

# Aesthetic Representation in Three English Versions of *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring* from the Perspective of Translation Aesthetics

Shuang Zhu

Department of Foreign Languages & Translation, Sichuan Normal University, Chengdu 610000, China

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**Abstract:** How to make Chinese literature better accessible to the world and how to represent the beauty of the original text is one of the heated discussion in translation. The article takes the aesthetic features embodied in *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring* as an example, and on the basis of the theory of translation aesthetics proposed by Liu Miqing, it explores the aesthetic representation in the English translations of *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring* by Lin Yutang, Luo Jingguo, and Xie Baikui at the levels of the formal system and the non-formal system, so as to provide the reference and significance for the contemporary translation of the classical Chinese text.

**Keywords:** *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring*; aesthetic representation; translation aesthetics.

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## 1. Introduction

Translation as an artistic activity has an inseparable relationship with aesthetics. Classical literature is the valuable spiritual wealth of Chinese people, and the aesthetic significance contained in literary works is self-evident. As an important part of ancient Chinese literature, ancient literary texts carry rich spiritual value and historical significance. The emergence and development of translation aesthetics opens up a new path for the appreciation of the translation of ancient Chinese classical literature, and also provides a reference for the translation of Chinese literature.

## 2. The Aesthetic Implications of *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring*

*A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring* by Tao Yuanming is a pearl in the classical literature of China. It is well-conceived and skillfully structured, which is written in poetic form, with a condensed writing style, simple and natural language, a low-profile and poetic statement, and beautiful rhymes that makes it catchy to read. It also has a sense of endless words and meanings, which has been recited by people all over the world. It creates a scenario of blended artistic mood, so that readers can savor the meaning of the words from the limited sentences. This imaginary world of peach blossoms expresses the author's dissatisfaction with the reality of darkness, and also expresses his sympathy for the people living in the war at that time. The article blends scenarios with feelings and has profound meaning, giving people a strong artistic feeling and enjoyment of beauty. It is these characteristics of the essay that have attracted many translators at home and abroad to display their talents and provide us with a wide range of wonderful translations. The three translators, Lin Yutang, Luo Jingguo and Xie Baikui, each have their own unique and representative English translations of *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring*.

## 3. The Theory of Translation Aesthetics

Translator Joseph Ramsten pointed out: "The beauty of translation is centered on the beauty of rhetoric, the beauty of mood, the beauty of scenery, the beauty of image, the beauty of typicality and the beauty of macro-scope. It is necessary to abstract thinking, sublimation of imagination and visualization of language in order to make the translation beautiful, similar in both form and spirit, and taste like sweet alcohol, which makes you feel intoxicated. Translations with the above sense of beauty can play a subtle, cultivating and infecting role, which can make the readers get emotional enjoyment and spiritual satisfaction." It can be seen that the success of a literary translation is inseparable from the communication of the above sense of beauty, and to be an excellent translator needs to have aesthetic ability. To convey the beauty of the original work is essentially a kind of artistic creation or representation.

According to Liu Miqing's theory of translation aesthetics, the aesthetic object of translation refers to the aesthetic object that can satisfy people's aesthetic needs because of its aesthetic value. And in the process of translation, it refers to the original text to be translated and processed. The aesthetic subject of translation refers to the person who carries out aesthetic activities on the aesthetic object in the process of translation, such as the translator. All the aesthetic elements existing in the original text are the aesthetic objects to be dealt with by the translator in the translation process. The aesthetic composition of translation aesthetic object is divided into formal system and non-formal system. As far as the aesthetic information of the formal system is concerned, it includes the four different levels of speech, text, words and sentence layers; while the aesthetic information of the non-formal system is often immaterial, which can be analyzed at the levels of contextual beauty and stylistic beauty, etc. The so-called aesthetic reproduction is not the so-called aesthetic elements in the original text. The so-called aesthetic representation is not to deliberately pursue complete equivalence with the original text in terms of formal structure, but to stand in the perspective of the readers of the translated text and convey to

them the sense of beauty conveyed by the author of the original text through various means, so as to enable them to obtain the same aesthetic feeling as the readers of the original text.

The three translators, Lin Yutang, Luo Jingguo and Xie Baikui, went through the process of aesthetizing, conceptualizing and creating the original until they reproduced the original's richness in their translation of *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring*. In the following, we take the beauty of words in the formal system and the beauty of image and the beauty of artistic conception in the non-formal system as the starting point to analyze the aesthetic representation in the English translations of Lin Yutang, Luo Jingguo and Xie Baikui.

## 4. The Aesthetic Representation of the English Translation of *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring*

### 4.1. Aesthetic reproduction of formal systems

#### 4.1.1. The lexical layer

Liu Miqing points out that in the word layer of the original language, the basic means of bearing aesthetic information can be covered in the big topic of "diction". The words with aesthetic value are obviously carefully chosen by the original authors, and often meet the three criteria of "appropriateness" "beauty" and "compactness". "Appropriateness" means that the words used express the original meaning and adapt to the context, "beauty" means that the words used can give people great pleasure physically and mentally, and "compactness" means that the words used in translation should be concise and free of procrastination. "Precision" means that the words used in translation should be concise and free of procrastination. The language of *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring* is simple, natural and refined, the writing is simple and beautiful, and the words used are vivid and visual. There is a paragraph describing the peach blossom garden in the text, and the translations of the three translators are as follows:

Translated by Lin Yutang: He saw before his eyes a wide, level valley, with houses and fields and farms. There were bamboos and mulberries; farmers were working and dogs and chickens were running about. The dresses of the men and women were like those of the outside world, and the old women and children appeared very happy and contented.

Translated by Luo Jingguo: The land was flat and spacious. There were houses arranged in good order with fertile fields, beautiful ponds, bamboo groves, mulberry trees and paths crisscrossing the fields in all directions. The crowing of cocks and the barking of dogs were within everyone's earshot. In the fields the villages were busy with farm work. Men and women were dressed like people outside. They all, old and young, appeared happy.

Translated by Xie Baikui: He saw an even and wide tract of land, on which some houses were arranged in good order, with fertile fields, beautiful ponds, mulberry trees and bamboos all around them. The fields were crisscrossed with ridged paths. The cocks and dogs heard and echoed each other. The clothes worn by the men and women tilling the land were identical with those of the outsiders. The aged and the adolescent all enjoyed themselves in blissful ease.

Lin Yutang's translation is simple, concise and clear. He

conveys what he sees and hears in the original text in three or two sentences, which is characterized by "conciseness". For example, when translating the scene in the eyes of the fisherman, Lin Yutang uses three short nouns, "houses" "fields" and "farm", which are very concise. The translation by Luo Jingguo, on the other hand, is very concise as well. Luo Jingguo's translation, on the other hand, paints a detailed picture of the scene as it appeared in the eyes of the fishermen: "fertile fields" "beautiful ponds" "mulberry trees and bamboos", adopting the structure of "adjective + noun" to present the reader with a beautiful and dynamic scene. Luo Jingguo's translation reflects "beauty", which means the use of words with "the quality of giving great pleasure to the body and mind". Similarly, Xie Baikui's translation adopts the same structure, such as "fertile fields" "beautiful ponds" "mulberry trees and bamboos", highlighting the dynamic beauty of the landscape. Bamboos", which emphasizes "beauty". Secondly, Luo Jingguo and Xie Baikui's translations also emphasize "accuracy". "The crowing of cocks and the barking of dogs were within everyone's earshot." and "The cocks and dogs heard and echoed each other's voices. The crowing of cocks and the barking of dogs were within everyone's earshot." and "The cocks and dogs heard and echoed each other." Both translations accurately convey the sound of the crowing of cocks and the barking of dogs that can be heard between villages, so that the readers feel as if they are in the countryside, and can really hear the crowing of cocks and the barking of dogs. In terms of word microcosm, all three translators show the target readers the aesthetic elements embedded in *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring*, with Lin Yutang showing readers the beauty of simplicity while Luo Jingguo and Xie Baikui emphasize the beauty of dynamics.

### 4.2. Aesthetic Representation of Non-Formal Systems

The use of imagery and artistic conception is a unique creative technique in Chinese art, which is very characteristic of Chinese literature, so the aesthetics of translation can never be neglected. "Imagery" refers to the combination of the writer's subjective feelings and external images (objects, scenes, and situations), or the "shape" of "feelings" in "literature". "Imagery" contains "feelings" and "scenery" and the author's "intention" and "will". "Imagery" implies "emotion" and "scenery" and the author's "intention" and "will", which is the advanced stage of aesthetics, while "image" also refers to the symbolization technique, and the translator needs to understand the author's "intention" according to "image", such as the meaning he wants to express. The translator needs to understand the author's "meaning" according to the "image", such as the concept he wants to express. As a translator, it is crucial to understand the "image" in the original text, because the "imagery" reflects the author's specific cultural background and unique aesthetic feelings, therefore, the translator should understand the cultural reference of the imagery when translating. The so-called artistic conception refers to the poetic space of the literary work where the scene is blended. Artistic conception is the expression of the author's emotion, and the author conveys his feelings through vivid descriptions of natural scenery and characters, and puts his feelings into the scenery. Translators need to grasp the author's emotion in the process of translating literary works, realize the overall style reproduction, and evoke the resonance of the translated

readers.

#### 4.2.1. The imagery layer

At the end of the text, the story of Liu Ziyi, a hermit in Nanyang, who explored the peach blossom garden to no avail is mentioned, and the translations by the three translators are as follows:

Translated by Lin Yutang: Liu Tsechi of Nan yang was a great idealist. He heard of this story, and planned to go and find it, but was taken ill and died before he could fulfill his wish.

Translated by Luo Jingguo: Liu Ziyi of Nanyang jun, a learned scholar of high repute, was excited when he heard the fisherman's story. He devised a plan to find the village, but it was not carried out. Liu died soon afterwards, and after his death, no one else...

Translated by Xie Baikui: Liu Ziyi of Nanyang, a high-minded recluse, having been informed of it, set out gladly for this unknown village, but to no purpose. Later he died of illness.

Tao Yuanming mentioned Liu Ziyi at the end of the text of, in fact, he was expressing his own feelings for the paradise beyond the world by taking advantage of his spirit of seclusion. At the same time, he pointed out to the world that "the paradise beyond the world" does not exist. Lin Yutang translated Liu Ziyi's comment as "a great idealist", which means "an idealist or an idealist". The translator understood the original author's hidden meaning and hinted to the English readers that the peach garden was not real. Luo Jingguo's and Xie Baikui's translations use the words "excited" "devised a plan", and "gladly" to convey the story of Liu Ziyi's journey from exuberance to failure. The words "excited" "devised a plan" and "gladly" are used to convey to the reader Liu Ziyi's journey from excitement to failure, highlighting the ending of the failure and the imaginary paradise.

#### 4.2.2. The artistic conception layer

There is a description of the peach blossom forest in *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring*, and the translations by the three translators are as follows:

Translated by Lin Yutang: He suddenly came upon a peach grove which extended along the bank for about a hundred yards. He noticed with surprise that the grove had a magic effect, so singularly free from the usual mingling of brushwood, while the beautifully grassy ground was covered with its rose petals.

Translated by Luo Jingguo: ..when all of a sudden, he found himself in the midst of a wood full of peach blossoms. The wood extended several hundred footsteps along both banks of the stream. There were no trees of other kinds. The lush grass was fresh and beautiful and peach petals fell in riotous profusion.

Translated by Xie Baikui: Oblivious of the distance that he had covered, he came upon a peach grove, which lined the

banks of the stream for several hundred paces. The grove was unmixed with any other trees and was carpeted with fragrant and tender grass, while the newly opened blossom was a riot of pink.

The original text makes the peach blossom forest seen by the fisherman a paradise and presents the peach blossom as the core image of the whole text. The author of the original text paints a picture of colorful peach blossoms and fragrant scent, which reflects the fisherman's astonishment at the scene, and the artistic concept is vivid. The three translators' portrayal of the scene is also unique. Lin Yutang puts the adverb "suddenly" after the subject, and Luo Jingguo uses the phrase "all of a sudden" to emphasize that the appearance of the peach blossom forest is not only unexpected by the fisherman, but also by the reader. Lin Yutang and Xie Baikui translate the word as "peach grove", which refers to "peach trees", while Luo Jingguo translates it as "a wood full of peach blossoms", which means "peach trees". Personally, I think Luo's translation is more appropriate, highlighting the peach blossoms in full bloom and emphasizing the image of flourishing. All three translators describe the scene in detail, and the reader understands the whole picture of the peach blossom forest, which vividly creates the artistic concept of a paradise for the reader.

## 5. Conclusion

On the basis of the theory of translation aesthetics proposed by Liu Miqing, this paper discusses the aesthetic representation in the English translations of *A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring* by Lin Yutang, Luo Jingguo and Xie Baikui, which provides reference value and significance for the translation of contemporary literary texts. It can be said that all three translators represent the aesthetic meaning of the original text at different levels, which brings readers a sense of beauty and at the same time allows the target language readers to appreciate the profound connotation of ancient Chinese culture.

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