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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Integrated Adoption of Domestication and Foreignization: A Study on the English Translation of *Prelude to the Melody of Water* by Su Shi

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| ABSTRACT

This paper is grounded in the context of poetry translation and probes into the English translation of *Prelude to the Melody of Water* by Su Shi, with translation strategies of foreignization and domestication as the theoretical framework. Despite the fact that it involves some numbers, it is qualitative in nature and adopts the method of textual analysis. It delves into multifaceted challenges encountered by the translator, encompassing cultural and linguistic perspectives inherent in the poetic work. Concerning the cultural perspective, it respectively investigates the translation of culturally-loaded terms and ideorealm, advocating for the application of foreignization in translating them to preserve the exotic flavor of the source culture and encourage target-culture readers to explore the cultural differences in the translated poetry. Regarding the linguistic perspective, it separately explores the adaption to grammatical completeness and rhyme of the English language, upholding the application of domestication in translating them to ensure the readability and musicality of the translated poetry. Through a close examination of four challenges within the two perspectives, this paper finds that the integrated adoption of foreignization and domestication facilitates the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic transmission of poetry, transcending the traditional dichotomy of viewing these two translation strategies as binaries.

| KEYWORDS

*Ci* Poetry, Poetry Translation, Translation Strategies, Integrated Adoption, Cultural Challenges, Linguistic Challenges

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### 1. Introduction

Poetry translation, as argued by Lawrence Venuti, presents an opportunity to explore experimental strategies that can unveil the distinctiveness of translation as a linguistic and cultural practice (Venuti, 2012). Though a substantial number of scholars have approached poetry translation from the perspectives of foreignization and domestication, they have presented these two strategies as mutually exclusive. Such a divergence, as claimed by Al-Jabri, has long persisted in the field of poetry translation (Al-Jabri, 2013).

When it comes to Chinese-to-English (C-E) poetry translation, *ci* deserves due attention for its high aesthetic value and artistic charm (Wei & Gong, 2019). It is a distinctive form of Chinese poetry characterized by varying line lengths and designated rhyme schemes. Throughout the Song dynasty (960-1279), *ci* poetry functioned as the dominant form of verse (Britannica, 2018). Among those poets who composed *ci* poetry, Su Shi (1037-1101) was one of the greatest. His official career was not smooth and he was banished in 1079 due to rejecting reform policies (Britannica, 2023). It was precisely the political setback that prompted the gradual maturation and awakening of his life consciousness, fostering an optimistic, broad-minded and resilient disposition (Chen, 2017).

For those who translate *ci* poetry, Xu Yuanchong enjoys high renown and he has been awarded the Aurora Borealis Prize for Outstanding Translation of Literature (Wei & Gong, 2019). Numerous scholars such as Wei and Gong have discussed the *ci* poetry translated by Xu from the perspective of foreignization and domestication, but they take an either-or stance on these two strategies (Wei & Gong, 2019). This essay aims to explore the integrated adoption of foreignization and domestication respectively from the perspective of culture and language by analyzing the translation of *Prelude to the Melody of Water*.

## **2. Review of Critical Literature on Domestication and Foreignization in Poetry Translation**

Poetry translation, as defined by Francis R. Jones, is the rendering of poetry into a different language (Jones, 2011). Even though poetry has faced significant marginalization in the global book market since the 1970s (Sapiro, 2019), the poetry translation has an enormous impact on translation theory through case studies and examples (Jones, 2011). Largely on the basis of poetry translation practice, Venuti sparkles the discussion of foreignization and domestication (Jones, 2011) which respectively underscore the “foreign identity” of the source text (ST) and “minimize the foreignness” of the target text (TT) (Munday 225-28). Of the two terms, foreignization is favoured over domestication, for it can make the linguistic and cultural differences embodied in the foreign text visible (Munday, 2016). Such a translation strategy has been preferred by many scholars in the field of poetry translation. For example, Al-Jabri takes it as a key to the preservation of the “cultural other” and a propeller to multiculturalism (Al-Jabri, 2013). Zhu Chaowei and Li Ping also claim that domestication is unfavorable for the exchange of cultures and the sharing of literary wealth (Zhu & Li, 2002). However, after reviewing the literature from the linguistic and cultural levels, this essay holds that the two strategies may not be incompatible in poetry translation and each has its own function.

Though Venuti prefers the foreignization strategy, he still acknowledges that some degree of domestication may be found in the translation process (Munday, 2016). It may not be a wise choice to completely abandon the strategy of domestication and take the two strategies as binaries in poetry translation. Xu Shichang and Sun Xuhui also think that the opposition of foreignization and domestication is theoretically and practically one-sided (Xu & Sun, 2017). If translators only adopt the strategy of foreignization to disseminate the culture, they may run the risk of producing a rigid translation, or translationese. It is because they do not take the linguistic factors into account, making the TT less acceptable for the TT readers.

A substantial number of scholars have discussed the differences between the English and the Chinese languages. For example, Zhang Zhizhong says that the English language underscores formal cohesion, and the Chinese language highlights semantic coherence (Zhang, 2013). In addition, Lian Shuneng concludes the ten major differences between the English and the Chinese language (Feng, 2019). Therefore, it may be more appropriate for Chinese translators to consider the differences between the two languages when translating poetry. If they do not value the linguistic differences, they may deter the transmission process because the TT may be less readable for the TT readers. In terms of language, Zhu Chaowei and Li Ping also consider the rhyme of the original poetry. They hold that the aesthetic features may be replicated, but the prerequisite for seeking rhyming patterns is the faithful transmission of the meaning of that poetry (Zhu & Li, 2002).

However, stressing the linguistic level does not mean that the cultural level is ignored. As Bassnett argues, translators are entitled to help transmit the culture “across linguistic frontiers” (Bassnett, 1998). Translators may encounter numerous culturally-loaded words in poetry translation (Zhu & Li, 2002), so how to translate them has become a challenge as well. After all, translation and culture are strongly connected, and the act of translation serves as a crucial tool for individuals to gain access to cultures (Al-Jabri, 2013). Such a statement is supported by Feng Quangong for he says that translation, in nature, is a sort of cross-cultural communication activity (Feng, 2019). If translators disregard the culture inherent in the poetry, they may dampen cultural exchanges since the TT readers may not be accessible to the ST culture.

Now that translators are conscious of the significance of language and culture in poetry translation, they may not take the strategy of domestication and foreignization as binaries. Some scholars advocate the strategy of foreignization for the sake of transmitting culture, but such a strategy may generate some problems in terms of language. Likewise, some scholars advocate the strategy of domestication in the name of avoiding rigid translation, but such a strategy may hinder the transmission of culture. The co-existence of foreignization and domestication may be another choice for translators, and the question left for them is how to apply the two strategies in a proper way. If the strategy of foreignization is mainly used in the transmission of culture and the strategy of domestication is mainly adopted in the transmission of language (Zhang, 2005), translators may have another answer at hand.

In conclusion, the review presents the different scholarly views of domestication and foreignization in the poetry translation, and naturally delves into the issue of language and culture. It can be found that the sole application of domestication or foreignization may not be sufficient for two dimensions: language and culture. Therefore, the scholarly view that they are taken as incompatible binaries may not be appropriate and is therefore a gap that needs to be bridged. Instead, each of them may be separately considered from the linguistic and cultural dimension. The essay will then look into a specific case of poetry and test the application of the two strategies in a real-life situation.

### 3. Specific Challenges in the Translation of *Prelude to the Melody of Water*

*Prelude to the Melody of Water* is a *ci* poem composed by Su Shi during the Song dynasty. Prior to his banishment in 1079, he expressed reluctance towards political reforms and suffered oppression from the reformists. Under such circumstances, he went to Hangzhou for his official duties and served as a sub-prefect. After completing his three-year term of office, he requested a transfer to Mizhou to be closer to his younger brother, Su Zhe. In 1074, Su Shi was appointed as the prefect of Mizhou, where he was beleaguered by natural calamities and man-made misfortunes, leaving no chance for him to reunite with Su Zhe. On the 15th of August in 1076, while contemplating his life, Su Shi composed the poem *Prelude to the Melody of Water* (Zhang, 2023). The source text (ST) and the target text (TT) are presented below.

ST	TT
丙辰中秋，欢饮达旦，大醉作此篇，兼怀子由。	On the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival of 1076, I drank happily till dawn and wrote this in my cups while thinking of Zi-you.
明月几时有？ 把酒问青天。	How long will the bright moon appear? Wine-cup in hand, I ask the sky.
不知天上宫阙， 今夕是何年？	I do not know what time of year It would be tonight in the palace on high.
我欲乘风归去， 唯恐琼楼玉宇， 高处不胜寒。	Riding the wind, there I would fly, Yet I fear the crystal palace would be Far too high and cold for me.
起舞弄清影， 何似在人间？	I rise and dance, with my shadow I play. On high as on earth, would it be as gay?
转朱阁， 低绮户， 照无眠。	The moon goes round the mansion red Through gauze-draped windows soft to shed Her light upon the sleepless bed.
不应有恨， 何事偏向别时圆？	Against man she should have no spite. Why then when people part is she oft full and bright?
人有悲欢离合， 月有阴晴圆缺， 此事古难全。	Men have sorrow and joy, they part or meet again; The moon may be bright or dim, she may wax or wane. There has been nothing perfect since the olden days.
但愿人长久， 千里共婵娟 (Xu, 2007)。	So let us wish that man Will live long as he can! Though miles apart, we'll share the beauty she displays (Xu, 2007).

Compared with the ST which contains 112 characters, the TT is considerably longer and includes 185 words, approximately 1.65 times the length of the original. Xu Yuanhong copes with several challenges, both in terms of culture and language. From the cultural perspective, translating culturally-loaded terms such as 明月, 天上宫阙 and 婵娟 as well as the ideorealm of the ST can pose significant challenges for the translator. Regarding the linguistic aspect, two main challenges can be observed as well. The translator needs to ensure grammatical completeness apart from dealing with the rhyme of the TT.

### 4. Foreignization and Domestication in the Translation of *Prelude to the Melody of Water*

In the translation of *Prelude to the Melody of Water*, Xu Yuanhong adopts an integrated use of foreignization and domestication respectively from the perspective of culture and language, promoting cultural communication and enhancing the readability and beauty of the TT.

#### **4.1 Foreignization in the Translation of Prelude to the Melody of Water**

The transmission of culture through foreignization is of immense importance in the process of translating poetry. Foreignization entails selecting a text from a different culture and adopting a translation strategy that diverges from prevailing cultural values in the target language. The objective is to make the presence of translators evident, thereby highlighting the foreign identity of the source text (Munday, 2016).

##### **4.1.1 The Translation of Chinese Culturally-loaded Terms**

From a cultural perspective, translating culturally-loaded terms can be a significant challenge for Xu Yuanchong. They refer to words and expressions that belong to a specific culture, and are direct or indirect reflections of the national culture within the vocabulary of language (Hu, 1999). They can best exemplify the cultural information embedded in the language and reflect the social lives of human beings, making their translation complicated yet significant (Zhou & Zhang, 2019). According to Chen Zhimin, it is crucial to preserve the cultural characteristics, or the so-called exotic flavour, of the ST in translation, allowing readers to experience phenomena that are different from their own culture. The literal translation of culturally-loaded terms can be seen as the application of foreignization strategy (Chen, 2017). The following examples are selected from the ST and TT for analysis.

ST: 明月几时有?

TT: How long will the bright moon appear?

In this example, Xu Yuanchong adopts the strategy of foreignization to translate 明月 (bright moon) in an attempt to convey its imagery to TT readers. The 明月 (bright moon) is a typical term laden with Chinese culture. As a natural phenomenon, the 月 is often regarded as a carrier of specific emotions. In different states of mind, the Chinese people use the imagery of the moon to express various thoughts such as happiness, sadness, resentment of separation, eternity and so on (Liu, 2008). Although the connection of the moon with insanity may be erroneous, Brunner has discovered that English has words such as “lunatic, loony or moonstruck” (Brunner, 2010), which implicates that the moon may evoke some horrible associations for TT readers. By retaining the imagery of the moon in the translation, the translator underscores its significance in Chinese culture and piques the curiosity of TT readers about the thoughts that Su Shi intends to express. 明 refers to brightness, which is the opposite of darkness (Zhong, 2010). When 明 is combined with the Chinese character 月, the translator can convey the message that the moon was particularly bright on that Mid-autumn night. However, Su Shi is far away from his younger brother and plays with his shadow, emphasizing the imagery of the moon as “resentment of separation”. Through foreignization, the translator seeks to convey the cultural connotation of the term 明月 to TT readers.

ST: 不知天上宫阙，

    今夕是何年？

TT: I do not know what time of year

    It would be tonight in the palace on high.

In this example, Xu Yuanchong employs the strategy of foreignization to translate 天上宫阙 (the palace on high) to transmit its imagery to TT readers. It is the only term that appears in the translator’s note, in which he mentions that “[a]ccording to some commentators, “the palace on high” might allude to the imperial palace”, thereby showcasing his loyalty to the emperor (Xu, 2007). 宫阙 (the palace), in Chinese culture, refers to the 宫殿, or the tall and magnificent place where the emperor resides (Zhong, 2010). However, in this sentence, the translator seems to underscore the lofty presence of the palace and the distance between Su Shi and it since he uses the phrase “on high”, thus reflecting his longing to return to the palace. For an author who consistently upholds the moral character of respecting the emperor and benefiting the people, being separated from his younger brother is a secondary ethical burden (Zhou, 2006). Therefore, the cultural connotation of 天上宫阙 can be conveyed to TT readers through foreignization.

ST: 但愿人长久，千里共婵娟。

TT: So let us wish that man

    Will live long as he can!

    Though miles apart, we’ll share the beauty she displays.

In this example, Xu Yuanchong employs the strategy of foreignization to translate 婵娟 in an attempt to transmit its imagery to TT readers. This culturally-loaded term can refer to both the beautiful posture (of a woman in particular) and the moon (Zhong, 2010).

By closely examining the Chinese characters 嫦娥, TT readers may notice that the character 女 (woman) appears on the left side of each character. In other words, there is a connection between woman and the moon in Chinese culture: Hou Yi is given the elixir by the Queen Mother of the West and he entrusts it to Chang'e for safekeeping. However, his disciple Feng Meng covets the elixir and attempts to steal it when Hou Yi is absent. In the face of this emergent situation, Chang'e swallows the elixir and involuntarily ascends to the sky. Since she misses her husband Hou Yi, she becomes an immortal on the moon closest to the human world (Yan, 2019). Therefore, when the moon is mentioned, it may evoke thoughts of Chang'e and longing for reunion with loved ones among the Chinese people. The translator translates 嫦娥 into "she" to convey the femininity associated with the moon in Chinese culture, thereby encompassing the meanings of both "beautiful posture" and "moon" conveyed by the characters 嫦娥. Through the strategy of foreignization, the translator attempts to convey the cultural connotation of the term 嫦娥 to TT readers.

#### **4.1.2 The Translation of Chinese Ideorealm**

From a cultural perspective, translating the ideorealm can be another challenge for Xu Yuanchong. In Chinese poetics, ideorealm is an aesthetic concept of foremost significance and is considered to be the essence of classical Chinese poetry. It involves the creation of an artistic realm that transports the reader into an imaginary world through artistic descriptions which blend emotions with the natural surroundings. The fundamental construction of ideorealm revolves around merging emotions with visual scenes, encompassing two elements: the objective portrayal of real-life images and the subjective creation of the emotions and thoughts of an author, or respectively the "realm" and the "thoughts". While it emerges from the collective images of the entire poem, it possesses a magnificence that surpasses the mere accumulation of different images (Chen, 2014).

Adopting the strategy of foreignization can be beneficial for Xu Yuanchong to present the ideorealm of the ST. As stated by Chen, translators should strive to retain the original images and produce translations that maintain the flavour of the original (Chen, 2014). Upon examining *Prelude to the Melody of Water*, readers may discover that its charm comes from the infusion of subjective feelings of Su Shi into objective natural scenes. The poet explicitly expresses his happiness at the beginning of the poem, but this represents only a part of his feelings, through which readers may not grasp the complete image of Su Shi and the complete thoughts that he wishes to convey. To present the ideorealm of the ST, the translator employs the strategy of foreignization to transmit the natural scenes included in the poem. For instance, he literally translates 明月 (bright moon), 天上宫阙 (the palace on high), 琼楼玉宇 (crystal palace), 朱阁 (red mansion), 绮户 (gauze-draped windows) and so on. Through foreignization, the translator concisely and accurately depicts the natural surroundings, representing the real-life images of the ST and allowing TT readers to exercise their imagination and grasp the emotions and thoughts of Su Shi: Although he drinks happily, he suffers from banishment and loneliness. He remains awake all night, with the moonlight casting its light on the sleepless man through "gauze-draped windows". However, in the end, he becomes conscious of the fact that parting and meeting are regular things in human life, just like the waxing and waning of the moon, elevating the sight of natural scenes into the realm of philosophy and demonstrating his optimistic and resilient outlook. It is due to foreignization that those natural scenes can be preserved and the complete ideorealm of the ST can be grasped by TT readers.

#### **4.2 Domestication in the Translation of *Prelude to the Melody of Water***

The adaptation of Chinese poetry to the English language through domestication during the process of translation holds enormous significance. Domestication involves transforming a text into a transparent, fluent, and "invisible" style, with the aim of minimizing foreign elements in the TT (Munday, 2016).

##### **4.2.1 The Adaption to the Grammatical Completeness of the English Language**

Regarding the language, adapting to the grammatical completeness of the English language can be a significant challenge for Xu Yuanchong. According to Zhang, meanings in English are suggested by forms and governed by syntax. However, the Chinese language places emphasis on semantic coherence and its forms and syntax are controlled by meanings (Zhang, 2013). In other words, Chinese sentences may not always explicitly state subjects or utilize conjunctive devices, as they can be implied by meanings of sentences. However, in English sentences, meanings are implicated by forms. Therefore, it is crucial for the translator to make these "invisible elements" visible when translating *Prelude to the Melody of Water*. The process of visualizing these "invisible elements" can be taken as an application of domestication, making the translation more fluent and comprehensible for TT readers. According to Lin, each language possesses its own linguistic characteristics, and its grammar and syntax must adhere to certain conventions (Lin, 2009).

On the one hand, Xu Yuanchong domesticates the language by taking into account the subjects of the sentences. Feng suggests that in Chinese, the omitted personal pronoun is typically in the first person, but it can also be in the second or third person. During the translation process, translators often make these concealed pronouns visible, which can be seen as a kind of domestication (Feng, 2019). In the *Prelude to the Melody of Water*, subjects such as "I", "The moon" and "Men" can be found, aligning the TT with the grammatical structure of the English language. Furthermore, with the transition of subjects, TT readers can gain a clearer

understanding of the meaning of the poem. When depicting the behaviors and thoughts of Su Shi, the translator translates the subject of the sentence as “I”, as seen in 欢饮达旦 (I drank happily till dawn), 不知天上宫阙 (I do not know what time of year), and 起舞弄清影 (I rise and dance, with my shadow I play). While describing the scenes, the translator translates the subject of the sentence as the specific objects being referred to, as in 转朱阁 (The moon goes round the mansion red). When elevating the vision of natural phenomena to the realm of philosophy, the translator translates the subject of the sentence as “Men” and “[W]e” to express a shared sentiment among human beings.

On the other hand, Xu Yuanchong domesticates the language by considering the cohesion and correctness of the TT. Reading through the *Prelude to the Melody of Water*, readers may notice the presence of cohesive devices such as “Yet” and “Though”. By fulfilling different functions in constructing sentences within this poem, they contribute to the form and cohesion of the English translation. For example, “Yet” appears in the TT “Riding the wind, there I would fly, Yet I fear the crystal palace would be Far too high and cold for me” despite the absence of such a conjunctive word in the ST 我欲乘风归去, 唯恐琼楼玉宇, 高处不胜寒. This conjunctive word signifies the hesitation of Su Shi: even though he desires to ride the wind and fly to the palace, he is apprehensive about being excluded by the emperor. Another example is the addition of the conjunctive word “Though” in the translation of 千里共婵娟. While the ST does not contain a conjunctive word, the translator introduces one during the translation process to make the internal connection explicit, resulting in a fluent and readable TT. This conjunctive word highlights the broad-mindedness of Su Shi: regardless of the distances between individuals, they can still appreciate the beauty of the moon together.

#### **4.2.2 The Adaption to the Rhyme of the English Language**

Regarding the language, adapting to the rhyme of the English language can pose another challenge for Xu Yuanchong. Rhyme primarily concerns the aesthetic value of the poetry. It refers to “the use of words in a poem or song that have the same sound, especially at the ends of lines” (Hornby, 2009). Rhyme has a notable impact on liking, intensity, perceived emotion and felt emotion ratings, with rhyming stanzas resulting in a more favorable evaluation in terms of both aesthetic appeal and emotional response (Obermeier, 2013). In C-E poetry translation, Lowell holds that attempting to replicate the rhythm or rhyme schemes of the original works is utterly unattainable (Ayscough & Lowell, 1973). However, it may be feasible for the translator to employ the strategy of domestication to adapt to the rhyme of the English language.

Xu Yuanchong domesticates the language by considering the rhyme in the *Prelude to the Melody of Water*. It can be seen from the ST that it follows a strict end rhyme pattern. The following sentences are selected from the ST, with the pronunciation of the last Chinese character provided in brackets: 把酒问青天 (tian), 今夕是何年 (nian), 高处不胜寒 (han), 何似在人间 (jian), 照无眠 (mian), 何事偏向别时圆 (yuan), 此事古难全 (quan) and 千里共婵娟 (juan). These characters consistently appear before full stops or question marks, and share the same end rhyme “an”. However, when translating these sentences into English, the translator utilizes both different alliterations and end rhymes. They are not confined to specific punctuation marks and allow for greater flexibility. For instance, the translator employs alliterations in words like “wax” and “wane”, “soft” and “shed” and “why” and “when”. In contrast, disparate end rhymes are used for the words such as “appear” and “year”; “sky”, “high” and “fly”; “be” and “me”; “play” and “gay”; “red”, “shed” and “bed”; “spite” and “bright”; “again”, “wane”, “man” and “can” as well as “days” and “displays”. Compared to the rhymes of the Chinese language, those English ones appear more varied and flexible (Tian, 2022), enhancing the aesthetic value and musicality of the translated poem.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this essay may offer valuable insights into the integrated adoption of foreignization and domestication by analyzing the English translation of *Prelude to the Melody of Water*, differentiating itself from the disproportionate emphasis of one strategy over the other. It delves into the specific challenges faced by Xu Yuanchong when rendering this poem of Su Shi into English, including culturally-loaded terms and ideorealm in terms of culture, as well as grammatical completeness and rhyme in terms of language.

After a close examination of these four challenges within the two aspects, this essay has highlighted the significance of both foreignization and domestication, advocating for a balanced set of strategies to poetry translation. Through the application of foreignization, Xu Yuanchong can preserve the exotic flavor of the ST and encourage TT readers to explore the cultural differences inherent in the poem, prompting them to develop a clearer understanding of the cultural imagery and unique ideorealm conveyed in the ST. Through the adoption of domestication, the translator ensures the readability of the TT and creates aesthetic effects for readers. It is through an integrated understanding and application of both strategies that the translator can promote the translation of poetry across cultures and languages.

In the broader context of translation studies, this essay may make contributions to the ongoing exploration of strategies in poetry translation. This essay emphasizes the importance of considering the specific aspects of poetic works, transcending the traditional

dichotomy of either foreignization or domestication. It encourages translators to adopt an integrated set of strategies, thereby making translations more accessible and appealing to TT readers. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations inherent in the scope of this essay, primarily confined to the field of poetry translation. This constraint, while allowing for in-depth exploration within its defined boundaries, beckons for supplementation through translations spanning a broader spectrum of literary and non-literary genres, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics involved in translation.

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