gap will hinder the target language readers' accurate understanding of the original text. Both Bo-ya and Zhuangzi are pursuing a life of unbridled friendship with their best friends, and seldom consider their political careers. Tao Yuanming resonates with them in this regard. In consideration of the acceptance of the target language readers, Wang explained the two names after the literal translation to clarify the implied content and the theme. Therefore, readers of the target language can not only obtain its original meaning but also acquire knowledge about culture-specific words. In this way, the expectation range of target language readers is expanded. James directly translates the names of the people in the poem without explaining them. Instead, he provided annotations in the subsequent appreciation of the poem. Although readers may understand what these two people represent when reading the explanation, they do not seek a thorough understanding when reading the poem. In my humble perspective, a better way to deal with such situations is to provide a slight explanation in the original poem, which can be referred to in Wang's translation. This not only helps readers understand but also does not interrupt them in reading.

Example 10

Source Text: 秋菊有佳色，浥露掇其英。

泛此忘忧物，远我遗世情。

—《饮酒》（其七）

Target text:

With fair chrysanthemums in view,

I pluck their petals glistening with wet dew.

A sip of wine that carries these fair flowers,

Will free my mind from all the worldly powers.

—Tr. by Wang Rongpei (2003:112)

Colors infusing autumn chrysanthemums

exquisite, I pick dew-bathed petals,

Float them on that forget-your-cares stuff.

Even my passion for living apart

soon grows distant.

—Tr. by David Hinton (1993:100)

"忘忧物" is the synonym for Jiu (alcohol) in ancient times, because drinking can make people temporarily forget the worries of reality. In many stories in China, Jiu appears as the image of "Wang You Wu". Like China, western countries also have their own unique wine culture, but in the West, wine is mostly associated with romance and elegance, and is rarely used to express and relieve sadness, which forms a gap in the understanding of Chinese and Western wine culture. Wang's translation of "Wang You Wu" into "a sip of wine" does not translate its literal meaning directly, thus avoiding ambiguity. In addition, the translation of "jiu" (酒) into "wine" conforms to the expectations of Western readers and helps Western readers understand the original text. Hinton translates it as "forget-your cares stuff", Although this approach is faithful to the original text, readers may not be able to understand the translation due to cultural differences between China and the West. In this case, translators need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the literal translation. If the literal translation can be both faithful to the original text and understandable to readers, then it is acceptable to use. But if literal translation adds comprehension barriers to readers, it may require a change in translation methods.

Example 11

Source Text: 彭祖爱永年，欲留不得住。

—《形影神三首》（神释）

Target text:

In endless pursuit for eternal life,

Peng Zu died and gave up worldly strife.

—Tr. by Wang Rongpei (2003:80)

P'eng lived to a great age,

Yet he went at last, when he longed to stay.

(P'eng is the Chinese Methuselah.)

—Tr. by Arthur Waley

"Peng Zu", one of the pioneers of Taoism in the pre-Qin Dynasty, is said to have lived 800 years. In Chinese traditional culture, he is a long-lived person. In Western culture, according to the Hebrew Bible, Methuselah was the ancestor of Enoch and lived until 969. Wang and Waley both translated "Peng Zu" directly. The difference is that Waley added the note "P'eng is the Chinese Methuselah." He not only retained the cultural image in the original text, but also linked it with the cultural image familiar to western readers, which is helpful for western readers to understand the original text. This way of using cultural relevance and similarity to eliminate barriers to understanding not only helps Western readers understand the original text but also helps expand their horizons of expectation and learn more about Chinese culture.

5. Conclusion

Tao Yuanming is an important poet in the history of Chinese poetry. His poems and personality enjoy a high reputation in the literary circles at home and abroad. The language in his poems is plain but far-reaching and thought-provoking, revealing the righteousness of life between the lines. The indeterminacies in his poems are the embodiment of his unique aesthetics, which contains profound cultural connotation. For Western readers, if they want to truly understand the connotation, the necessary Chinese cultural cultivation is indispensable. However, due to the differences in cultural background, living habits, geographical environment, etc., Western readers will inevitably feel difficulty in the process of understanding. If the connotation of the images cannot be understood, the artistic conception of the poem and the thoughts and feelings expressed by the poet will be more difficult to predict, and the aesthetic experience will also be greatly diminished.

The theory of reception aesthetics provides a new perspective for the translation community to study and deal with the blank points in poetry from the readers' point of view. Its "indeterminacy" theory is similar to the "Liu Bai" technique with a long history in China. From the above analysis of the translated versions of Tao's poems, we can see that in the principle of "for readers", the translators, according to the characteristics of the source language and the target language and cultural differences, fill and interpret the vacancies in the poem through different translation strategies, clarifying the understanding obstacles for the target language readers. At the same time, the translator does not interpret the original poem too much, but leaves the readers with space for imagination, providing a reference for the English translation of poetry. "Therefore, there is no literal translation or free translation in poetry translation, but only plain and skillful translation." (Lyu, 2002) The translator is the reader first, and then the translator.

Through the comparative analysis of the above translations, it can be seen that different translators have different translation styles and personal innovation abilities. Finally, this paper provides the following suggestions for filling blank spaces in Chinese poetry with the excellent translations mentioned above: 1. When handling linguistic indeterminacies, appropriate word conversions can be made according to the meaning and composition of the words in the original context, especially when translating distinctive vocabulary such as reduplicated words. It is also important to pay attention to whether the translation can convey the phonological beauty of the original text. The Simple literal translation is not advisable on such occasions, and the specific translation method still needs to be carefully considered by translators. 2. When dealing with

syntactic indeterminacies, the translator should be aware of the differences in syntactic structure between Chinese and English, as incomplete sentence components are quite common in classical Chinese poetry. The translator should make an appropriate filling to facilitate the understanding of the target language readers. 3. When translating images in poetry and prose, translators need to adjust their translation strategies according to the context. If the context of the original text can reflect the connection between images and their symbolic meanings, then the treatment is simple and a direct translation can be adopted, which not only conveys the meaning but also leaves room for the readers to think. But if the connection is not reflected in the poetry, then the translator might add appropriate explanations or annotations. Here, the author leans more toward the former, which also tests the translator's ability to adapt and create. If annotations are added in the following text, it is highly likely to interrupt the reader and affect the aesthetic experience. 4. When translating culturally loaded words, translators can also refer to the translation method mentioned in the last suggestion. There are both differences and similarities between Chinese and English cultures. When dealing with heterogeneous cultures, translators can adopt the interpretive translation method. When dealing with common cultures, translators can use cultural commonalities to interpret the content of poetry and prose by borrowing the corresponding content in the target culture. This not only helps translators understand the content of poetry and prose but also enhances the communication and integration between the two cultures.

Thus, in the process of poetry translation, translators should unleash their imagination and creativity, try their best to clear the reading barriers caused by uncontrollable factors such as cultural background, and at the same time, appropriately preserve the blank features in the original poem, giving target language readers a certain amount of imaginative range, achieving interaction and communication between readers and poetry, and enabling readers to better appreciate the beauty of poetry.

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