
An Analysis of English Translation “The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain” from the Perspective of the Image Continuity

Yu Xia

School of Foreign Languages, Chengdu College of Arts and Sciences, Chengdu, China

Email address:

315429252@qq.com

To cite this article:

Yu Xia. An Analysis of English Translation “The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain” from the Perspective of the Image Continuity. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. Vol. 11, No. 1, 2023, pp. 20-23. doi: 10.11648/j.ijll.20231101.14

Received: February 6, 2023; **Accepted:** February 22, 2023; **Published:** February 28, 2023

Abstract: After years of poetry creation, the poet chooses fixed images to express certain ideas or emotions. These words with certain ready-made meanings and idioms can be used by the author to express certain thoughts and feelings. The poet is impressed by the fixed image and continues to create new works. We call it the “image continuity”. The continuity of image is particularly prominent in Li Bai's poems, it is not difficult to find that there are many repetitive typical images in Li Bai's poems. “The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain” is a famous seven-character poem written by Li Bai. It describes the poet riding a boat down the stream from the Qingxi Posthouse on a bright autumn night. It expresses the poet's longing for his hometown and old friends when he left the country. This paper will use the case analysis method, taking the continuity of the image as the research perspective, and Xu Yuanchong's version of “The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain” as a typical case, trying to analyze the continuity of the representative image “moon” and the continuity of the regional image, in order to expect to analyze the rationality of Xu Yuanchong's translation and enrich readers' understanding of these images.

Keywords: The Image Continuity, Moon Image, Regional Image, “The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain”

1. Introduction

“The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain” is Li Bai's seven-character poem, it is his masterpiece before he left Sichuan in the 14th year of Kaiyuan. In his youth, Li Bai visited Sichuan, and he enjoyed famous mountains and scenic spots in Sichuan. Mount Emei attracted his interest, he has twice climbed and wandered among the mountains and waters of Mount Emei, singing the praises of “There are many fairy mountains in Shu, and Mount Emei is hard to match”. On the eve of his “going to the country with a sword and leaving his relatives for a long journey”, the beautiful mountain scenery, the fresh and bright moonlight of Emei still haunted him and filled him with infinite attachment. Therefore, he wrote this seven-character quatrain with deep artistic conception and clear words. The “moon” image in the “The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain” is a cultural image with rich connotations in the minds of Chinese literati [1]. Different feelings are generated due to the differences of people's subjective moods [2]. The moon can often arouse people's sagacious thinking.

The beautiful and moving legend reflects the rich connotation of the moon. For example, on the night of the 15th, the sky is clear and the full moon is like a plate, the moon is covered with the image of “reunion”, “loneliness” and “lovesickness”. The bright moon shines in the sky and shines on the earth, it has the image of “noble” and “frank”. These images are deeply rooted in Li Bai's heart [3]. On the one hand, the moon occupies an important position in Chinese history, culture, literature and art, so the traditional historical culture is deeply entrenched in Li Bai's heart, thus becoming the cultural connotation of Li Bai's infatuation with the moon. On the other hand, Li Bai was influenced by Taoism and his ideal of life could not be realized, therefore, he loved to write the moon in his poems [4]. This is because the “moon” has the fixity of spanning time and space, and the non-fixity of changing of shape, which coincides with the poet's psychological tendency. The poet in the “The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain” passes through the following places in turn: Mount Emei - Pingqiang River - Qingxi - Yuzhou - Three Gorges, and the poetic scene gradually unfolds a picture of a

journey of thousands of miles across the Sichuan River for the reader. The moon is only "half round", which makes readers associate with the beautiful artistic conception of the green mountains spitting the moon. In the northeast of Mount Emei, there is the Pingqiang River, which originates from Lushan County, Sichuan Province and flows to Leshan County and enters the Minjiang River. The second sentence "shadow" refers to the shadow of the moon, and the two verbs "in" and "flow" form a continuous predicate, which means that the shadow of the moon reflects into the river and goes with the river. The poet set out from Qingxi Posthouse overnight to the Minjiang River, and then sail toward the Three Gorges.

This paper attempts to analyze the image of the "moon" and the restoration of the regional image in the translated poems from the perspective of image transmission and continuity.

2. Interpretation of "the Image Continuity"

When discussing the relationship between image and Fu, Bi and Xing, this paper quoted the new western theory of poetry about ready-made language. According to the study of the creator of this theory, Parry Lauder, the formulaic scenery used in poetry to elicit a certain fixed emotion is not necessarily the real thing in the story. For example, birds of prey and beasts often appear in the descriptions of terrorist wars in ancient European epics. In the poem "Fensberg", the scene of the death of Geslev, a Dane, is in the room. There is also a hovering raven in the description. From a modern perspective, such a plot seems unreasonable. But because this is a ready-made idea, the singer can't help but use ravento exaggerate the terror atmosphere when he sings here. The audience also naturally understood and resonated. From the perspective of effect, this description is reasonable. The so-called ready-made thinking is also called "the first voice of the following text", which refers to the continuity of this image [5].

The theory of Parry Lauder was put forward by both teachers and students based on their research on the creation of Yugoslav folk songs. Today's so-called poetry also refers to "song poetry" in ancient times [6]. Even those are almost metrical poems, they are highly metrical and refined over and over again, which also use a large number of "first voice" to cause "later text". Here, "formulaic formality" refers to the addition of images with a recurrence and continuity in the poems.

3. Analysis on the Continuity of the Image in "The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain"

3.1. The Continuity of the Moon Image

Li Bai has a "love moon complex", and his rich feelings are often expressed with the help of the "moon" [7]. The moon in the sky is Li Bai's eternal confidant in the spiritual world, and

it is also a frequent visitor in Li Bai's poetry. If we want to analyze Li Bai's rich emotions, we will study the poetry based on "moon" and the translation of "moon" as the starting point, which will be thorough and yield twice the result with half the effort. Although the rhyme, rhythm, style and image can reproduce the "charm" contained in the original poem, because the "moon" can give people a sense of happiness, loneliness and sadness, and Li Bai has a special preference for the moon [8], Li Bai often uses the "moon" in his poems to express his "happy", "lonely" and "sad" feelings. Therefore, through the analysis of the recurrence and continuity of the English translation of "moon" in Li Bai's poems, we can appreciate and appreciate the emotional representation of the English translation of "moon" in Li Bai's poems in Xu Yuanhong's "The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain".

3.1.1. "Happy" Emotion

Taking the poem about "moon" in a poem by Li Bai as an example, the analysis is as follows:

"Drinking alone under the moon"

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.
I sing and the Moon lingers to hear my song;
My Shadow's a mess while I dance along. [9]

In the poem, Li Bai personified the moon and regarded it as his best friend. He raised a glass to invite the moon to drink and dance together. The translator uses "friend" to translate "moon", and the free translation method perfectly deepens the joy that Li Bai can find the "moon" as a friend and treat it as a confidant when drinking alone [10]. The translator still uses the word "linger" to translate the "happy" state brought by the "moon", and vividly translates the joy of Li Bai, which not only gives the reader a beautiful written language, but also creates a relaxed and happy mood [11], and achieves the sentiment from loneliness to happiness consistent with the original poem, thus achieving the effect of similarity in spirit.

3.1.2. "Loneliness" and "Sadness" Emotion

Taking the poem about "moon" in Li Bai's two poems as an example, the analysis is as follows:

"Endless Longing"

My lonely lamp burns dull, of longing I would die.
Rolling up screens to view the moon, in vain I sigh. [9]

This sentence describes the poet who is missing someone with a lonely lamp on a chilly autumn night. The poet uses the words "Gu", "Kong" and "Jue" to make readers feel the poet's loneliness and helplessness. The translator uses the method of free translation to express the feelings of "lonely", "longing", "die", "in vain", "sigh" and even deepens the poet's loneliness, helplessness and despair. On the surface, the "lonely" image of the "moon" is completely displayed in the translation of "Rolling up screens to view the moon, in vain I sigh". In fact, the poet's loneliness, helplessness and desperation are fully expressed in the translation of the poem, and the translator

uses the word "lonely", which is the attribute of "lamp" on the surface, to modify and render the loneliness of "lamp". In fact, it is to foil the poet's deep loneliness and sadness.

Another example is "Morning at Night Near Cattle Hill"

On deck I gaze at the moon bright,

Thinking of General Xie with a sigh. [9]

While recalling the story that General Xie Shang met Yuan Hong, Li Bai also revealed that the poet expected to be met by celebrities, but a word "Kong" revealed the poet's lack of confidence and emotional depression. The translator uses literal translation method to translate the poet's helpless mood of telling his political ambition to the "moon" in the sky [12]. The translator uses free translation method to use "with a sigh" to deepen the poet's "loneliness" and "hopelessness" in the bleak moonlight. Because the poet's political ambition cannot be realized, there is no place to find a bosom friend in the world.

Next, let's look at the "The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain" with the continuity of image. Xu Yuanchong's translation is as follows:

The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain.

The crescent moon looks like old Autumn's golden brow.

Its deep reflection flows with limpid water blue.

I'll leave the town on Clear Stream for Three Gorges now.

O. Moon, how I miss you when you are out of view! [9]

The poet wrote from "the mountain and moon of Mount Emei", and pointed out that the season is in autumn. The word "autumn" is inverted at the end of the sentence due to its rhyme. In the poem "The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain", the moon is mentioned three times. The title of the poem is to see Mount Emei through the moon, the moon here expresses homesickness. "The Crescent moon looks like old Autumn's golden brown." Li Bai used the moon image to express his "sadness" and "loneliness" in his heart. The last sentence of the poem "O. Moon, how I miss you when you are out of view!" compares the moon to a person and an emotional friend, as if talking directly to the moon. It follows the use of the moon image in Li Bai's poem "Drinking alone under the moon" [13]. Along the river, he sees the moon as if it were an old friend. The infinite feeling of parting expressed by the moon in the poem is worthy of in-depth research. The exquisite emotion represented by the original poem "moon", and the yearning and melancholy reflected by the translated poem "moon" can be described as short words with deep feelings.

3.2. The Continuity of Regional Image

Five place names are embedded in the poem of "The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain", including Mount Emei, Pingqiang River, Qingxi, Three Gorges, and Yuzhou. The organization is exquisite, the scene is complementary, and there are no traces of stacking, which shows the ethereal beauty of Li Bai's quatrains. Among them, translators have different translation methods for the images of Mount Emei, Pingqiang River and Qingxi. According to the continuity of the images, we can figure out the accuracy of image restoration.

3.2.1. Mount Emei

Mount Emei is a famous mountain in China. From a distance, the two peaks are ethereal, like a classic beauty. Therefore, in the cognitive world of Chinese readers, "Emei" is like an eyebrow of Chinese classical beauty, which gives Chinese readers a beautiful frown image and a sense of beauty. The translator may realize that literal translation cannot express the real world that the original poet wants to express, so the translator changes the image of the original poem by means of transformation, replacing "Emei" with "Eyebrow Mountains", and the "half moon" in the first sentence below is translated into "old Autumn's golden row". The two images are linked to form a scene of mountain and moon. However, from the perspective of regional image restoration, western readers can't fully understand Mount Emei in the original poem, and even the name of Mount Emei is unknown. Therefore, the translator's translation only restores the beauty of the mountain and the moon, but does not restore the unique style of the regional image. From the perspective of image continuity, the translator can refer to other translated poems to add the annotation "Mount Emei" to the place name, so as to better express the regional image in the original poem.

3.2.2. Pingqiang River

The translator did not translate the place name "Pingqiang River" and believed that Pingqiang River was only a part of the long river, and the poet just showed the artistic conception of the river, so, it is dealt with "It deep reflection flows with limpid water blue". When the moon goes, the people also go. Only when the viewer goes down the river, can he see the wonderful scene of "shadow into the river". Therefore, this sentence only describes the beauty of the moon reflecting in the river, and does not translate the place name "Pingqiang River", so, the regional image is lost in the translated poems. The continuity of the regional image of "Pingqiang River" can be traced in the poems of the past. For example, in Volume 32 of the Annals of the Yuanhe County, it is said: "Pingqiang River passes through Hongya County of Meizhou for two li in the east." "Qingyi River is also called Pingqiang River, and Weixian County is one li in the south" [14]. Li Bai's poem is located at the Taibai Pavilion of Jinjiang Temple in Pingqiang Town, that is the highest point of Jinjiang Mountain, overlooking the river. So the Pingqiang River refers to the section of the Minjiang River. In order to restore the regional image of the original poem, the author suggests that it could directly translates "Pingqiang River" in the poem.

3.2.3. Qingxi

The third sentence, "I'll leave the town on Clear Stream for Three Gorges now", the original line is obviously a sentence without a subject [15]. According to the English custom, an English subject should be added when translating into English. The literal translation of "Qingxi" by Xu Yuanchong in this sentence is "ClearStream", which deviates from the image of the original poem. The Qingxi in the poem refers to the place name, which should be reflected in the poem as a regional image rather than a simple stream scene. According to the

records in Leshan County Annals "Banqiao Creek is five miles away from the gorge mouth". There are more than ten households, close to the bank of the river, where Qingyizai receives the high priest". In the Tang Dynasty, this place was renamed Qingxi Posthouse, namely Pingqiang Posthouse in the Song Dynasty. It is an important place along the road from Leshan to Chengdu. According to this, Qingxi refers to the place of Qingxi Posthouse, not the clear stream. Therefore, if the translator pays attention to the location of Qingxi Posthouse when translating, it could be more accurate to express the regional image in the original poem.

4. Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can draw a conclusion that Xu Yuanchong's version of "The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain" fully shows the continuity of the image of "moon", it shows the unique beauty of "moon" in Li Bai's poems. Through analyzing the interaction of the three elements in the communication process of "author-text-translator", the translator tried to approach the beauty and artistic conception of the original poem in the translation by means of transformation, literal translation and other translation methods, expressed the theme meaning and emotional expression of the poem, achieved a kind of equivalence in difference, and reproduced the image of the original poem. However, the reduction of the regional image in the original poem still needs to be corrected. The translator used the transformation of "Mount Emei", the literal translation of "Qingxi", and the Omit translation of "Pingqiang". Different translation methods led to the deviation of the regional image from the original poem, which could not completely restore the regional image in the original poem, resulting in the reader's incomplete understanding. It can be seen that the loss of image in the process of translation may be unavoidable. Even the loss of image in the translated works of famous writers will weaken the overall aesthetic feeling of the original poem and distort the emotional and cultural connotation of the original poet's intention. This process requires the translator to excavate the image expressed in the original poem from multiple levels and angles in combination with poet's creative intention, creative background and social and cultural context, so that the translated poem can restore the image of the original poem to the maximum extent, and make the translated work approach to the beauty of the original poem with both meaning and feeling.

Fund Project

This paper is the research result of Sichuan characteristic philosophy and social science's 2022 plan "Research on the External Communication of Bashu Culture" special item "Reproduction, Variation and Reconstruction of the Bashu Regional Image in the English Translation of Tang Poetry" (Project No.: SC22BS022);

The research result of the project "Inheritance, variation and loss of the image of wine culture in the translation of Chinese

poetry into English" (Project No.: CJC2022-05) from the International Communication Research Center of Sichuan Wine Culture, a key research base of humanities and social sciences in colleges and universities in Sichuan Province.

References

- [1] Lu Su, Beautiful Tang poetry [M] Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House, 2020.
- [2] Yu Xia, On the Loss of Poetic Image in English Translation of Chinese Poetry [J] Journal of Literature and Art Studies, 2022 (2).
- [3] Xie Zhenyuan. Appreciation of three hundred Tang poems (in Chinese and English) that must be read in his life [M] Translated by Xu Yuanchong et al. Beijing: China Publishing Group, 2006.
- [4] Yu Xia, An analysis of Yang Xianyi from the perspective of image reproduction [J] Journal of Global Humanities and Social Sciences, 2022 (3).
- [5] Chen Zhie, Poetic image theory [M] Qin Huangdao: China Social Sciences Press, 1990.
- [6] Xu Jun. Theory and Practice of Literary Translation-Translation Dialogues (Revised Edition) [M]. Nanjing: Yilin Publishing House, 2010.
- [7] Han Cihong, A Study of Emotional Representation in the English Translation of "Moon" in Li Bai's Poems [J] Contemporary literature, 2015 (5).
- [8] Zhai Zihui. The Art of Beautifying Poetry Translation --Comparison of the Two Versions of Spring Dawn [J] Journal of Qinzhou University, 2008 (05).
- [9] Xu Yuanchong. 300 Tang Poems [M]. Beijing: China translation and Publishing Corporation, 2014.
- [10] Xie Shilin. Xu Yuanchong's poetry translation theory and its application [J] New West: Theory Edition, 2008 (11).
- [11] Yu Xia, Image combination [J] Research on Literary and Art Development, 2022 (3).
- [12] Li Mi. Xu Yuanchong's theory of "three beauties" in poetry translation [J] Journal of Chengdu University (Social Science Edition), 2004 (03).
- [13] Lewis, C. D. The Poetic Image [M] London: Cox & Wyman, 1974.
- [14] Zhou Ziyun, A Textual Study of the Place Names in Li Bai's "The Moon Song of Mount Emei" [J] Journal of China West Normal University (Philosophy & Social Sciences), 1980 (03).
- [15] Meng Die, Image Translation of Tang Poetry Guided by Cognitive Linguistics-taking "The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountain" as an example [J] English Square 2015 (08).

Biography

Yu Xia, associate professor at the School of Foreign Languages, Chengdu University of Arts and Sciences. Research interests: translatology.