

The English Translation of Moonlight over the Lotus Pond from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology: A Comparative Study of the Versions by Yang Xianyi and Zhu Chunshen

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Abstract: *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*, a canonical essay by the modern Chinese writer Zhu Ziqing, has been rendered into English by several distinguished translators, among whom Yang Xianyi and Zhu Chunshen are the most widely read and studied. This study compares these two English versions within the framework of Hu Gengshen's Eco-translatology, focusing on the core concept of "three-dimensional transformation" at the linguistic, cultural, and communicative levels. Through a close comparison of representative passages, the study reveals that Yang's version tends toward fidelity to the source text's structure and diction and toward the preservation of Chinese cultural images, whereas Zhu's version privileges syntactic restructuring, target-reader acceptability, and the musicality of the target language. These divergent strategies are interpreted as the translators' adaptive selections within distinct translational eco-environments, shaped by their backgrounds, purposes, and aesthetic pursuits. The study demonstrates that the three-dimensional framework offers a productive lens for prose translation criticism, and it provides practical reference for the Chinese-to-English translation of literary essays.

Keywords: Eco-translatology; three-dimensional transformation; *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*; adaptive selection; prose translation

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I. Introduction

With the growing international influence of Chinese literature, the translation of canonical essays has become a significant channel through which foreign readers gain access to Chinese culture. *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*, written by the renowned modern essayist Zhu Ziqing in 1927, is widely regarded as a hallmark of modern Chinese prose. Characterized by exquisite language, refined structure, and profound artistic conception, it carries rich cultural connotations and constitutes a representative piece of Chinese literary heritage. Among its several English versions, those by Yang Xianyi (co-translated with Gladys Yang) and Zhu Chunshen are the most authoritative and widely studied. Both preserve, to a large extent, the stylistic features and aesthetic effects of the original; yet, owing to differences in the translators' backgrounds, purposes, and aesthetic pursuits, the two versions exhibit markedly distinct styles and strategies.

The essay was composed in the summer of 1927, when Zhu Ziqing, then teaching at Tsinghua University, was beset by political disquiet and personal unease. In the piece he withdraws to a secluded lotus pond near his home under the moonlight, and through the subtle interweaving of landscape description and emotional confession gives voice to the aspirations, confusions, and faint melancholy of a generation of Chinese intellectuals. The essay is celebrated above all for its musical language—a dense texture of reduplicative words, a measured alternation of long and short clauses, and a pervasive sense of rhythm that resists reproduction in any other tongue. It is precisely these qualities that render the essay both a touchstone of modern Chinese prose and a demanding test for translators, and that account for the sustained scholarly interest in its various English renderings.

The purpose of this study is not to adjudicate the relative merits of the two translations but, within the theoretical framework of Eco-translatology proposed by Hu Gengshen, to explore how the two translators make adaptive selections and transformations at the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions. Two research questions guide the analysis. First, what systematic differences are evident between the two versions in their handling of the three dimensions? Second, how does the translational eco-environment—including the translators' subjectivity, the historical context, and the target readership—account for these divergent choices, and what translator styles do they reveal?

The study holds threefold significance. Theoretically, it supplies a classic textual case for the emerging framework of Eco-translatology, testing its explanatory power in literary translation and offering a reference for applying the theory to other text types. Practically, it demonstrates the multiple legitimate renderings of a single

literary text, yielding parallel strategies for Chinese-to-English prose translation, particularly in the handling of artistic conception, rhetorical devices, and culturally loaded terms. Pedagogically, the comparative analysis can serve as dynamic teaching material in advanced translation courses, cultivating students' critical faculties and deepening their understanding of the complexity of translation.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the existing research on the English translation of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond* and identifies the gap that this study addresses. Section 3 sets out the theoretical framework of Eco-translatology and the three-dimensional transformation, and describes the case study and comparative analysis methods. Section 4 presents a close comparative analysis of the two versions at the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions. Section 5 concludes the study, summarizes its implications, acknowledges its limitations, and proposes directions for future research.

II. Literature Review

Studies of the English translation of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond* abroad remain relatively limited. Yang (2011) analyzed the aesthetic value embedded in Zhu Ziqing's prose and argued that translators should probe the artistic features of the original and recreate them so as to achieve the ultimate goal of prose translation, namely spiritual resemblance. Wang (2023), from a stylistic perspective, compared and appreciated four English versions of the essay, examining issues at the lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical levels, and arguing that stylistic analysis offers a productive means of assessing prose translation. Bai (2023) analyzed the original and Zhu Chunshen's version from the perspective of thematic structure, proposing that translators should carefully select the theme of each clause so as to convey the thematic meaning of the original as fully as possible.

Domestic research is more extensive. Chen (2009) compared the cohesive devices in three English versions from a textual perspective, finding that the appropriate transformation of such devices contributes to the coherence of the target text. Yuan (2018) conducted a comparative analysis of two versions on the basis of Nida's functional equivalence and the "three beauties" principle, offering insights into the guidance that functional equivalence can provide for prose translation. Cui (2022), from the perspective of translation aesthetics, summarized how different translators reproduce the aesthetic elements of the original in the translation process. Studies that specifically apply Eco-translatology to the essay are relatively few. Xie (2015), focusing on Zhu Chunshen's version, argued that the translator successfully transformed objects such as the lotus pond under moonlight into carriers of emotion, thereby achieving an optimal adaptive selection. Lu (2022) examined how the translator balances the source text and the target text through several key relationships of Eco-translatology. Bao (2023), using the three-dimensional transformation as an analytical lens, concluded that Zhu's version not only conveys the original's content accurately but also restores its stylistic features and aesthetic function.

Collectively, these studies display three notable tendencies. First, they are dominated by linguistic and stylistic perspectives, such as cohesion, thematic structure, and translation aesthetics, whereas a holistic theoretical framework is comparatively rare. Second, most analyses concentrate on a single version—most often Zhu Chunshen's—so that a side-by-side comparison of multiple translators remains underrepresented. Third, even where Eco-translatology is invoked, the application tends to be introductory or descriptive rather than grounded in a systematic, passage-level comparison. These gaps point to the need for the present study, which applies the three-dimensional framework in a rigorous and comparative manner.

In sum, few studies have employed Eco-translatology to conduct a systematic, comparative analysis of different translations of the essay. Most existing work either examines a single version or adopts aesthetic or purely linguistic perspectives, and there remains a scarcity of studies that integrate the three-dimensional framework into a side-by-side comparison of translations by different translators. This study addresses this gap by comparing the versions of Yang Xianyi and Zhu Chunshen within the three-dimensional framework, thereby offering a more integrative account of how the two translators' adaptive selections differ and why.

III. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1 Eco-translatology and the Three-Dimensional Transformation

Eco-translatology emerged from a convergence of ecological and translational thinking. As early as 1988, Newmark identified the ecological dimension as one of the principal domains in which culture interacts with translation, drawing attention to the geographical and environmental features embedded in linguistic expressions (Newmark, 1988). Katan (1999) elaborated the notion of the "translational eco-environment," extending it beyond the immediate textual context to encompass physical surroundings, political climates, and the contemporary socio-historical situation. Cronin (2003) explicitly introduced the ecology of translation, calling for a healthy balance among languages in an era of globalization. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990), in their account of the cultural turn, likewise described translation as operating within a cultural environment, thereby foreshadowing the ecological perspective.

Within this intellectual climate, the Chinese scholar Hu Gengshen proposed Eco-translatology in 2001 and has since developed it into a systematic framework (Hu, 2013). Hu conceptualizes translation as “a selection activity of the translator’s adaptation to the translational eco-environment,” a process in which the translator first adapts to the constraints of the environment and then makes selective decisions at the linguistic, cultural, and communicative levels (Hu, 2008). Central to this account are three interrelated notions. The translational eco-environment refers to the interconnected world constituted by the source text, the source language, and the target language, together with the author, the reader, and the client; it is both the object of the translator’s adaptation and the basis for selection. Translator-centeredness foregrounds the leading role of the translator, who must operate within this ecosystem. Adaptation and selection, finally, summarize translation as the production of the version best adapted to its environment (Hu, 2006).

As a research paradigm, Eco-translatology encompasses nine principal research focuses and theoretical perspectives—the ecological paradigm, the sequence chain, ecological rationality, the objective effect of translation, the translational eco-environment, translator-centeredness, adaptation and selection, three-dimensional transformations, and post-event penalty (Hu, 2011). Among these, the three-dimensional transformation serves as the most operational analytical tool, and it is the perspective adopted in the present study.

The linguistic dimension focuses on the adaptive transformation of linguistic forms at the levels of lexicon, syntax, and rhetoric. Rather than translating word for word, the translator must adjust vocabulary, sentence structure, and rhetorical devices to the conventions of the target language. Chinese and English differ markedly in their syntactic tendencies: Chinese prefers prepositive attributives, allowing multiple modifiers to be stacked before a head noun, whereas English favors postpositive attributives and relative clauses; Chinese relies on parataxis and short, balanced clauses, whereas English prefers hypotaxis and the explicit marking of logical relations; and Chinese frequently employs the active voice and non-subject sentences, whereas English favors the passive voice and an obligatory subject. Rendering a text such as *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*, which is rich in reduplicative words, four-character expressions, and paratactic structures, therefore demands continuous linguistic adaptation.

The cultural dimension is concerned with the transmission of the cultural connotations that underlie the language. Translation is a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural activity, and the translator must therefore handle culturally loaded terms with cultural awareness, avoiding the interpretation of the source text from the perspective of the target culture. The core goals at this dimension are balance and compensation: preserving the cultural essence of the source text while ensuring that it remains intelligible and acceptable to the target reader. When a source text contains references to specific cultural practices, social values, or historical contexts with no direct equivalent in the target culture, a literal rendering may be incomprehensible or even misleading. The translator therefore acts as a bridge, re-presenting elements of the source culture in a form that resonates with the target audience—a process Eco-translatology describes as adaptive selection and transformation at the cultural dimension.

The communicative dimension focuses on whether the communicative intent of the source text is realized in the translation. It requires the translator to ensure that not only the linguistic information and cultural nuances but also the author’s intention and the emotional effect are effectively perceived by the target audience. Different text types entail different communicative requirements, so translation strategies should be flexibly adjusted to the nature of the text and its communicative objectives. In *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond*, the author conveys an emotional experience of tranquility, solitude, and a touch of melancholy through delicate scene description and inner monologue; recreating this effect of communicating with the reader in English poses a crucial test of the translator’s adaptive selection at the communicative dimension. The three dimensions are intertwined: the linguistic dimension provides the foundation, the cultural dimension adds depth, and the communicative dimension represents the ultimate goal, and an optimal translation achieves a dynamic equilibrium among them.

The explanatory power of this framework has been demonstrated across a range of text types, including classical poetry (Ding, 2009), film subtitling (Zheng, 2014), culture-loaded terms in science fiction (Sun & Han, 2021), and intangible cultural heritage terminology (Yuan, 2025). The present study extends this line of inquiry to the comparative criticism of prose translation.

A distinctive strength of this framework for comparative purposes is its account of translator divergence. Because the translational eco-environment is not a fixed entity but is constituted differently for each translator—depending on their linguistic competence, cultural background, purpose, and the readership they envision—two translators confronted with the same source text may legitimately produce markedly different versions. Each version can be understood as the outcome of the translator’s adaptation to a particular configuration of ecological factors, followed by selective decisions at the three dimensions. The framework thus avoids the simplistic question of which version is “better,” asking instead how each translator adapts and selects within a distinct environment and with what degree of holistic adaptation and selection the resulting version satisfies its

own ecological conditions. This orientation makes the three-dimensional transformation particularly well suited to the comparative criticism of multiple translations of a single literary work, and it is applied accordingly in the case analysis that follows.

3.2 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study method combined with a comparative analysis. Moonlight over the Lotus Pond is selected as the research case because of its exceptionally strong literariness, which centrally embodies the aesthetic qualities of artistic conception, rhetoric, and language. Its literary distinctiveness is manifested in three interconnected aspects. First, the text abounds in reduplicative words such as “曲曲,” “田田,” and “亭亭,” which create a rhythmic, musical quality that contributes to the lyrical atmosphere. Second, the author favors concise syntax and parataxis, employing short, balanced clauses that rely on implicit logical connections—a hallmark of classical Chinese prose aesthetics. Third, the text is steeped in Chinese cultural imagery, including references to lotus gathering and the Jiangnan region, elements that carry layers of literary and historical significance and thus resist straightforward transfer into English. Collectively, these features render the essay a demanding test case for translation, since they require the translator to navigate complex decisions across the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions simultaneously.

The English versions by Yang Xianyi (co-translated with Gladys Yang) and Zhu Chunshen are adopted as the corpus for three reasons. First, both are authoritative and representative renderings of the essay, enjoying wide scholarly recognition. Second, the two versions exhibit clear strategic contrast: Yang’s translation tends toward conciseness and readability, often employing simplification or domestication, whereas Zhu’s version places greater emphasis on preserving the literary qualities of the original through meticulous attention to syntax, rhetoric, and cultural imagery. Third, this contrast makes the pair an ideal subject for testing the explanatory power of the three-dimensional framework, since the two translators, confronted with the same source text, make markedly different adaptive choices.

The comparative analysis proceeds dimension by dimension. At the linguistic dimension, the comparison focuses on the two translators’ handling of lexis, syntax, and rhetoric, particularly reduplicative words, non-subject sentences, and voice selection. At the cultural dimension, it examines their strategies for rendering culturally loaded terms such as “艳歌,” “妖童媛女,” and “江南,” including literal translation with annotation, free translation, and domesticating substitution. At the communicative dimension, it assesses whether the translations reproduce the original’s emotional tone of tranquility, solitude, and melancholy, and how each translator considers reader reception and expectation. Passages are selected on the basis of their literariness, the translation challenges they pose, and their capacity to reveal differences between the two versions. The English renderings quoted in Section 4 are taken from the published translations of Yang Xianyi (with Gladys Yang) and Zhu Chunshen.

IV. Case Analysis

The following analysis examines representative passages under each of the three dimensions, comparing how Yang Xianyi and Zhu Chunshen make adaptive selections and transformations within their respective translational eco-environments.

4.1 Adaptive Selection and Transformation at the Linguistic Dimension

The essay derives much of its appeal from its musical quality, produced in large part by the reduplicative words and the distinctive syntactic patterns of classical Chinese prose. The following examples illustrate how the two translators respond to these challenges at the linguistic dimension.

Example 1

Original: 虽然月光也还是淡淡的。

Yang’s version: ...though the moonlight was pale.

Zhu’s version: ...although the moonlight is not more than a thin, greyish veil.

For the reduplicative “淡淡的,” Yang renders it directly as “pale,” a word that denotes weak or dim light and conveys the denotative meaning accurately, though it fails to reproduce the phonetic reduplication of the original. Zhu, by contrast, translates it as “a thin, greyish veil,” a nominalization that not only conveys the haziness of the moonlight but also creates a musical effect through the echo of the vowels in “thin” and “veil,” thereby compensating, at least partially, for the loss of the reduplicative rhythm. The two choices illustrate the translators’ contrasting priorities at the linguistic dimension: Yang privileges semantic economy, whereas Zhu privileges the reproduction of the original’s musicality.

Example 2

Original: 这几天心里颇不宁静。

Yang’s version: The last few days have found me very restless.

Zhu’s version: It has been rather disquieting these days.

The original is a typical non-subject sentence, with the implicit subject “I” recoverable from the context. Yang preserves the source structure closely, making “the last few days” the grammatical subject and “me” the object; although structurally faithful, the rendering reads less idiomatically to English readers, and “restless” captures only the superficial agitation without the deeper melancholy of the original. Zhu recasts the sentence in the idiomatic English impersonal construction “It has been rather disquieting these days,” in which the adjective “disquieting” conveys not mere restlessness but a pervasive unease and inner turmoil, precisely echoing the author’s state of mind. Zhu’s choice thus reflects a fuller adaptive transformation at the linguistic dimension, conforming to the syntactic norms of the target language while sharpening the emotional import.

Example 3

Original: 曲曲折折的荷塘上面，弥望的是田田的叶子。

Yang’s version: As far as the eye could see, the pool with its winding margin was covered with trim leaves...

Zhu’s version: All over this winding stretch of water, what meets the eye is a silken field of leaves...

This sentence opens the description of the lotus pond and is densely patterned with reduplicatives “曲曲折折” and “田田,” which create a visual and aural texture. Yang renders “曲曲折折” implicitly through “winding margin” and “田田” as “trim leaves,” producing a concise, visual account in which the phonetic patterning is largely flattened into plain description. Zhu, by contrast, renders the pond as “a silken field of leaves,” introducing the tactile metaphor “silken” to compensate for the loss of the reduplicative texture and to evoke the smooth, luxuriant surface of the leaves, thereby recreating, through different means, the sensory richness of the original. The comparison shows how each translator negotiates the untranslatability of Chinese reduplication at the linguistic dimension.

Example 4

Original: 月光如流水一般，静静地泻在这一片叶子和花上。

Yang’s version: Moonlight cascaded like water over the lotus leaves and flowers...

Zhu’s version: The moon sheds her liquid light silently over the leaves and flowers...

The verb “泻” (to pour or gush) and the simile “如流水” together convey the smooth, continuous flow of moonlight. Yang preserves the simile by rendering “泻” as “cascaded” and making “moonlight” the subject, keeping the image dynamic and verb-centered. Zhu dissolves the simile into the adjective “liquid” and personifies the moon (“The moon sheds her liquid light”), foregrounding the silent, gentle quality of the light through the adverb “silently.” The two renderings reflect different adaptive selections at the linguistic dimension: Yang reproduces the rhetorical figure closely, while Zhu transposes it into a different, more lyric form that suits English idiom.

4.2 Adaptive Selection and Transformation at the Cultural Dimension

Because the original and target readers inhabit different cultural backgrounds, the translator must attend to adaptive transformation at the cultural dimension so that culturally loaded terms remain intelligible without losing their connotation. The essay is rich in classical allusions and culture-specific expressions that pose exactly this challenge.

Example 5

Original: 唱着艳歌去的。

Yang’s version: ...who sang haunting songs...

Zhu’s version: ...singing love songs.

The term “艳歌” refers to a category of classical Chinese poetry characterized by themes of romantic love and an ornate style. Yang renders it as “haunting songs,” where “haunting” denotes something beautiful, sad, and unforgettable; while this conveys the aesthetic quality of “艳,” it obscures the connotation of romantic love. Zhu’s “love songs” is more precise, preserving the cultural connotation of the term while remaining immediately intelligible to target readers. Zhu’s free translation thus achieves a better balance between the source and target texts at the cultural dimension, illustrating how adaptive selection can reconcile fidelity to the source culture with accessibility to the target audience.

Example 6

Original: 于是妖童媛女，荡舟心许。

Yang’s version: Deft boys and pretty girls, / Reach an understanding while boating.

Zhu’s version: So those charming youngsters row their sampans, heart buoyant with tacit love.

This line, quoted from the classical poem “The Lotus Picking Song” (《采莲赋》), depicts the lively scene of lotus gathering in Jiangnan. The classical terms “妖童” (handsome young men), “媛女” (beautiful young women), and “心许” (mutual affection silently acknowledged) are unfamiliar to English readers. Zhu employs free translation, rendering “妖童媛女” as “charming youngsters” and “心许” as “tacit love,” thereby conveying

the cultural connotation while maintaining readability. Yang's "deft boys and pretty girls" likewise conveys the basic sense of the terms, but his rendering of "心许" as "reach an understanding" fails to capture the romantic, mutual affection implied in the original. The comparison shows how the two translators make different adaptive selections in rendering culturally loaded classical allusions, each negotiating the tension between cultural preservation and reader acceptance in a different way.

Example 7

Original: 采莲是江南的旧俗。

Yang's version: This was an old custom south of the Yangtse...

Zhu's version: It used to be celebrated as a folk festival in the South...

The term "江南" (literally "south of the river") denotes the culturally rich lower Yangtze region and carries deep literary and historical associations for Chinese readers. Yang renders it as "south of the Yangtse," preserving the geographic specificity and cultural reference, so that target readers may glimpse the regional identity embedded in the original. Zhu renders it simply as "in the South," which reduces the cognitive burden on English readers but sacrifices the specific cultural connotation of Jiangnan. This contrast epitomizes the two translators' divergent orientations at the cultural dimension: Yang's source-culture-oriented preservation versus Zhu's target-reader-oriented adaptation.

4.3 Adaptive Selection and Transformation at the Communicative Dimension

The communicative dimension concerns whether the target text realizes the communicative intent of the original, so that target readers obtain a reading experience comparable to that of the original readers. The essay conveys a distinctive emotional tone of tranquility, solitude, and melancholy, which the translator must recreate.

Example 8

Original: 但热闹是它们的，我什么也没有。

Yang's version: But this animation was theirs alone, I had no part in it.

Zhu's version: But the liveliness is theirs, I have nothing.

The author first describes the liveliness of the cicadas and frogs, then contrasts it with his own emptiness, creating a stark opposition between the external world's animation and his inner solitude. Yang's free rendering "I had no part in it" emphasizes the author's exclusion from the surrounding bustle, while Zhu's literal "I have nothing" foregrounds the author's inner emptiness. Both versions successfully convey the loneliness, helplessness, and melancholy of the original, though through different communicative strategies: Yang through paraphrase and Zhu through concision. This contrast demonstrates that the same communicative intent can be realized through divergent means, each of which represents a legitimate adaptive selection at the communicative dimension.

Example 9

Original: 我且受用这无边的荷香月色好了。

Yang's version: I could savour to the full that expanse of fragrant lotus and the moonlight.

Zhu's version: For the moment, just let me indulge in this profusion of moonlight and lotus fragrance.

This sentence expresses the author's momentary escape from reality through the enjoyment of the lotus and moonlight—a self-consoling indulgence central to the essay's communicative intent. The particle "且" (for the moment) carries a self-deprecating, resigned tone. Yang renders "受用" as "savour to the full," emphasizing the sensory enjoyment, but does not convey the temporal and resigned nuance of "且." Zhu renders the sentence as "For the moment, just let me indulge," using "for the moment" to capture the transient, self-consoling quality of "且" and "indulge" to convey the self-gratification, thereby more fully recreating the author's resigned yet yearning state of mind at the communicative dimension.

Example 10

Original: 这是一条幽僻的路；白天也少人走，夜晚更加寂寞……路的一旁，是些杨柳，和一些不知道名字的树。

Yang's version: It is off the beaten track and few pass this way even by day, so at night it is still more quiet...with willows and other trees I cannot name by the path.

Zhu's version: It is peaceful and secluded here, a place not frequented by pedestrians even in the daytime; now at night, it looks more solitary...On the side where the path is, there are willows, interlaced with some others whose names I do not know.

Here the author establishes the secluded, tranquil atmosphere that frames the whole essay. Yang reorganizes the short Chinese clauses into longer English sentences and selects precise words such as "off the beaten track" and "quiet" to depict the stillness, enabling readers to sense both the environment and the author's inner sorrow and wandering. Zhu retains the more deliberate pace of the original while choosing emotive words such as "peaceful and secluded" and "solitary," and adds participial modifiers such as "interlaced" to render the imagery more

vivid. Both versions achieve an adaptive transformation at the communicative dimension, though Yang communicates the mood through economy and Zhu through lyrical elaboration.

Taken together, the ten examples reveal a coherent pattern of strategic divergence between the two translators, which is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of the Two Translators' Strategies Across the Three Dimensions

Dimension	Yang Xianyi's Strategy	Zhu Chunshen's Strategy
Linguistic	Faithful to the source structure and diction; concise and economical; reproduces figures closely	Flexible syntactic restructuring; idiomatic; compensates for phonetic features such as reduplication
Cultural	Preserves Chinese cultural images and regional references; source-culture-oriented	Adapts culturally loaded terms for target-reader acceptability; domesticated or simplified
Communicative	Conveys mood through the meticulous replication of scenic detail and economy of expression	Conveys mood through linguistic rhythm, musicality, and lyrical elaboration

4.4 Discussion

The pattern summarized in Table 1 suggests that the two translators operate within distinct translational eco-environments. Yang Xianyi, as a cultural ambassador committed to introducing Chinese literature to the world, tends to privilege fidelity to the source text and the preservation of its cultural specificity. Zhu Chunshen, by contrast, writes with a closer eye to the aesthetic experience of the target reader, treating the translation as a literary work in its own right and striving to recreate the musicality and emotional texture of the original. Neither strategy is inherently superior; each represents a coherent adaptive response to a different set of ecological constraints.

This divergence can be traced to identifiable ecological factors. Yang Xianyi worked in close partnership with his wife Gladys Yang at the Foreign Languages Press, a publishing house whose institutional mission was to introduce Chinese literature to foreign readers; this institutional eco-environment predisposed him toward fidelity to the source text and the preservation of Chinese cultural imagery, so that the translation might serve as a faithful conduit of Chinese culture. Zhu Chunshen, a scholar-translator who later taught translation studies in Britain, approached the text as a literary artifact whose aesthetic value should be recreated in its own right; his eco-environment, shaped by his scholarly engagement with English literary style and by his sense of the target reader's literary expectations, predisposed him toward syntactic flexibility and the pursuit of musicality. The notion of translator-centeredness is thus concretely realized: within the same broad environment, the two translators enact different adaptations, and their selections at the three dimensions follow coherently from these adaptations.

At the same time, the three-dimensional framework illuminates what each version sacrifices in its respective choices. Yang's fidelity to source structure occasionally produces renderings, such as "The last few days have found me very restless," that strike the English reader as slightly stilted, and his preservation of cultural references demands greater interpretive effort from the reader. Zhu's pursuit of idiomatic elegance occasionally blurs cultural specificity, as in his rendering of "江南" simply as "the South." These observations suggest that adaptation and selection always involve a measure of trade-off, and that the notion of "post-event penalty" in Eco-translatology—whereby a translation that fails to integrate all three dimensions smoothly is felt to be deficient—offers a useful criterion for weighing such trade-offs.

V. Conclusion

This study has compared the English versions of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond* by Yang Xianyi and Zhu Chunshen within the framework of Eco-translatology's three-dimensional transformation. At the linguistic dimension, Yang's version tends toward fidelity to the source text's structure and diction, whereas Zhu's version exhibits greater flexibility in syntactic restructuring and lexical choice. At the cultural dimension, Yang tends to preserve Chinese cultural images, while Zhu prioritizes target-reader acceptability. At the communicative dimension, both succeed in conveying the essay's serene and contemplative mood, yet through different means: Yang through the meticulous replication of scenic detail, and Zhu through linguistic rhythm and musicality. The two versions are therefore not superior or inferior in an absolute sense; rather, they are the products of the translators' adaptive selections within distinct translational eco-environments—Yang's an environment valuing cultural fidelity, and Zhu's one prioritizing reader reception and literary aesthetics.

The study validates the applicability of Eco-translatology, and particularly the three-dimensional framework, to the criticism of prose translation, demonstrating that translation is not a mere linguistic transcoding but a complex activity involving multidimensional adaptation. It also offers practical guidance for literary translators, highlighting the importance of balancing linguistic accuracy, cultural transmission, and communicative effect.

The study is not without limitations. The analysis of specific examples inevitably involves a degree of subjective interpretation, and the focus on a single essay means that the findings may not be fully generalizable. Moreover, the three-dimensional framework, while powerful, is not exhaustive; other dimensions, such as the aesthetic, warrant further attention. Future research could expand the corpus to include other prose works by the same translators, incorporate empirical data on target-reader reception, and trace how the translational eco-environment has evolved over time.

In practical terms, the study suggests that the translator of lyrical Chinese prose should first identify the predominant dimension of a given passage—linguistic, cultural, or communicative—and then allocate attention accordingly, always with a view to the whole. The contrasting success of Yang and Zhu, each in his own register, further reminds us that there is no single correct way to translate a literary classic; rather, the vitality of a classic lies precisely in its capacity to generate multiple faithful renderings, each of which illuminates a different facet of the original.

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