

# Study on Poetry Translation from the Perspective of Translation Aesthetics

## -- Taking *Fishing in Snow* as An Example

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### Abstract

China's poetry has a long history and plays an integral role in Chinese history, or more precisely, poetry is part of history itself. *Fishing in Snow* is a master work written by Liu Zongyuan in the Tang Dynasty, describing a snowy scene. It is known as the loneliest poem in Tang poetry. As an art of language and writing, translation has an inseparable relationship with beauty. Translation Aesthetics is the combination of aesthetics and translation, which is to analyze, explain and solve the aesthetic problems in interlingual translation by using the basic principles of aesthetics, and to study the aesthetic subject (translator and reader) and aesthetic object (original work, translated work) in translation. This paper analyzes Xu Yuanchong's translation of *Fishing in Snow* from the perspective of translation aesthetics, which mainly includes linguistic beauty and contextual beauty.

### Keywords

Poetry Translation, Translation Aesthetics, Fishing in Snow.

## 1. Introduction

In the first year of the reign of Emperor Shunzong of Tang Dynasty, Liu Zongyuan joined the political reform movement led by Wang Shuwen. Due to the joint counter-attack of conservative forces and eunuchs, the revolution failed. As a result, Liu was relegated to Yongzhou, which was known as the "Wilderness City". In his career life, he was appointed as a minister of justice, but in reality he was a "criminal" who had no real power and was monitored by local officials. There was no place for him to live in the government office, so he had to settle down in the west wing of the monk temple, the Longxing Temple. Since he was deported to Yongzhou, he was mentally stimulated and depressed, so he described the fishermen living in the mountains and waters to express his feelings of nobility and loneliness, and to express his depression and anguish of political disappointment. He wrote this famous poem with a sorrowful and angry mood. In only twenty words, the poet paints a picture of a quiet and cold scene: a small boat and an old fisherman fishing alone in the cold river with heavy snowfall. What the poet shows to the reader is something like this: the heaven and earth are so pure and silent without any dust and sound; the life of the fisherman is so noble and the character of the fisherman is so lonely.

## 2. Features of the Original Text

### 2.1. Linguistic Beauty

The poem uses a combination of the void and the solid. The "void" naturally refers to the imagery in the poem: thousands of mountains, birds, people, a lonely boat, a straw-cloaked man, river, and snow, which are real scenes. The first two lines of the poem use the disappearance of

birds to create a sense of absolute silence. In the last two lines, the straw-cloaked man and the scenery mingle, shaping the realm of forgetfulness of things and me. The whole poem is like a painting that all four lines are scenes in the painting. Except for these imagery, the rest is a void world under the white space. The presentation of the "void" scene is mainly undertaken by snow. "Snow" is placed at the end of the poem, which brings the reader an empty and cold psychological feeling in terms of imagery characteristics. In terms of color, snow is white and pure, forming the main color of the white world. The all-encompassing, overwhelming and sweeping snow forms a huge visual contrast with the smallness of the lonely boat and the straw-cloaked man. The narration of the snowy scene is like a brief outline in a painting. The simple word "snow" presents a overwhelming and boundless world of imagination, and we cannot determine where the edge of the snow is. The word "lonely" is not only used to describe the "boat", but also the description of the straw-cloaked man. The author didn't use words to describe the fisherman, because the silence is better than the sound, and the omission of the language and description of the look is exactly where the poet set up the white space. This kind of omission is not unimportant, but a kind of style that is not written. The author has set up a suspense to stimulate the reader's desire to explore, and speculate on the fisherman's mood and psychological activities. What kind of mentality does this straw-cloaked man have when he is fishing alone in a place where people are rarely seen? This is a more intriguing artistic tension than the actual old man. This kind of white space has an intriguing artistic tension.

## 2.2. Contextual Beauty

The cold winter is not a good time for fishing, why did a depressed poet do this? Liu Zongyuan was relegated to the minister of justice of Yongzhou and lived in exile for ten years. The political disillusionment and the dangerous environment prompted the poet to put his ideals and life values into his poetry to relieve his resentment. The externalization of the poet's inner sentiment is the embodiment of the poet's proud and untrained personality. This is a kind of resistance that does not yield to the corrupt officialdom, a kind of solitary determination to seek dream, a kind of aspiration to maintain the ideal in his heart. The snow can be regarded as a symbol of the poet's character. "Snow" can cleanse the dirt, so that the spirit and heart remain pure. The sober poet faced with the corrupt officialdom. Which is right and which is wrong, which is illegal and which is integrity, the heart knows. The heaven and earth are spotless and silent, giving the readers an ethereal and boundless sensory experience. The fisherman is lonely, noble, self-indulgent, alone but inviolable, which shows a profound beauty of life experience of poet. *Fishing in Snow* is rich in grand and magnificent mood. The snow and the transcendent fisherman are the solid scene. The snowy border and the psychology of the straw-cloaked man are the imaginary scene. All these leave endless room for the reader's imagination.

## 3. The Beauty of Target Language

Translation Version:

*Fishing in Snow*

From hill to hill no bird in flight,  
From path to path no man in sight.  
A lonely fisherman afloat,  
Is fishing snow in lonely boat.

In ancient Chinese poetry, the words "thousand" and "ten thousand" do not always refer to the actual figure, but to its quantity. In the original text, "thousand" and "ten thousand" are highlighted. The "mountains" and "paths" are numerous, rendering the sluggish and quiet atmosphere of "each mountain without birds" and "each path without traces". Therefore, Xu Yuanchong translates "千山" and "万径" as "from hill to hill" and "from path to path"

respectively, instead of choosing to translate "thousand" and "ten thousand" directly. The words "鸟飞绝" and "人踪灭" are translated as "no bird in sight" and "no man in sight" respectively. They are in line with the English expression habits and make the message of the original text be accurately conveyed. At the same time, the structure, words and syllables of "from hill to hill" and "from path to path", "no bird in flight" and "no man in sight" are the same, thus the form of the original poem is transplanted into the target text, and the beauty of the original poem is well reproduced. The third and fourth lines rhyme and reproduce the static atmosphere of the original poem, and the word "lonely" and "alone" accurately convey the feelings of a person. The mood of the original poem was perfectly reproduced as a whole.

#### 4. Conclusion

Poetry has its own special characteristics and is the most beautiful art in literature. Poetry translation is a creative and aesthetic reproduction process. In the process of translation, the translator should not only grasp the external rhythm of the original text, but also the internal rhythm that appeals to the soul. In the end, the original meaning is unified and the poem is grasped as a whole from content to form. The emotion, rhythm and style are recreated to reproduce the aesthetic effect of the original poem.

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