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## A Tentative Study of William Allingham's *A Dream* Under the Guidance of Xu Yuanzhong's "Three-Beauty Theory"

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### Abstract

Famous Chinese translator Xu Yuanzhong advocates "three-beauty theory" in translating poems, namely, beauty in sense, sound and form. Based on the Luxun's opinion, theoretical system of "three beauties" is summarized by Xu Yuanzhong after he translates a large number of poem. In addition to conveying the content of the original poem, it is also necessary for translators to strive to convey the form and rhyme of the original poem. Especially in poetry translation, the effect of "three beauties" is the goal of many poetry lovers. Guided by the theory of "three beauties", the author tries to make an exploratory translation of William Allingham's *A Dream*, keeping in line with the original poetry from three aspects of artistic conception, rhyme and form. And this thesis mainly aims for helping readers further appreciate the original poetry and draw lessons from translating the English poetry under the guidance of the theory of "three beauties". Furthermore, the author wants to contribute to the cultural exchange between China and the West.

**Key words:** William Allingham; *A Dream*; "Three-beauty theory"; English poetry translation

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### INTRODUCTION

As international contacts multiply, an increasing number of foreign poems has been translated into Chinese. More and more translators explore poetry translation with great enthusiasm. William Allingham, as an Irish poet, is less familiar with Chinese readers. There are few Chinese versions of his poems. Therefore, translating William Allingham's poems is a challenging work. The author select his *A Dream* to study under the guidance of "three-beauty theory". However, Hai An (2005; 27) states that translating poems is always infused with the intention of the translator because of the ambiguity of the language. Xu Yuanzhong has done a lot of research in the translating Chinese poetry and develops the "three-beauty theory". This article attempts to pursue the "three beauties" in the translating English poems into Chinese. Through the analysis of William Allingham's *A Dream*, the author tries to reproduce the content of the original poem, style, rhythm. Finally, the author summarizes and reflects on the Chinese version of this poem and urges readers to explore poetry translation as much as possible when appreciating the original poem. What's more, this thesis also could make some contribution to the cultural exchange between China and the West.

### 1. XU YUANZHONG'S "THREE-BEAUTY THEORY"

In 1979, Xu Yuanzhong proposed "three beauties"—the beauty in sound, form and sense in his *Study on Translating Poetry* (Liu, 2003). He put "beauty in sense" in the most important place, "beauty in sound" in second place and "beauty in form" following behind. The theory has its origin in Mr. Lu Xun's *From Word to Article*: "Reciting a word, one should recognize the form, sound, and sense: reading and listening its sound, observing its form, understanding its sense. When finished all of these,

one will grasp the word. In an article,...there exists three beauties: beauty in sense for feeling; beauty in sound for listening; beauty in form for seeing” (Luo, pp.932-933) . Xu Yuanzhong applied “three-beauty theory” in poetry translation, aiming to realize the sound, form and sense of poetry. Western poetry focus on narratives and Chinese poetry stresses on lyricism. Therefore, when translating English poetry into Chinese, we must pay attention to the integrity of the content and grasp the tone of the original poem to reproduce artistic conception of the original poem. Imagery is the essence and soul of poetry, So “beauty in sense” is in the first place which helps readers to appreciate the beauty of the original poem. In the process of poetry translation, translators must grasp the theme and emotion of the original poem, and try to be bilingual. Finally, Xu Yuanzhong emphasizes that translators should remain the “beauty in sound” as far as possible on the premise of conveying “beauty in sense” of original poems, and on the try to express the “beauty in form”, striving to achieve “three beauties” completely.

## 2. WILLIAM ALLINGHAM AND A DREAM

William Allingham (March 19, 1824 - November 18, 1889), Irish poet, born in Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal, who was the son of a local bank manager of British descent. Allingham loved poetry since he was a child. He walked around the streets, listening to girls singing old songs in the countryside, copying and adapting them according to his own preferences. At the age of 13, he worked as a clerk in bank. During his six years of work, the poetry words and images contributed to his peace of mind and inner tranquility. At the age of 19, he became a customs officer and had since sailed all over Northern Ireland until he was 39. However, the love for poetry did not decline, but increased with past years. In 1850, William Allingham published his first volume of *Poems*. It was followed by *Day and Night Songs* (1854) and by various other volumes including *Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland*. And He published a further 6 volumes before death in 1889. William Allingham loved poetry, Ireland and particularly his native Donegal. He wrote poems to convey his feelings and to give readers images of Ireland and the lives of people. Readers could feel magic in *The Fairies*; satire in *Lord Crashton*; sorrowful in *A Dream*. Reading William Allingham's poetry likes readers dropping in a wonderland. Allingham's poems are fresh and refined, beautiful and bright, with distinctive national characteristics in spirit and local cultural color and exude the ancient and mysterious Irish flavor. He is a legend and a respectable Irish poet.

*A Dream* is selected by William Butler Yeats and compiled into *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*. The whole poem is divided into eight stanzas and each stanza is in the form of aabb. In *A Dream*, the poet sees

his childhood playmate, the secret crush, the kind mother and the old acquaintance, young and old, men and women. In the last stanza, the poet uses the rhyme of aabbbb, and express his deep sorrow in the poem's last sentence. It's a narrative poem with a sad emotional tone, which is full of mystery, sadness, meticulous description and lamentation when recalling these lonely souls at the moonlight night.

## 3. THE TENTATIVE STUDY OF A DREAM UNDER THE THREE-BEAUTY THEORY

### 3.1 Beauty in Sense

Imagery is the soul of poetry. To translate poetry, we need to keep style of the original poem and reappear the artistic conception that the poet wants to express. Xi Linhua (2001, p.37) claims that the image is misty and vague—the highly abstract thing, which can hardly be expressed are valued and concerned by Chinese and foreign poets whose understanding and discussion are lead to the same destination. Most people in Ireland believe in the tradition of soul-fleeing. Based on dreams, Allingham expresses his deep nostalgia for the dead. When the author first read the original poem, the author felt so sad. In the process of translation, the author retains the tone of sorrow and beautiful mood.

#### Example 1:

I heard the dogs howl in the moonlight night;  
I went to the window to see the sight;  
All the Dead that ever I knew  
Going one by one and two by two.  
——First stanza

#### Initial Translation:

月夜闻犬声，  
窗前观异景；  
逝者皆曾识，  
肩手相并离。

#### Revised Translation:

月夜闻犬声，  
窗前观异景；  
逝者均已逢，  
肩手交叠行。

As the first stanza of the whole poem, Allingham outlines the strange scene with the images of “Moonlight”, “night”, “window”, “dogs” and “dead”. The author recreates the scene of the original poem from the equivalent images, namely, “月夜”, “窗”, “犬声” and “逝者”. On the moonlight night, the dog barks, and the poet looks at the scene from the window. After the last sentence is revised by Chai Su, from “肩手相并离” to “肩手交叠行”, so the sight that the poet wants to show readers is more concrete and more vivid, reflecting the “beauty in sense” of the original poem.

Example 2:

On they pass'd, and on they pass'd;  
Towns fellows all, from first to last;  
Born in the moonlight of the lane,  
Quench'd in the heavy shadow again.  
——Second stanza

Initial Translation:

人群走不停，  
始末皆同乡；  
月光巷初生，  
月影终消亡。

Revised Translation:

孤队迟迟往，  
始末皆同乡；  
初生月明巷，  
消亡月影凉。

Tasting the second verse of the original poem, the readers could feel that the group of people who died are all Allingham's countrymen. The last two sentences of this verse, which shows that life is so short from birth to death, while the moon is just from the brightness to the shadowiness. In the author's translation, the expression of "人群" is not clear enough, and "走不停" breaks the tense atmosphere of the original poem, and "月光巷出生，月影终消亡。" seems to describe the moonlight, without conveying the meaning of original poem. After being modified by Chai Su, "孤队迟迟往" takes on the "肩手交叠行" in the first stanza, "初生" and "消亡", "明" and "凉" form a sharp contrast, the only two sentences reproduce the gloomy mood of the original poem.

Example 3:

On, on, a moving bridge they made  
Across the moon-stream, from shade to shade,  
Young and old, women and men;  
Many long-forgot, but remember'd then.  
——Seventh stanza

Initial Translation:

人群似流桥，  
月溪穿阴影；  
男女老弱少，  
多数已忘掉。

Revised Translation:

人群似流桥，  
光影渐次倒；  
凝望众人遥，  
多数音容消。

In the seventh verse, the long team of ghosts moves forward slowly, crossing the stream under the moon, which seems like a bridge composed of men and women, old and young. And most of them the Allingham doesn't remember for a long time. "Moving bridge" is translated into "流桥", which retains the original poetic image and

displays the lonely team in the moonlight vividly. When translating "Across the moon stream, from shade to shade", the author wants to express the ghosts crossing the stream in the moonlight and go to the dark place. Although the author expresses the meaning of "月溪" and "阴影", there is no aesthetic feeling. If the reader does not read the original poem, it will only lead to ambiguity. After being revised by Chai Su, it is translated into "光影渐次倒", which conveys the mood that Allingham wants to present to readers that people walk in the moonlight. In the third line, the poet describes men and women, old and young, Chai Su translates it as "凝望众人遥". First of all, the word "众人" includes all people. The word "遥" echoes with the word "渐次倒". The team is moving forward slowly, and at the same time, it corresponds with the word "凝望", which shows that the poet's trance. When dealing with "many long forgot, but remember'd then", the author simply renders it as "多数已忘掉", which is stiff and has no lasting appeal. However, Chai Su doesn't translate it literally, but dug out the deep meaning of the original poem. "音容消" describes the poet's memory of his fellow countrymen gradually blurred until it disappeared.

### 3.2 Beauty in Sound

Poetry is a lyrical literary genre. The language is highly condensed, vivid and has a certain rhythm. China and the West have cultural differences and poetry also written in different forms. Chinese poetry mainly includes folk songs, Tang poetry, Song Poems, Yuan verse, and modern Chinese poetry. English poetry is roughly divided into free verse, metrical verse, and blank verse.

Liu Junping (2003; 55) indicates that the sound meter reflects the music lingual rhythm of Poetry. Rhythm is the element of poetry and the core requirement of poetry. And the harmony of rhythm should be emphasized between lines. When Feng Huazhan talked about poetry translation, he believed that poetry translation should be as national and popular as poetry writing; poetry translation should not focus on form mechanically AND lose the beauty of rhyme (Luo, 2015, p.886). In the second and seventh stanzas, the original poetry is in the form of aabb, and the final translation version is processed into the same rhyme to the end, which shows readers a kind of flowing beauty.

Example 4:

Schoolmates, marching as when we play'd  
At soldiers once—but now more staid;  
Those were the strangest sight to me  
Who were drown'd, I knew, in the awful sea.  
——Third stanza

Initial Translation:

同窗似孩童，  
扮兵略稳重；  
此景吾啧啧，  
知其葬海底。

Revised Translation:

同窗似孩童，  
扮兵略稳重；  
夜睹此奇景，  
知其葬海冢。

The third stanza of the original poem describes the poet's former schoolmates moving forward like children playing games and soldiers with heavy steps. The rhyme the original poem is aabb, when the author translates, keeping the rhyme, which is roughly neat with“童” and “重”，“奇” and “底”。When Chai Su revises the poem, he changes the pattern of the original poem. At last, he ends up with “冢”，which not only makes the poem vivid, but also makes it easy to read.

**Example 5:**

Straight and handsome folk; bent and weak, too;  
Some that I loved, and gasp'd to speak to;  
Some but a day in their churchyard bed;  
Some that I had not known were dead.  
——Fourth stanza

Initial Translation:

少英老弱驼，  
吾爱或惧说；  
教墓或刚置，  
未识或已逝。

Revised Translation:

少英老驼孱，  
旧爱曾怯言；  
坟莹旦夕置，  
未识竟已逝。

In the fourth stanza, the four sentences tells readers that all the dead are ghosts. William Butler Yeats (2010; 130) once mentioned that ghosts, or as they are called in Irish, Thevshi or Tash (taidhbhse, tais), live in a state intermediary between this life and the next. They are held there by some earthly longing or affection, or some duty unfulfilled, or anger against the living. The poet looked at the lonely group, some of whom were old and young, some of whom had never spoken to, some of whom had just lain in the churchyard for only one day, while some had died before they knew each other. When translating, the author chooses the words “驼”，“说”，“置”，“逝”to reproduce the end rhyme, which conveys the gloomy atmosphere of the original poem. The last three sentences all have the word “some”，while the author starts the translation, using “或” three times to parallel, while Chai Su changes the rhyme of the first two sentences into “孱” and “言”，with a strong sense of rhythm. And he also changes words, such as changing “吾爱”，“惧说”，“教墓” into “旧爱”，“怯言”，“坟莹”，which is more literary. Of course, he deletes the “或”，instead with “曾”，“旦

夕”and“竟”，which not only faithfully expresses the content and embodies the rhythm, but also conveys the poetic sentiment of the original poem.

**Example 6:**

A long, long crowd—where each seem'd lonely,  
Yet of them all there was one, one only,  
Raised a head or look'd my way.  
She linger'd a moment,—she might not stay.  
——Fifth stanza

Initial Translation:

寂寞长人群，  
队中有一人；  
举头朝我望，  
迟疑却未停。

Revised Translation:

孤队徐徐往，  
一人却异样；  
举头向此望，  
踌躇仍前往。

In this stanza, the long crowd looks lonely in the moonlight. One of the ghosts looks at me, hesitated for a moment, but still moving forward. When dealing with it, the author doesn't maintain the rhythm, such as “lonely”，“only” and “way”，“stay”。And the author just narrates the content and doesn't consider the “beauty in sound”。Chai Su translates “a long, long crowd where each see'd lonely” into “孤队徐徐往”。“孤队”is coherent with second stanza and“徐徐”conveys the meaning of “long, long”。The revised version, which is both nationalized and popular, reproducing “three beauties”of the original poem.

**Example 7:**

How long since I saw that fair pale face!  
Ah! Mother dear! might I only place  
My head on thy breast, a moment to rest,  
While thy hand on my tearful cheek were prest!  
——Sixth stanza

Initial Translation:

久违美苍颜！  
惟愿俯汝怀！  
休憩慈母陪，  
拂吾脸颊泪！

Revised Translation:

久违媪苍颜！  
愿偃母胸前！  
休憩汝相伴，  
拂吾泪满面！

In the sixth verse, Allingham saw his mother in the long crowd. It is not difficult to see the foreshadowing made by the poet in the fifth stanza. The one who looking at him is his dear mother! In the four sentences, the poet used four exclamation marks. It can be seen that he

missed his beautiful and kind mother so long. At this time, his mother's face was pale. Allingham wants to nestle in her mother's arms and rest for a moment! The poet wants his mother to wipe away his tears. In the process of translation, the author deals with third and fourth sentences with rhymes of “陪”and“泪”. Chai Su rhymed all four sentences with “颜”, “前”, “伴”and“面”. The end rhythm is beautiful, catchy and neat. When translating the word "fair", the author translates it directly into “美”, and Chai Su modifies it into “姍”which can better reproduce the gentle and beautiful image of the mother in the poet's mind.

#### Example 8:

And first there came a bitter laughter;  
A sound of tears the moment after;  
And then a music so lofty and gay,  
That every morning, day by day,  
I strive to recall it if I may.  
——Last stanza

#### Initial Translation:

苦笑先传出,  
随即众人哭;  
哀乐倍崇敬,  
自此朝朝闻,  
梦醒犹不停。

#### Revised Translation:

初闻一苦笑,  
众人恻悲惶;  
哀乐肃幽净,  
自此朝夕鸣,  
梦醒犹不停。

In the last verse, there is one more sentence than the first seven verses, and the rhyme form is aabbb. In the translation, the author only rhymes“出”and“哭”, “敬”and“停”while Chai Su keep the end rhyme as the original poem. Therefore, the end rhymes “笑”and“悼”, “净”, “鸣”,“停”are very neat and represent the style of original poem.

### 3.4 Beauty in Form

As the last criterion of “three-beauty theory”, “beauty in form” can give readers visual beauty, so “beauty in form” can't be ignored because of stressing “beauty in sense and sound”. Xu Yuanzhong thought that we should

pay attention to the length of lines and the number of stanzas when translating poems. There are 8 stanzas in the whole poem and about ten syllables in each line. The form of original poem is neat and regular. In the whole poem, syllables of each line are not exactly the same. The author did not deal with it according to the structure of the original poem. At first, it was translated into seven-character quatrain, but not concise enough. After careful consideration, in order to reproduce mysterious scene, the author decides to translate it into five-character quatrain.

## CONCLUSION

Translating poems is not easy. On the basis of a great deal of poetry translation, Xu Yuanzhong's “three-beauty theory” has a guiding role in poetry translation. And William Allingham's *A dream* conveys the poet's nostalgia for his fellow countrymen, schoolmates, secret crush, fair mother, and his perception of life and death with his peculiar imagination and mysterious artistic conception. Therefore, the author tries to master the style of original poem, reproduce the poignant mood. However, the author has little talent and learning, when trying to translate William Allingham's *A Dream*, the author doesn't reach to the “three beauties”. Fortunately, after the supervisor's revision, the version becomes more aesthetic and could be published. At last, translating English poetry into Chinese, we must understand the poet's background, study Chinese and foreign languages and try our best to achieve “three beauties” to make contribution to poetry translation.

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