

A Comparative Study of the English Translation Versions of Yu Meiren from the Perspective of the Skopos Theory

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Abstract: Yu Meiren is a wonderful work of classical Chinese poetry because of the poet's inexhaustible sadness for the destruction of his country, which is just like a torrent of water. Due to the unique cultural symbols, Chinese poetry has also been given much attention in the study of foreign translations of Chinese culture. With the frequent cultural exchanges between China and other foreign countries, translators for Chinese poetry translation are also becoming more than before. However, the translation of the same poem may have different characteristics because of the different translation views and purposes of translators. Under the guidance of the Skopos Theory, this paper will analyze different versions of translations of Yu Meiren and discuss the translation strategies that should be adopted in the translation of Chinese poems. Thus, the translation of Chinese poetry will be more in line with the reading habits of the target readers and promote the foreign dissemination of China's excellent traditional culture.

Keywords: English Translations of Yu Meiren, The Skopos Theory, Poetry translation, Translation strategy, Comparative study.

1. Brief Introduction

Li Yu was the last emperor of the Southern Tang Dynasty, who is proficient in calligraphy, painting, poetry and melody. The bumpy life experience provides a kind of unique feeling of sadness to his poems. Zhao Yi, a scholar in the Qing Dynasty, once said: "The country is unlucky while the poets are prolific", which is undoubtedly the true portrayal of Li Yu's life. After the destruction of his country, Li Yu was also imprisoned. In order to express his pain about the country's destruction, he expressed his feelings of grief and anger through his poems, which are excellent works of poetry with high literary value and research value. Ci, according to Wang Jiaosheng (1989), is originally a type of melody tuned to folk music and later develops into a new form of written verse, which is composed of lines of different lengths. A Ci-poem is limited to a fixed number of characters, which conforms to a strict meter and rhyme scheme. The origin of Ci dated back to the Sui Dynasty. However, it was not until the end of the Five Dynasties during the year 907 to 960 that Ci made rapid strides [1]. *Yu Meiren* was created by Li Yu after he was captured, which expresses the poet's mourning for his former country---Southern Tang Dynasty. The language of *Yu Meiren* is concise and beautiful, which expresses Li Yu's grief for his life after the destruction of his country. The last sentence of *Yu Meiren* "I ask you, how much sorrow can there be? It's just like a whole river full of eastward flow in spring" is to express the imperceptible sadness in an extremely appealing and vivid way, which has become very famous till now.

There are many different English translation versions of Li Yu's *Yu Meiren*. This paper mainly puts emphasis on three English translation versions of *Yu Meiren* by Hans H. Frankel (It will be referred to as Frankel), Xu Yuanhong and Yang Hsien Yi (who translates *Yu Meiren* with his wife Gladys Yang), and explores the translation strategies that should be adopted while translating Chinese poetry into foreign

languages through the use of the Skopos Theory. Next, this paper will give a brief overview of the translators and their views on translation, so that we can know the influence of the translators' views on their translation of poems in the following close reading analysis of *Yu Meiren*.

German-born American Sinologist Hans H. Frankel is a very important researcher and translator of Chinese classical poetry. During his work at Peking University, Frankel had a good relationship with scholars such as Feng Zhi and met Zhang Chonghe, who would become his wife later. After returning to the United States with Zhang Chonghe, he changed his research orientation from Western Cultural Studies to Sinology and became one of the most important scholars in studies of Tang Poetry in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s by self-study [2]. He published *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretation of Chinese Poetry* (1976) [3], which includes translation and explanation of 106 poems, and can be regarded as one of the important media for English-speaking readers to understand Chinese culture [4]. In *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretation of Chinese Poetry* (1976), he constructs a rich context for his translated poems by means of annotations, explanations and appendices. In the process of translating poems, he analyzes the structural features, symbolic meanings and interrelationships of each poem through close reading based on the text. And he also emphasizes the preservation of the original language form and image in translation, so as to reproduce the characteristics of literature of Chinese poetry. For each poem in *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretation of Chinese Poetry* (1976), Frankel will give the title, the author (year of birth and death of the author) and the genre of each poem. A footnote to the title of each poem will give details of its origin, translators of earlier translation versions, and relevant documents. Frankel will also give the context he thinks is important in the annotations of some poems. *Yu Meiren*

translated by Frankel is from his book *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretation of Chinese Poetry* (1976). Frankel tries his best to reproduce the structural characteristics of the original poem while he does not stick to the untranslatable elements. He calls this poetry translation method “compromise translation” [5]. “What I choose is a compromise translation between literal translation and free translation. I’ve always kept the source text in its own structure and changed the order of words as little as possible... However, I did not attempt to convey other elements of poetry that are difficult or even impossible to reproduce in English, such as length of verse, rhyme, meter and tone, etc [4]. Frankel is like a “revolutionary” in the translation of poems. He completely abandons the pursuit of the early translators of Chinese poems translation for the translation of poetic images. Instead, he focuses on the accurate meaning and structural equivalence of poems, which promotes the translation of Chinese poems to a new height. *Yu Meiren* translated by Frankel is as follows:

Li Yu, Form: tz’u;

Tune pattern: “*Yu Meiren*”

Spring blossoms and autumn moon-when will they end?
How much has happened in the past!
On the balcony last night, again an east wind,
The moon was so bright, I couldn’t bear to look toward
the old land.

The carved galleries and jade steps must still be there,
Only the rosy cheeks have changed.

I ask you, how much sorrow can there be?
It’s just like a whole river full of eastward flow in spring.

Xu Yuanchong is a leading scholar in the translation field in China. He has been engaged in literary translation for more than 60 years, whose translation works cover Chinese, English, French and other languages. His translations mainly focus on the translation of ancient Chinese poems, and he has developed the method and theory of poetry translation in rhyme style. Xu Yuanchong’s main view of translation is “the Translation Theory of Three Beauties”, which is elaborated in his book *The Art of Translation*: “Translation is the art of transforming one language into another language, mainly resolving the contradiction between the original content and the form of the translation. The translation of poetry should not only convey the sense beauty of the original poem, but also convey its beauty of sound and form as much as possible” [6]. Namely, “The Translation Theory of Three Beauties” mainly includes: the beauty of sound, the beauty of sense, and the beauty of form. The so-called beauty of sense means that the beauty of the original content is reflected in the translation. The beauty of sound requires the translation should correspond to the rhyme. The beauty of form requires that the lines of the poem and the sentences are neat. Xu Yuanchong emphasizes the “re-creation” of translation, which in many cases will lead to the unfaithful translation of the source texts. Xu Yuanchong tried to support his “re-created translation” view in an interview and he said, “Western translation pays attention to equivalence, which means one word for one word, and 90% of the main words are equivalent in Western languages. Unlike other languages, the words in Chinese are only half equivalent. Although equivalence does not violate objective laws, it does not exert subjective initiative. Without distorting the author’s meaning, the translation must reflect the characteristics, natural essences and soul of the country’s

or nation’s culture [7].” Under the guidance of “the Translation Theory of Three Beauties”, Xu Yuanchong’s translation of *Yu Meiren* also pays attention to oblique rhymes in each sentence and choice of words and building of sentence. Xu Yuanchong and Frankel put totally different emphases on the methods of poetry translation. Frankel’s poetry translation emphasizes fidelity to the source text and does not use very gorgeous words in poetry, mainly hoping to reproduce the content of the original poem. Xu Yuanchong’s poems, on the other hand, pay more attention to the aesthetics of diction and form, so the final translation may not be completely faithful to the original poem, and he will do some re-creation on the basis of the original poem. Based on their completely different methods of poetry translation, many scholars often make a comparative study of their translated poems, so as to seek more appropriate methods and strategies for translating Chinese poems into English. *Yu Meiren* translated by Xu Yuanchong is described as follows:

The Last Land Recalled Tune: *The Beautiful Lady Yu*
When will there be no more autumn moon and spring
flowers,

For me who had so many memorable hours?
My attic which last night in vernal wind did stand,
Reminds me cruelly of the lost moonlit land.
Carved balustrades and marble steps must still be there,
But rosy faces cannot be as fair.

If you ask me how much my sorrow has increased,
Just see the over brimming river flowing east!

Yang Hsien Yi is a famous translator in China, and he almost “translated the whole of China”, and every translation, after his name, must be followed by his wife’s name-Gladys Yang. Yang Hsien Yi was not interested in *A Dream of Red Mansions* at first, but his wife Gladys Yang liked it, so the couple began to work together and translated the famous Chinese traditional work into English, which is called *A Dream of Red Mansions* and was widely acclaimed in the Western English-speaking world. For more than half a century, the couple immersed themselves in translation. On the one hand, they translated hundreds of Chinese classical and modern literary works into English, including *Selections from the Books of Songs, Li Sao, The Scholars, and A Dream of Red Mansions*. On the other hand, many foreign classics were introduced into China by Yang Hsien Yi and Gladys Yang, such as *Odysseus* and *Pygmalion*. In order to make English readers better understand the meaning of Chinese works, Yang and his wife always try to understand every sentence of the source text thoroughly and carefully before their translation. Therefore, “his translations are concise and vivid, which are popular among the large quantities of readers. In particular, the English version of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, which he co-translated with his wife Gladys Yang, caused a heated discussion in the Chinese literary circle and became famous overseas” [8]. Yang Hsien Yi and his wife are very dedicated to translation. Facing the complexity of Chinese classical literary works and the barriers of cross-cultural communication, on the one hand, they need to pursue the integrity and accuracy of the Chinese works and strive to achieve “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”. On the other hand, they also need to find a translation method suitable for the source text by adding some words that are not in the source text or adding footnotes. Their conscientious translation career provides very valuable experience in intercultural translation. *Yu Meiren*, which the couple co-

translated into English, is also an excellent work. During the translation of *Yu Meiren*, Yang Hsien Yi and his wife not only pay attention to the reproduction of the original poem's content, but also pay attention to the rhythm and diction of the original poem. The translation is catchy and easy to read. It is one of the translation versions often studied by scholars in the English version of *Yu Meiren*. Through the translation of *Yu Meiren*, we can also see the translation strategies and methods advocated by Yang Hsien Yi and Gladys Yang for the translation of Chinese poetry, so as to provide some references and experience for the foreign translation of contemporary Chinese poetry. *Yu Meiren* translated by Yang Hsien Yi and Gladys Yang is described as follows:

To the Tune of *Yu Mei Ren*

There is no end to moonlit autumns or flowery springs,
 And I have known so very many things.
 From my turret the wind was in the east again last night.
 A lost land was too much to bear: I turned from the
 moonlight.
 The cavern rail and jade work wall are as they were
 before:
 Those rosy cheeks alone are there no more.
 Tell me, what is the uttermost extent of pain, you say?
 Mine is a river swollen in spring and welling east away.

2. Overview of the Skopos Theory

Before the 70s in the twentieth century, linguistic theory was popular with scholars in the field of translation theory. Because of its limitations, the linguistic theory could not solve the new problems existing in the process of translation. Since the 70s translation theorists were no longer restricted to the static linguistic theory as the basis of their study, they began to study translation from the perspective of function and communication. This kind of research method soon developed and produced some new translation theories, among which the German School of Functionalism Translation was included [9]¹. The rise of the Functionalism Translation School has had a great impact on the translation field and triggered a heated discussion among scholars.

The Skopos Theory was the core of the Functionalism Translation Theory in Germany in the 1970s. The Skopos Theory has promoted the transformation of translation theory from the linguistic level to the functional level, and translation is no longer regarded as a simple process of language conversion and processing, but a purposeful cross-cultural communication behavior. As one of the main representatives of the German Functionalism School, German linguist and translator Hans Vermeer first proposed the Skopos Theory (Skopos is from Greek, which means "purpose", the term usually refers to the "communicative purpose" of the target text). And he believes that the translation method is determined by the purpose of translation [10]. According to Vermeer, translators must follow a series of rules while doing translation work. The rules of the Skopos Theory should be put first in the translation process, that is, "any act of translation is determined by the purpose of translation" [11]. The Skopos Theory holds that the "purpose rule" is the first rule that all translation activities must follow, that is, the translation should fully consider the environment and reading habits of the target language readers, give full play to the subjective initiative of the translator, make the translation play a good expression role in the environment of the target language country, and promote the effectiveness of translation communication.

Two scholars with great influence in the initial formative period of the Skopos Theory are Hans Vermeer and Katharina Reiss. The book *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action Foundation*, which was co-written by Hans Vermeer and Katharina Reiss, lays the foundation for the development of the Skopos Theory. This book gives a detailed explanation of Vermeer's Skopos Theory, that is, the Skopos Theory mainly includes the purpose rule, the coherence rule and the fidelity rule, and emphasizes the purpose rule as the most important. Katharina puts forward the views of "comprehensive communicative translation" and "text types determine translation methods" [12]. Based on the Skopos Theory of translation proposed by Vermeer and Reiss, Justaholz-Manttari proposed the translational action model, which regards translation as a purpose-driven and result-oriented interpersonal interaction. And the translation process is regarded as a complex of all kinds of information transmission including cross-cultural transformation [13]. The translational action model emphasizes that translation should attach importance to the sensibility of the target readers and focus on the production of the target text in line with the corresponding communicative functions for the target readers. The translational action model attaches great importance to the creation of translation according to the needs of the target readers. Although the Skopos Theory came into being earlier than the translational action model, the Skopos Theory is still regarded as a part of the translational action model because of its complement and improvement of the Skopos Theory. Christian Nord, another important scholar of Functionalism, made further contributions to the development of the Skopos Theory on the basis of Vermeer and other predecessors. Nord found two limitations of the Skopos Theory: one is the cultural difference caused by the particularity of source culture and target culture, and the other is that the translation purpose pursued by the translator is not necessarily consistent with the intention of the author of the source text [10]. To solve these two problems, she put forward the functionality plus loyalty Principle, emphasizing that translators should be loyal to both the source texts and target texts, that is, the purpose of the translation should be as consistent as possible with that of the original author, and the functions of the translation and the source text should be the same. Christian Nord's theories and views enrich the content of the Skopos Theory and make it become a more complete and mature theory.

The Skopos Theory in China is mainly divided into theoretical study and applied translation study. Since The Skopos Theory was introduced in China in 1987, books and articles on The Skopos Theory have emerged one after another. The relevant researches mainly involve translation strategies and translation criticism. Through searching online, the current research on the English translation of poems through the Skopos Theory mainly focuses on the translation of Li Bai's poems, such as Chen Zhaoli's "The Translation of Li Bai's Poems from the Perspective of Skopos Theory" [14] and Shen Yu's "A Study on Domestication and Foreignization in English Translation of Li Bai's Poems from the Perspective of the Skopos Theory" [9]. In recent years, the quality of papers on the Skopos Theory has gradually improved, which provides some guidelines for the application of the Skopos Theory in the selection of translation strategies. However, there are not so many papers that use the Skopos Theory to study the English translation of poetry at present. Therefore, this paper intends to use the Skopos Theory to conduct a

comparative study on different English translation versions of *Yu Meiren*, so as to explore how the translation of Chinese poetry can better be accepted by the world.

3. Comparative Analysis of Different Translations of *Yu Meiren*

As *Ci* is a unique form of poetry, how to accurately convey the cultural content of *Ci* in the translation process should be put in the first place. In translation, the translator needs to take the acceptance ability of target readers into consideration, start from the requirements of target readers, and make the translation of *Ci* more in line with the reading habits of target readers. The core principle of the Skopos Theory is to adopt different translation methods and strategies according to different translation purposes. There are two purposes for the translation of *Yu Meiren*: one is to make the target readers understand the cultural connotation of Li Yu's poems. The other is to spread the traditional culture with Chinese characteristics. The different English translation versions of *Yu Meiren* under the guidance of the Skopos Theory can effectively improve the quality of poetry translation, make the translation more in line with the reading habits of target readers, and make it easier for target readers to understand the source text, so as to better convey the cultural connotation and images of *Yu Meiren*.

According to the three rules of the Skopos Theory proposed by Vermeer, namely, the purpose rule, the coherence rule and the fidelity rule, this paper will make a detailed comparative analysis of the English translation versions of *Yu Meiren* translated by Frankel, Xu Yuanchong, Yang Hsien Yi and Gladys Yang, so as to summarize the appropriate translation strategies for Chinese poetry translation under the Skopos Theory.

3.1. Purpose Rule

The purpose rule is the most important rule in the Skopos Theory, that is, the translation is determined by translation purpose [13]2. For English translation of Chinese poetry, the main purpose is to realize the communicative function of translation.

The first is the translation of the title *Yu Meiren*. Both Frankel's and Yang Hsien Yi's translation versions are "*Yu Meiren*", and Frankel has noted in the front that the poem's form is "tz'u" and notes "tune pattern: *Yu Meiren*", while Yang Hsien Yi directly translated the title as "To the Tune of *Yu Meiren*". Both Frankel and Yang Hsien Yi use transliteration and add notes to translate the title of *Yu Meiren*, which not only shows that the poem is a kind of Chinese traditional literary form and has a unique rhythm, but also retains the sound of *Yu Meiren*. These two ways of translation fully retain the unique cultural connotation of Chinese culture and fully reflect the cultural confidence, which also provides a different way for the English translation of Chinese poetry's titles. However, for target readers who are not familiar with the form of "*Ci*" in traditional Chinese poetry, the literal translations of Frankel and Yang Hsien Yi may cause errors in understanding, and this form of *Ci* does not have a complete corresponding meaning in the English world. Therefore, the literal translation of "*Yu Meiren*" may not be easy to accept for target readers, and it has certain requirements on the cultural level of the target readers. Only readers who have a certain understanding of Chinese traditional poetry culture can understand the specific meaning of "*Yu Meiren*". Instead,

Xu Yuanchong translates the title as "The Last Land Recalled Tune: The Beautiful Lady Yu", which takes full account of readers' acceptance, and its translation of the title is more acceptable to target readers. According to the purpose rule, in order to realize the communicative function of translation, it is necessary to annotate and explain the title of *Ci*, which can help the target readers to better understand the literary form of Chinese *Ci*, so as to promote the translation and dissemination of Chinese poetry to the outside world.

As For the translation of the whole source text, the same rhyme is used in every two sentences, such as "When will there be no more autumn moon and spring flowers/ For me who had so many memorable hours?" Frankel's translation version pays little attention to the rhyme of the translation and focuses on fidelity to the source text, such as "Spring blossoms and autumn moon -- when will they end? /How much has happened in the past!" Yang Hsien Yi's translation also focuses on the rhythm of the poem, such as "There is no end to moonlit autumns or flowery springs, /And I have known so very many things". These three translations have different understandings of the same *Ci*, which produce different forms of translation. However, if we analyze these three translations from the purpose rule, the translation of some specific words in some translation versions may cause difficulties in the understanding of the target readers. For example, the word "attic" in *Yu Meiren*, Frankel translated it as "balcony" (a platform that is built on the upstairs outside wall of a building, with a wall or rail around it. You can get out onto a balcony from an upstairs room), Yang Hsien Yi translated it as "turret" (a small tower on top of a wall or building, especially a castle), and Xu Yuanchong translated it as "attic" (a room or space just below the roof of a house, often used for storing things). According to the historical and cultural background of *Yu Meiren*, we can know that this kind of building in the *Ci* should be a unique architectural type in ancient China, and can also be regarded as a unique symbol of Chinese culture in *Yu Meiren*. Through the comparative analysis of the meaning of this word in these three different translation versions, it can be seen that Frankel's translation may not fully express the unique cultural image represented by "attic" in the original *Ci*. However, the translations of this word in Yang Hsien Yi's translation version and Xu Yuanchong's translation version are better and closer to the original meaning of the word in *Yu Meiren*. These two translation versions also reflect the symbolic meaning of Chinese culture contained in "attic". Due to the existence of cultural differences between Chinese and English, although the translation of Yang Hsien Yi and Xu Yuanchong cannot fully achieve the corresponding of every word between the original *Ci* and its translation, after all, there are not completely corresponding words in the western culture, but at least it will not cause the misunderstandings of target readers.

In general, if we analyze these three translations from the perspective of the purpose rule, we can find many highlights from each of them. In summary, it is easier to obtain some inspiration for English translation of Chinese poetry in each translation. These three versions have their own advantages in dealing with some details during translation, which also reflects different translators' different thoughts on poetry translation.

3.2. Coherence Rule

The coherence rule mainly emphasizes that the translation must take into account the needs, background and cultural

level of the target readers so that the readers can understand it [13]3. If the translation cannot be understood by the target readers, it fails to achieve the purpose of translation.

The author will give an example of a comparative study of different translation versions for *Yu Meiren* from the perspective of the coherence rule. The last sentence of the original Ci describes the invisible sadness specifically, and the beauty of sense is expressed explicitly here. Frankel translated the last sentence as “I ask you, how much sorrow can there be? / It's just like a whole river full of eastward flow in spring. Xu Yuanchong translated it as “If you ask me how much my sorrow has increased, / Just see the over brimming river flowing east!”. Yang Hsien Yi translated it as “Tell me, what is the uttermost extent of pain, you say? / Mine is a river swollen in spring and welling east away.” In general, all three translations express the meaning of the original Ci. Frankel's translation is the closest to the original Ci, which is just like Frankel's translation view, so the translation of Frankel is almost close to literal translation, and readers will not have too much difficulty in understanding it, and it is easier for the target readers to accept it. Basically, it is completely faithful to the source text, but it does not show the emotional sublimation of the source text, and the emotions are slightly flat and straightforward, so it is impossible to feel the emotional changes in the original poem while reading. However, “over brimming river” in Xu Yuanchong's translation and “the uttermost extent of pain” in Yang Hsien Yi's translation express the author's emotion that the translator can feel from the words on the basis of understanding the source text, which belongs to free translation to some extents. That is, the translator recreates the translation to some extent on the basis of his own understanding of the original poem. Although the emotion in the poem is conveyed, not all target readers can understand the original poem through the translation. To sum up, if a comparative study of the three translations is conducted from the coherence rule of the Skopos Theory, the three translations have their own advantages in terms of expression. However, Frankel's translation version is closer to the cultural environment of the target readers and fully considers the acceptability of the target readers. However, this translation can't show the characteristics of Ci as a unique form of traditional Chinese poetry. Thus, it cannot reflect the differences between Chinese poetry and poems of other cultures. However, although the translation of Xu Yuanchong and Yang Hsien Yi observes the rhyme and the form of Chinese poetry, it is easy to cause the faithless expression of the source text, which may lead to the misunderstanding of the target readers.

3.3. Fidelity Rule

The fidelity rule emphasizes that the source text and the target text must be coherent, which mainly refers to the coherence between the information received by the translator from the source text, the interpretation of the information by the translator and the information delivered to the target readers [13]. Fidelity to the source text is also a rule advocated by many translation theories, especially emphasizing that the information conveyed by the target text and the source text should be as equal as possible, so as to avoid the error of information transmission and the misunderstanding of the target readers.

The fidelity rule mainly considers the accuracy of the translator to receive and convey the information of the source

text. Taking the sentence “Reminds cruelly of the lost moonlit land” in the poem as an example, Frankel added notes for it as follows: Since the poem was written after the poet Li Yu's country was ruined and he was confined as a prisoner, the “old land” in the poem refers to both the old land and the lost land [3]. Frankel translated it as “old land”, and both Xu Yuanchong and Yang Hsien Yi translated it as “lost land”. Frankel's translation does not misunderstand the meaning of the source text, but the translation of “old land” does not seem to fully express the fact that the poet's country had already been ruined when he wrote the original Ci, while the other two translations express this fact that the country of the poet had been ruined which was contained in the original poem. Therefore, compared with Frankel's translation, the other two translations seem to convey the meaning of the poem more accurately, which is also more in line with the fidelity rule. In addition, Frankel's translation of the whole sentence mentioned before is “The moon was so bright, I couldn't bear to look forward to the old land”. Xu Yuanchong translated it as “Reminds cruelly of the lost moonlit land”. Yang Hsien Yi translated it as “A lost land was too much to bear: I turned from the moonlight”. In terms of the translation of the whole sentence, these three translations have reached a certain degree of coherence with the source text, basically expressing the meaning intended by the source text, and there is no big difference in the three translation versions, and the differences mainly focus on the understanding and translation of some specific words of the translators. For example, different translators have different understandings and translations of “old land” mentioned above. This also shows that it is very necessary to follow the fidelity rule in the translation of poetry. The purpose of poetry translation is mainly to promote the translation and dissemination of Chinese poetry to the world, but the first prerequisite for successful translation is that the target readers can understand the translation of Chinese poetry, so as to be interested in it and promote the target readers' appreciation and understanding of Chinese poetry.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, each of the three English translation versions of *Yu Meiren* has its own highlights. The three English translation versions do not completely follow the literal or free translation strategy. The main reason for the different English translation versions of *Yu Meiren* is that translators have different understandings of the source text and attach different importance to the target readers, thus producing different translations. There is no absolute distinction between different translation versions, which mainly depends on the reading purpose and interest of the target readers, as well as the understanding and acceptance of Chinese poetry by different target readers.

From the perspective of the Skopos Theory, through the comparative analysis of the three English versions of *Yu Meiren*, this paper draws the following conclusions: The way of translation of Chinese poetry into English mainly depends on the communicative effect the translator hopes to achieve through the translation. There is no absolute distinction between literal translation and free translation. The translation method is mainly determined by the source text type and the translator's understanding and expression of the source text. Secondly, the translation of poetry must fully consider the target readers' language environment and their reading habits. Only by fully understanding the target readers' real needs, can the translation play its communicative functions in the

country of the target language, so as to better promote the translation of excellent traditional Chinese culture and promote cultural confidence of Chinese. To sum up, while translating traditional Chinese poems such as *Yu Meiren*, translators can adopt different translation methods according to different translation purposes. Whether using free translation to achieve cross-cultural communication, or using literal translation to spread traditional culture with Chinese characteristics, all reflect the inclusiveness of culture. Different translations provide a variety of choices for readers with different cultural backgrounds, which is more conducive to the spread of *Yu Meiren* abroad.

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