

On the Loss of Poetic Image in English Translation of Chinese Poetry*

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In the process of translation, the translator is subject to the differences of language and culture, which often leads to the loss of poetic image, and affects the accurate interpretation of the original work. Based on the interpretation of the original poetry image, this paper divides the loss of poetry translation image into three categories: loss of cultural image, loss of concrete image, and loss of abstract image. This paper analyzes the loss of these three types of poetry image respectively, it is expected to contribute to the correct dissemination and acceptance of poetry in western countries.

Keywords: poetic image, loss, translation

1. What the Poetic Image is

The use of some individual words by the poet may become the most effective in a poem. These “key” words can be described as imagery, which cover every concrete object, action and feeling in a poem and, also, the use of metaphors and similes (Nibras, 2014, p. 46).

Producing images, the poet shows not only their imagination but also their passion, thinking, understanding, etc. Imagery is not a decorative ornament. It provides ideas in a poem, but those ideas are realized and found expression largely through the poet’s use of imagery. Imagery complicates and makes an idea more forceful. Observe, for instance, the following lines by Li Bai, translated by Xu Yuanchong (as quoted in *300 Tang Poems*, 2014, p. 125).

Drinking Alone under the Moon By Li Bai
Amid the flowers, from a pot of wine
I drink alone beneath the bright moonshine
I raise my cup to invite the Moon who blends
Her light with my Shadow and we’re three friends.
The Moon does not know how to drink her share;
In vain my Shadow follows me here and there.
Together with them for the time I stay
And make merry before spring’s spent away.

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I sing and the Moon lingers to hear my song;
My Shadow's a mess while I dance along.

At the beginning of the poem, the theme "loneliness" was pointed out. When the poet drank alone, he seemed depressed and lonely. He had to "raise his glass" and invite "bright moon" and "shadow" to accompany him. This is equivalent to three people drinking. However, the moon and shadow will not drink, but will accompany themselves silently. Compared with the drinking of real friends, this scene is even more lonely. This image makes the idea vivid by creating a very forceful sense of lonely by associating sad things from various areas of life with the moon and the shadow.

1.1 Image in Western Rhetoric

Only in the 20th century that the term "Image" acquired the sense in question. It is described as the vestigial representative of sensation (Richards 1924, pp. 91-92). For Pound (1954, p. i4), it is an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. Image is not an equation of mathematics, not something about a, b, c having something to do with sea, cliffs, night or having something to do with mood (Pound as cited by Gentzler, 1993, p. 21). Actually, Pound uses the term "image" to refer to a complete imagist poem which reveals itself instantaneously as it does a painting to the spectator.

On the other hand, the sense of image is often restricted to metaphors and similes. Lewis (1947, p. 40), for instance, contends that there are no categories which an image conforms to beyond metaphor, simile, classical epithet or personification. Cox and Dyson (1965, pp. 182-183), however, regard this sense as fairly narrow and propose that an image is basically associated with anything descriptive and evocative in poetry. Imagery is generally an integral part of poetry. Such an inevitability is due to the inadequacy of plain language for what the poet wishes to convey.

1.2 Image in Arabic Rhetoric

Early views of image set form and content apart. Al-Jahiz (1965, p. 132) sees the image as a skillful scheming of words to present the meaning of a picture. Following al-Jahiz, Ibn Jafar (1962, p. 19) emphasizes the importance of "picturing and formulating" with a view to recognizing good or bad verse. Ibn Seeda (1978, pp. 159-60) also believes that image is in its form.

The Loss of Poetic Image in Translation

The word "image" was an important concept in ancient Chinese poetry. The ancients thought that "Yi" was the internal abstract meaning and "Xiang" was the external concrete object. Meaning originates from the heart and is expressed with the help of object, which is actually the sustenance of meaning. Mr. Chen zhi'e's *on poetic images* classifies images into five categories: from the perspective of language analysis, they can be divided into static images and dynamic images; From the perspective of psychology, it can be divided into eight types: visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory, kinesthetic, illusory and synaesthesia; In terms of content, it can be divided into natural, life and myth; In terms of subject matter, it can be divided into 14 kinds: farewell, homesickness and so on; From the aspect of expressive function, it can be divided into three types: Figurative type, symbolic type and descriptive type (Chen, 1990, p. 127). Although the classification is complicated, it is helpful for us to understand the characteristics of image types. Although image classification has different principles and

standards, it also has the same and similar aspects on the whole. In terms of the formation of image itself, there are single image (local image) and overall image. Poetry can have many single images, but they can also enter the overall image system of poetry as the structural component of poetry to form the overall image.

2.1 Loss of Cultural Image

Due to the cultural differences, it is usually difficult to find the equivalent in English for an image contained in the Chinese poetry. There has long been serious concern in the translation circles over the misrepresentation of the Chinese poetic images in the English language. And the concern over the loss of poetry in the process of translation has led quite a few literary scholars and translation theorists to propose the impossible task of poetic translation. Take Obata's version of Li Bai's poem "Going to Drink" as an example.

"Do you not see high on yonder tower, a white-haired one sorrowing before his bright mirror?", here, the Chinese word "Gaotang" can refer to the tall hall and lobby. For example, "Chu Ci evocation of souls": "lofty and profound buildings, more porches on the sill layer", it means the high lobby and deep eaves, which are surrounded by railings on several floors. There is also the fifth part of "Miscellaneous Poems": "the crane's singing leads the two young children to gather in the high hall." The "high hall" here refers to a richly decorated house. In addition, "Gaotang" can also refer to parents, such as Li Bai's poem "ten thousand angry words cast into doctor Wei": "love Gaotang and cry, tears and blood become mud." "Gaotang" here refers to parents. This poem describes the unfortunate experience of being separated from the author's family and being in prison during the An Shi rebellion. Based on this poem, it is not difficult to understand the original Chinese sentence, what the poet wants to express is that time flies and time is fleeting, it means that the one who don't see their elderly parents and lament white hair in front of the mirror. The black hair of youth is now snow-white. Obata translated "Gaotang" into "high on yonder tower" (on the tower over there), which deviates from the inherent semantics of "Gaotang". The "Gaotang" has no meaning of "lobby", "richly decorated house". No matter from which perspective, this translation is biased and cannot accurately express the original image, it is suggested to translate "Gaotang" into "parents" or "Chambers".

"Little I prize gongs and drums and sweet-meats", the Chinese word "Zuan Yu" refers to food as precious as jade. For example, in the text "selected works Zuo Si's Fu of Wu capital": "if you live at a banquet, you will wear pearls and jade dishes." And Li Zhouhan's note: "jade dishes are more precious and beautiful than jade". The original Chinese sentence refers to glory and wealth, which is nothing in the author's mind. Here, Obata's translation of "Zuan Yu" into "sweet meats" not only does not show the value of food, but also does not express the poet's disdain for precious food, which may mislead readers and make them think that Li Bai just doesn't like sweets. In addition, Li Bai expressed his disdain for wealth and power through the precious "Zhong Gu Zuan Yu". From the perspective of "implied scenery" and "implied meaning", the translation of "Zuan Yu" into "sweet meats" deviates from the image of the original poem. Here, we can translate "dessert" into "precious food", emphasizing the value of real objects.

"The king of Chen would feast in ancient days at his Palace of Peace and Pleasure". The translator translated Chinese word "Chen Wang" into "the king of Chen" and "Ping Le" into "his palace of peace and joy". This poem means that Cao Zhi, "Chen Wang", once held a banquet in Ping Le temple. "Chen Wang", namely Cao Zhi, was granted the posthumous title of "Chen Wang" after his death because he was granted the place of "Chen" (now

Huaiyang, Henan Province). Ping Le, the name of a Taoist temple, was built by Emperor Han and Ming Dynasty, outside the west gate of Luo Yang City. When Li Bai wrote this poem, he expressed his feelings wildly. This sentence is just the right way to express his feelings for wine with the help of the sentence “return banquet, peace and happiness, and drink ten thousand wine” in the famous chapter written by “Chen Wang” Cao Zhi, however, Obata did not make a note on the “Chen Wang” and explained the historical background, so that readers may understand that this is the king of the state of Chen or this is the prince surnamed Chen, and the image of the character is not fully illustrated. The literal translation of “Ping Le” will mislead the readers, make the readers completely do not understand its connotation and meaning, and cause the loss of cultural images. It is suggested that in the process of translation, the translator should provide necessary annotations or notes to the words containing cultural marks and images.

2.2 Loss of Concrete Image

Ezra Pound, an American poet, is an imagist. He loved Chinese ancient culture all his life and translated *Cathay* in 1915. Europe and the United States set off a “China fever”, which has a far-reaching impact on the western poetry world. Although Pound loves Chinese ancient culture, specific cultural atmosphere and social requirements made Pound focus on literal translation and creative translation in the translation of ancient Chinese poetry, and also create a lot of mistranslation in the creation. “A long journey” is one of the best works of Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai describing love and Acacia. Here is the sentence translated by Pound:

You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.

The images of “Zhu Ma” and “Qing Mei” and the dynamic of “two small child guessing”, such images constitute two well-known idioms “a friendship formed in childhood—said of boys and girls” and “The boy and girl are innocent playmates”. Due to lack of understanding of cultural diachronic inheritance of China, Pound’s translation ignores the emotion conveyed by this image, the translation sentence is plain and straightforward, so that readers can not feel the pure and beautiful childhood conveyed by the original poem emotion. “Zhu Ma” is translated by Pound as “bamboo stilts”, which refers to “stilts”, while in the original text, it refers to a bamboo stick used as a toy horse, so the translation here is not reasonable. Moreover, Pound’s translation of “blue plums” also joined the influence of western culture. “Qing plums” is a green immature plum. “Qing” in Chinese contains three colors: green, black and blue, most of which are explained by green and black, but Pound’s translation is chosen “blue plums”. The translator chooses blue for a reason, because blue in the west, it has the meaning of loss, depression and melancholy. Pound combines the theme and meaning of lovesickness in the whole poem, but this blue or depression obviously deviates from the image of the original poem.

Then, taking Li Bai’s famous poem “Leaving the White Emperor Town at Dawn” as an example to illustrate the loss of concrete image. This poem is translated by Xu Yuanchong:

With monkeys’ sad adieus the riverbanks are loud;
My skiff has left ten thousand mountains far away.

The Chinese word “Qing” is used as an adjective, which means light and not heavy. For example, in “the letter of reporting an appointment”: “a person’s inherent death is either heavier than Mount Tai or lighter than a

feather". "Qing" can also refer to lightness, such as "the boat is light from afar, and the wind blows the clothes". "Qing" is used as a verb to show despise and "Qing" as an adverb refers to gently and effortlessly. Combined with the central image and central intention of the poem, this poem expresses the poet's happy mood, so "Qing" should mean light. Xu Yuanchong failed to translate the "Qing" of "light skiff", which made the translated poem unable to fully show the image of the original poem, resulting in the loss of the image of the original poem.

2.3 Loss of Abstract Image

Dream image is an unique abstract image in poetry. Different from the images with real objects or scenes, the dream image is very abstract and uses the objects or scenes in the ethereal dream to express the true feelings. Yuan Zhen's "Dream Well" has many similarities with western image expression forms in the expression of dream images, so it was selected by Arthur Waley as the representative translation of Yuan Zhen's mourning poems. Therefore, the author takes Arthur Waley's version "Dream Well" as an example to illustrate the loss of abstract image.

"I DREAMT I climbed to a high, high plain; And on the plain I found a deep well". The first two lines are clear and concise. In addition to adding the subject according to the habit of English, Waley's translation is completely consistent with the original text. When translating this poem, Waley not only strives to express the meaning accurately, but also intends to retain the formal style of the original poem. And another sentence "And my eyes were eager to look into the cool shaft", actually, the "deep" and "cold" in this poem reflect the image characteristics of the original poem and constitute the overall image of the poem. "Deep" can refer to water depth, as opposed to "shallow". Just as "Preface to Tengwang Pavilion": "the terrain is extremely deep and the South Ming is deep" and "if the water is not deep, there is a dragon, there is a spirit". "Deep" can mean far-reaching, indicating a large distance from top to bottom or from outside to inside. Such as "garden tour": "people stand a small court and a deep courtyard". "Deep" can be a long time, "Deep" can also refer to deep degree, such as "Bian que meets Cai HuanGong": "your disease is in the intestines and stomach, and if you don't treat it, it will benefit deep". "Deep" can also mean very (compilation team, 2003, p. 470). Waley translated "And my eyes were eager to look into the cool shaft", which did not translate the core meaning of this sentence "deep", but simply translated "Shen Quan Leng" into "the cool shaft", which also deviates from the image of the original poem. In fact, the word "deep" in the second line of the poem "deep well", Waley made a good interpretation of "a deep well", "deep" can well show the darkness and depth of the well and restore the original image. Therefore, it is suggested to translate "Shen Quan Leng" into "the cool deep well".

Thimble and ligature are both connection methods in Chinese poetry. The thimble connects two verses, which means that the last word and word in the second line of the upper couplet are repeated at the beginning of the first line of the lower couplet. A conjunction connects two lines in a couplet, meaning that the last word and word in the first line are repeated at the beginning of the second line. Thimble and ligature can strengthen the rhythm of poetry and make poetry more continuous. Waley closely followed these two methods, and the translation basically restored the thimble and ligature in the original poem:

And the dead below them laid in deep troughs.
Deep are the troughs, yet sometimes dead men
 That was why the tears suddenly streamed from my eyes.
Streamed from my eyes and fell on the collar of my dress.

Waley's translation is even more creepy. "Deep are the troughs, yet sometimes dead men" "Find their way to the world above the grave." That means the ditch is really deep, but sometimes the dead will try to come to the world on the grave. Soul communication sometimes pretends, it is more fictitious, but the English translation is more real, it refers to the body or the dead climbing up. Originally, the dead had been sleeping in the barren mountains, but the poet imagined that the dead could climb out of the cemetery and find a way to return to the world. Life and death are supposed to be farewell, but the poet never thought so. He dreamed that his dead wife could come back. The poet's yearning for his beloved made him fearless and intoxicated, but from another point of view, this idea is very terrible. The embodiment of the soul of the dead appeared in front of the living, from the communication of the soul to the contact of the body in the same space, which is really frightening. The original poem is fictitious, but the translation is realistic. Fictitious poetry generally "thinking is greater than image", thinking is scattered, there are more contacts and jumps. If the poet wants to find images to repose his thoughts, he will look for the personnel or material scenery of real life to repose his feelings, but at this time, the image entering the poetry has been deformed. It seems that it is the personnel or material scenery of the real world, but it has been specious. These images have become symbols and metaphors, and "soul" is the symbol of his dead wife, the actual image of the deceased wife has been greatly changed and transferred. Realistic poetry tends to observe and reflect things from real life. The images depicted in poetry are often people, things, objects, scenes and details that actually exist in real life. This kind of poetry constructs the artistic realm of poetry with realistic images, and then sublimates the thoughts and emotions of life realized by the poet from the description of the real world, so as to achieve the soul of a poem. Compared with realism, fictitious poetry is more subjective and logical. It is not easy for readers to understand and recite. Waley's translation deviates slightly from the original, and it's more gloomy and frightening.

Conclusion

The incomplete or wrong restoration of poetic image can easily lead to readers' misunderstanding and misreading of the original poem, resulting in readers' distorted understanding of Chinese society, culture and history at that time, which is not conducive to the correct acceptance and dissemination of Chinese culture. The loss of poetic image is inevitable in the process of translation. Even famous translators will have the phenomenon of loss of poetic image. The poetic image of the original poem is a combination of "meaning" and "object", which are intertwined and integrated with each other, both of them are the indispensable part in translation. If only one side is emphasized, it will inevitably lead to the lack of the other. Especially involving social customs and historical facts, it is difficult to achieve the perfect combination of "meaning" and "object". Nowadays, translators should try their best to restore the image of the original poetry, avoid the poetic image loss in the process of poetry translation, and make the acceptance and dissemination of Chinese poetry more "original".

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