

Original Paper

Translation Ideology of the Crescent Moon School: A Case Study of Lin Huiyin's Chinese Version of *The Nightingale and the Rose*

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Abstract

*This study analyzes Lin Huiyin's translation of *The Nightingale and the Rose* to explore the translation ideology of the Crescent Moon School from three aspects: translation selection, translation strategy, and translation language, addressing two key questions: First, the school's translation selection criteria, which favored classic works, especially poetry, reflecting high literary standards; and second, its translation strategies, combining domestication and foreignization, resulting in a balance between preserving literary integrity and enhancing readability. Influenced by the New Culture Movement, these practices also exhibited unique poetic qualities.*

Keywords

Crescent Moon School, translation ideology, Lin Huiyin

The May Fourth Movement of 1919 holds profound significance in the long river of Chinese history, marking a new chapter in China's historical development. As a great patriotic revolutionary movement, it has had an all-round impact on China society. This kind of influence was not only political, but also challenges the traditional ideas that have been entrenched in China society for a long time in thought and culture. With the influx of a large number of foreign literary works into China, translated literature gradually occupied a key position in the literary system. The Crescent Moon School did not follow the mainstream literature to serve the revolution during the ideological differentiation of Chinese modern intellectuals in the 1920s. Instead, it continued to adhere to the enlightenment ideas of the May Fourth Movement, pursuing intellectual independence and artistic integrity. There are two tendencies in the theory of Crescent School: on the one hand, Liang Shiqiu, as the representative, advocates that literature should express human nature, meet the standards of norms and balance, and has a distinct neo-classical

tendency; On the other hand, Xu Zhimo, as the representative, advocated that literature should express inspiration and write about the beauty of life and nature, which has a typical romantic tone.

In 1921, Lin traveled to Europe with her father and met Xu Zhimo, who was studying in the UK at that time. The two often communicated through letters. Influenced by Xu Zhimo, Lin Huiyin developed a great interest in poetry and actively participated in the activities of the Crescent Moon Society. However, although Lin Huiyin was widely recognized for her achievements in architecture and literature, her identity as a translator received less attention due to her limited number of translated works. It is generally accepted in academic circles that Wilde's *The Nightingale and the Rose* is Lin's only translation, and she is also the first female translator of this work. Before the publication of Lin's translation, *The Nightingale and the Rose* had two versions in China: Hu Yuzhi's *Oriole and the Rose* (1920) and Mu Tianmu's *Oriole and the Rose* (1922). The following year (1923), Lin translated it into Chinese and published it in the special issue of the fifth anniversary of *Morning Post*, which was later widely adopted by domestic translators. Lin's translation mainly adopts vernacular Chinese, including a small amount of classical Chinese terms.

Current studies on the Crescent Moon School have the following limitations. First, the study of the Crescent School have been stagnant until 1980s (Huang, 2013, p. 75). Second, studies at the Crescent Moon School mainly focus on poetry, with less attention to fiction and insufficient connection to translation. Third, case studies within the Crescent Moon School primarily concentrate on figures such as Liang Shiqiu, Hu Shi, and Xu Zhimo, with relatively few studies on Lin Huiyin. Therefore, this paper will take Lin Huiyin's translation of *The Nightingale and the Rose* as a reference for analysis, compare the translation with the original text, and discuss the translation ideology of the Crescent Moon School in the context of its historical background. The specific research questions are as follows.

- 1) What are the characteristics of the Crescent Moon School's translation selection?
- 2) What translation strategies did the Crescent Moon School adopt, and what linguistic features did these strategies lead to?

1. Translation Selection of the Crescent Moon School

Before engaging in an analysis of the translation ideology of the Crescent Moon School, it is imperative to delineate the temporal boundaries of this literary movement. Scholarly consensus regarding the inception and culmination of the Crescent Moon School remains elusive. A prevailing perspective posits that the movement originated with the establishment of the Crescent Moon Society and concluded with the discontinuation of the *Crescent Moon* monthly periodical. However, this view essentially conflates the Crescent Moon School with a literary organization, neglecting the broader ideological and aesthetic underpinnings that characterized its development.

In actuality, the Crescent Moon School emerged as a significant literary movement due to a confluence of organizational efforts, publication activities, and most crucially, its distinctive aesthetic and creative philosophies. Tracing the intellectual trajectory reveals that the movement's ideological cohesion

predated the formal establishment of the Crescent Moon Society. Moreover, even after the publication of the *Crescent Moon* magazine, the core principles of the movement persisted, which was proved by the subsequent publication of the *Academic Culture* magazine. Therefore, the temporal span of the Crescent Moon School should not be limited to the existence of the society and its eponymous magazine but should be determined by the overall evaluation of its literary efforts and ideological framework (Huang, 2013, p. 39).

For the purposes of this study, the temporal scope of the Crescent Moon School is defined as the literary activities of Tsinghua students, including Wen Yiduo, at home and abroad, and the closure of the *Academic Culture* magazine. This expanded time frame also proves that the translations published by the Crescent Moon Bookstore, founded in 1927, elucidates the translation selection criteria during the early stages of the Crescent Moon Society in 1923. The core membership of the Crescent Moon School, comprising figures such as Hu Shi, Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo, Liang Shiqiu, Lin Huiyin, Chen Mengjia, and Luo Longji, were instrumental in shaping its translation activities. This paper aims to distill the overarching translation ideology of the Crescent Moon School by scrutinizing the translation philosophies of these key members.

Factors influencing translation selection encompass the translator's aesthetic predilections, cultural biases, and political orientations, among others. However, the predominant factor shaping the Crescent Moon School's translation selection was its literary ideology. In terms of translation selection, the Crescent Moon School prioritized the translation of canonical literary works (Huang, 2017, p. 128). In a 1916 correspondence to Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi, a key figure of the Crescent Moon School, articulated that the introduction of Western masterpieces would provide Chinese literati with models for emulation and observation, thereby facilitating the creation of new literature (Li & Zhao, 2009, p. 68). In April 1918, Hu Shi further advocated in his *Constructive Theory of Literary Revolution* for the exclusive translation of works by distinguished authors, eschewing those of secondary or inferior quality. In his essay *On Translation*, he championed the translation of British and American literary masterpieces, cautioning against the superfluous retranslation of works (Huang, 2017, p. 128). Liang Shiqiu contended that translations should focus on canonical works embodying universal human values. In his *The Romantic Trend in Modern Chinese Literature*, he posited that translation constituted a pivotal pillar of the New Literature Movement. He observed that translators often approached foreign works with a romantic, rather than rational, attitude, resulting in capricious and emotionally driven selections. Consequently, third- and fourth-rate foreign works were frequently imported into China, revered as treasures, and indiscriminately imitated (Liang, 1997, p. 11). Huang Libo (2010) analyzed the works published in the *Crescent Moon* journal and revealed that the majority of the translators within the Crescent Moon group had studied in various European countries. As a result, the translated works in the journal predominantly featured European and American literature, with a focus on popular genres, diverging from the revolutionary selection criteria of other left-wing writers' publications at the time. In terms of genre, the Crescent Moon School prioritized the translation of British Romantic poetry, French Symbolist poetry,

and 20th-century British Modernist poetry. According to Huang Hongchun's statistics, among the 24 translated works published by the Crescent Moon Bookstore, approximately 11 were literary; of the 110 translated pieces published in *Crescent Moon*, 91 were literary, comprising 42 poems, 23 short stories, 17 essays, and 9 plays (Huang, 2017, p. 128).

During the May Fourth Movement, the banner of "literature of humanity" was raised high, with this type of literature primarily manifesting as a pursuit of individual freedom and liberation. Influential Western authors of the time included Byron, Shelley, Rousseau, Goethe, Nietzsche, Whitman, and Wilde, all of whom were individualists rich in a spirit of rebellion and defiance. Lin Huiyin, a key figure of the Crescent Moon School, chose to translate Wilde's works for two main reasons. First, she was influenced by Chen Duxiu, who had listed several renowned authors in *New Youth*, advocating the translation of Western literary masterpieces into China, with Wilde among them. Second, Lin Huiyin's travels in Europe with her father provided her with favorable conditions to absorb more authentic Western dream. During this period, influenced by a female architect, she resolved to pursue architecture as a lifelong career. Despite the rarity of female architects at the time and the fact that the University of Pennsylvania's architecture department did not admit women, she ingeniously realized her ideal by enrolling in architecture courses. This act alone was sufficient to demonstrate Lin Huiyin's spirit of rebellion. Wilde, with his unique anti-traditional stance as a dandy of aestheticism, challenged and subverted the stale mindset and modes of expression of the Victorian masses (Li, 2003, p. 61), which coincided with Lin Huiyin's rebellious spirit. In 1932, the renowned American biologist John Fairbank and his wife Wilma traveled to China to study, where they met Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin, forming a deep friendship. In her 1994 work *Liang and Lin: Partners in Exploring China's Architectural History*, Wilma Fairbank stated that Lin Huiyin's involvement with the Crescent Moon Society marked the beginning of her writing career... However, according to Sicheng, her first published work was a translation of Oscar Wilde's romantic prose poem: *The Nightingale and the Rose*. I do not know where it was published, but it was likely in the literary supplement of a newspaper in Beijing or Tianjin, which were important venues for the early members of the Crescent Moon Society (Wilma Fairbank, 1997, p. 21). This statement was later confirmed. Professor Chen Xueyong, using the pen name "Chicui" from Lin Huiyin's 1931 inclusion in the *Crescent Moon Poetry Selection* as a clue, discovered Lin's translation of *The Nightingale and the Rose* in the *Morning Post 5th Anniversary Special Issue* (Chen, 1997, p. 35).

2. Translation Strategies of the Crescent Moon School

Xiong Bing (2014) posits that translation strategies constitute a set of principles and adopted solutions designed to achieve specific translational objectives within the translation process. Based on the translator's orientation towards either the source text and its author or the translation receiver during the translation process, translation strategies can be categorized into domestication and foreignization (Xiong, 2014, p. 84).

In 1898, Yan Fu proposed the renowned translation standards of “faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance” in his preface to the translation of *On the Origin of Species*, titled *On Translation*. Yan Fu stated that there are three difficulties in translation: faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance (Yan, 2002, p. 10). In Yan Fu’s translation philosophy, “faithfulness” refers to the accurate representation of the original text without distortion or addition/subtraction of its meaning; “expressiveness” means that the translation should not be overly bound by the form of the original text and should be comprehensible and easily understood by readers; “elegance” pertains to the use of classical Chinese (Shen, 1998, p. 65).

However, the Crescent Moon School argued that the translation standards of faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance should be viewed dialectically. Chen Xiying (1929), a representative figure of the Crescent Moon School, severely criticized Yan Fu’s translation standards in his essay *On Translation*, pointing out that in translating literary works, elegant or similar words are not only superfluous but also a great taboo for translators. He argued that Yan Fu’s constant preoccupation with the ancient elegance of pre-Qin and Han texts obscured his vision of the clarity and conciseness of Mill and the readability of Huxley. As a result, the translated text became extremely difficult to comprehend, not only failing to reflect the original style but also causing readers great difficulty (Guan, 2018, p. 146). Chen Xiying believed that different translation standards should be applied to different genres and types of works. For non-literary works, achieving “expressiveness” is sufficient without the need to focus on the style of writing. “Expressiveness” is also not suitable for all literary works. Symbolist and expressionist works, which are inherently obscure, should not be forced to conform to the standard of “expressiveness,” as this would lead to misinterpretation. “Elegance” should only be required of works that are originally elegant. To achieve “faithfulness,” translators must possess the ability to understand the original text and be able to move beyond mere formal and semantic resemblance to achieve a spiritual similarity. Therefore, translators should not set a standard for themselves before translating, whether it be elegance, expressiveness, antiquity, accessibility, beauty, or simplicity, but rather use the standard of the original text as their own (Huang, 2013, p. 198). Another representative of the Crescent Moon School, Liang Shiqiu, affirmed the standard of “faithfulness” but opposed the view of preferring faithfulness over smoothness. He also opposed the justification of Europeanization as an excuse for not striving for smooth and comprehensible language, arguing that both faithfulness without smoothness and smoothness without faithfulness are equally problematic (Huang, 2013, p. 198).

Under the guidance of a translation strategy that combines domestication and foreignization, and influenced by the New Culture Movement and the Vernacular Language Movement, the translation language of the Crescent Moon School developed unique characteristics. First and foremost, the Crescent Moon School insisted on the unity of content and style in translation. In her analysis of the translation philosophies of two prominent Crescent Moon translators, Liang Shiqiu and Xu Zhimo, in *A Comparative Study of the Translation Theories of Liang Shiqiu and Xu Zhimo*, Liao Hong concluded that Liang Shiqiu believed the standard of perfect translation is the unity of faithfulness and expressiveness, that is, being faithful to the content and style of the original text while ensuring the reader’s comprehension; Xu Zhimo

argued that the standard of translation is the combination of spirit and form, which means retaining both the style and the content and form of the original. Both believed that translation is a form of creation that should incorporate the translator's personal style (Liao, 2011, p. 68). This is reflected in Lin Huiyin's translations. *The Nightingale and the Rose*, a fairy tale by the British Aesthetic writer Oscar Wilde, is primarily intended for children. Therefore, Lin Huiyin consciously adapted and abridged the original work during the translation process to make the language style of the translation more accessible to child readers.

Example 1:

Source Text: "Why is he weeping?" asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air.

Lin's Version: "他为什么哭泣呀?" 绿色的小壁虎, 竖起尾巴从他身前跑过。

Lin Huiyin translated the "Green Lizard" in the original text as "绿色的小壁虎" (green little gecko), which adds a touch of childlike charm to the translation but is evidently not scientifically accurate. Strictly speaking, "lizard" refers to "蜥蜴" (lizard), although it can also mean "壁虎" (gecko), these two animals are not interchangeable. In fact, lizards encompass all animals within the order Squamata, while geckos are specifically animals within the Gekkonidae family of the order Squamata. Therefore, Lin Huiyin's translation effectively narrows down the meaning of "lizard". However, we cannot definitively conclude that the "lizard" here does not refer to a gecko.

Lin Huiyin was from Fujian Province and moved to the capital with her father during her childhood. Lizards are primarily distributed in tropical and subtropical regions, and within China, they are mainly found in Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Jiangsu, Zhejiang. These places have diverse living environments and are home to a rich variety of lizard species. Therefore, we can infer that if Lin Huiyin had encountered lizards, it was most likely in Fujian. Upon verification, the lizard species found in Fujian Province include the Hengchun Grass Lizard, Xueshan Grass Lizard, and Hainan Keeled Lizard, none of which are geckos. In fact, the "Green Lizard" refers to a chordate animal widely distributed in Eastern European countries, with the Chinese name "绿蜥" (Green Lizard). However, Lin Huiyin might have considered the special reader group of children and thus chose the more familiar "壁虎" (gecko) to Chinese people, instead of the rarer "蜥蜴" (lizard) or the more specialized term "绿蜥" (Green Lizard).

Example 2:

Source Text: "The musicians will sit in their gallery," said the young Student, "and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor, and the countries in their gay dresses will throng round her..."

Lin's Version: 青年学生说: "乐师将在舞会上弹弄丝竹, 我那爱人也将随着弦琴的音乐声翩翩起舞, 神采飞扬, 风华绝代, 莲步都不曾着地似的....."

In Oscar Wilde's writing, the term "stringed instrument" refers to Western string instruments, primarily including the harp, guitar, and violin. The Chinese translation "丝竹" (sizhu), however, has two layers of meaning. In a broad sense, "丝竹" refers to "music," as seen in the phrase "无丝竹之乱耳, 无案牍之劳形". In a narrow sense, "丝竹" specifically denotes traditional Han Chinese string and bamboo wind

instruments, mainly comprising the guqin, se, xiao, and flute. Clearly, Wilde's "stringed instrument" here refers to the harp and violin. However, on the one hand, to enhance the readability of the text and, on the other hand, to align with the character image of the "young student" as a well-read scholar, Lin Huiyin chose the more elegant term "丝竹."

Moreover, Lin Huiyin translated the word "dance" from the original text into three four-character phrases, which are strictly regulated in terms of prosody and have a neat structure, imbuing the translation with musicality. This reflects the Crescent Moon School's shared pursuit of formal rhythm in the translation of novels, as well as in the translation and creation of poetry.

3. Conclusion

The Crescent Moon School is an important literary movement in modern Chinese literary history that emerged after the May Fourth Movement. This study explores the translation ideology of the Crescent Moon School by analyzing Lin Huiyin's translation of *The Nightingale and the Rose*, focusing on three aspects: translation selection, translation strategy, and translation language. In terms of translation selection, the Crescent Moon School emphasized the translation of classic literary works and advocated against translating works of second-rate quality. In terms of genre, the school prioritized the translation of poetry, followed by fiction, prose, and drama. Lin Huiyin's choice to translate Oscar Wilde's works was influenced by both her personal experiences and Wilde's unique status during the May Fourth period. As a nonconformist rich in rebellious spirit, Wilde embodied the ideals of "literature of humanity" that were prevalent at the time and served as a model for the youth. Regarding translation strategy, Crescent Moon translators advocated a combination of domestication and foreignization. They did not fully endorse Yan Fu's translation principles of "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance," arguing that different translation standards should be applied to different genres and types of works. Influenced by this strategy, the translation language of the Crescent Moon School insisted on the unity of content and style, viewing translation as a form of creation that should incorporate the translator's personal style. This granted translators a degree of freedom, primarily manifested in adaptation and abridgment. At the same time, influenced by the New Culture Movement and the Vernacular Language Movement, the translation language not only possessed the unique poetic characteristics of the Crescent Moon School but was also easy to understand.

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