

# Imagery Actualization in English Translation of Chinese Classical Prose from the Perspective of Gestalt Theory

-- A Case Study of the English-Version the Peach Colony by Lin Yutang and The Peach Blossom Spring by James Robert Hightower

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**Abstract.** As a vital means to promote Chinese traditional culture overseas, translation of classics is an integral medium to get more say in the dissemination of Chinese culture internationally. With Chinese classical prose loose in forms but condensed in meanings, its translation is a combination of science and artistry. Gestalt theory has the interdisciplinary nature of translation aesthetics and psychology, which has methodological significance for guiding the overall translation of Chinese classical prose. Attempting to apply the principles of continuity, heterogeneous isomorphism, and closure of Gestalt theory as well as the Gestalt imagery actualization theory proposed by Jiang Qiuxia, this paper analyzes the Gestalt imagery actualization in Taohuayuan Ji and the translators' psychological mechanism in this process by using the "top-down" and "bottom-up" research methods, so as to promote the scientific and standardized application of Gestalt theory in English translation of Chinese classical prose.

**Keywords:** English Translation of Chinese Classical Prose; Gestalt Theory; Gestalt Imagery Actualization; Taohuayuan Ji.

## 1. Introduction

China has time-honored prose writing, which can be traced back to the Shang Dynasty in the pre-Qin period. As a means of public diplomacy with information and cultural exchange as its core, foreign translation is the most critical approach to enhancing the say in the international community and building a national image (Huang, 2022). All the Chinese magnificent and rich prose works in past dynasties embody and develop the in-depth spiritual pursuit of an excellent traditional culture characterized by "literature is the vehicle of ideas" and the advocacy of truth, goodness, and beauty. Therefore, more attention has been paid to the English translation of Chinese classical prose. In China, Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidie translated *Poetry and Prose of the Tang and Song*; Luo Jingguo translated *Gems of Classical Chinese Prose*, etc. In the foreign world, Pollard, D.E. translated *The Chinese Essay*; Giles, H.A. translated *Gems of Chinese Literature*, etc. However, compared with Chinese classical poetry, novels, and other literary genres, there are few interdisciplinary discussions on the English translation of Chinese classical prose, with less comprehensive research path and dimension (Wang & Gao, 2022).

In addition to ontological poetics and aesthetics, the imagery also belongs to psychology. It not only refers to the graphic beauty of text symbols in works, but also to the picture scenes where the language of works stimulates readers' imaginations (Wang, 2017). Imagery in Chinese literature mainly refers to those in poetry and prose. Compared with poetry, prose incorporates the author's life experience and perception in scenery depiction, in which imagery contains profound poetic philosophy. As a Chinese classical prose, *Taohuayuan Ji* is widely read by Chinese culture lovers at home and abroad. Tao Yuanming, the author, constructs imageries or imagery groups such as "peach blossom wonderland", "chicken crowing", "dog barking", and "pastoral paradise" by the fragmented narrative of combining illusion and reality with rhetorical techniques including antithesis, plain line drawing,

and synecdoche. Such imageries run through the whole prose context and form a language picture full of poetic wisdom, containing the seclusion feelings of pursuing simplicity and nature. Therefore, imageries in literary works are not limited to language and structure, but the integration of text elements and psychologically aesthetic experience. As Lin Yutang stressed in his *On Translation* published in 1932, the translation should be based on the analysis of linguistic psychology (Luo & Chen, 2009). With the interdisciplinary nature of translation aesthetics and psychology, Gestalt theory emphasizes that the overall imagery of literary works, namely the Gestalt imagery (hereinafter referred to as image-G), is not a simple addition of linguistic meaning, but a high integration of sound, speech, imagery, meaning, and its structure. The aesthetic components of image-G include “contour” and “mood”, the former means the atmosphere created by the article, while the latter means the feelings incorporated by the author (Meng & Feng, 2005). In fact, image-G actualization refers to presenting emotional beauty, verve beauty, painting beauty, implicit beauty, and philosophical beauty from the artistic conception of the original text to the targeted text after the translator constructs an abstract object gestalt in his mind.

Lin Yutang, who is a famous contemporary Chinese writer, litterateur, and translator, believed Tao Yuanming was the most harmonious and perfect figure in the whole Chinese literary tradition, so he hoped to spread its aesthetic value by translating *Taohuayuan Ji*. James Robert Hightower, a renowned American sinologist, listed Tao Yuanming as the second greatest poet in ancient China after Qu Yuan, holding an understanding and sympathy towards Tao Yuanming’s official career and retirement. Hence, taking the English version *The Peach Colony* by Lin Yutang and *The Peach Blossom Spring* by James Robert Hightower as an example, this thesis analyzes the realization of “top-down” and “bottom-up” image-G actualization, so as to explore the guiding role of Gestalt theory in English translation of Chinese classical prose and broaden its research path.

## 2. Development Overview of Gestalt Theory in Literary Translation

Gestalt theory originated from a modern psychology school in Germany in the early 20th century, that is, Gestalt psychology. Its core idea is “the whole is greater than the sum of parts”, which proposes that the imagery of objects is a complete and organized cognitive experience caused by the interaction between sensory information and the brain force field (Wang, Pan & Gao, 2009). In 1988, Snell-Hornby (1988) put forward a comprehensive approach to translation studies based on the German functionalist translation theory and the continuity principle of Gestalt psychology. In other words, the linguistic analysis of texts should be carried out by integrating the top-down conceptual-driven mechanism and bottom-up data-driven mechanism, thus affirming the guiding role of Gestalt theory in translation and translation aesthetics. The top-down conceptual-driven mechanism means that the translator grasps the text meaning as a whole and initially extracts the image-G structure presented by the text according to the text information, in combination with the specific cognitive experience and the understanding of the social, historical, and cultural background behind the text. The bottom-up data-driven mechanism means that the translator grasps the logical development of image-G at different levels under the overall consideration of image-G to realize the intensive scrutiny of the translated words. Thus, as for language and translation, Gestalt theory has some agreement with the macro-structure theory in Western discourse semantic research and the “harmony-promoting translation” advocated by Chinese scholars (Yang & Li, 2018). With the increasingly close academic exchanges between the East and the West, Gestalt theory has been introduced into Chinese translation where Dr. Jiang Qiuxia has a great influence. She reinterpreted and defined the image-G in the literary translation and proposed image-G as a common feature in literary works, which is formed by the organic integration of various imagery blocks or imagery groups. Based on the principle of closure, Jiang Qiuxia proposed a model of image-G actualization in literary translation. Firstly, the original text should be understood to form an overall schema with linguistic meaning and artistic imagery in the brain, that is, the psychological realization of image-G. Secondly, this schema should be reconstructed with the target language, that is, the reproduction of the original meaning and artistic conception (Jiang, 1999).

In literary translation, Gestalt theory has three main principles, including continuity, heterogeneous isomorphism, and closure. The principle of continuity emphasizes that the beauty of artistic conception in literary works is not the simple addition and piling of the imageries represented by words, phrases, and sentences in the article, but the emotion, atmosphere, and tone conveyed by the original text as a relatively independent whole. The principle of heterogeneous isomorphism means that the translator's inner emotion, perception of language information, and artistic form of the source text are consistent with the authors. In this circumstance, the image-G in the source text may be perfectly constructed in the target text, thus arousing the aesthetic experience and pleasure of the target readers. The principle of closure pays attention to the inferential tendency of human psychology, that is, to make a disjointed and gapped figure psychologically close as much as possible (Koffka, 2013). Based on the principle of closure, the translator has two ways to enable image-G in the target text to be gestalt. One is to supplement the tangible carriers such as words, phrases, sentences, and texts from the original text to the targeted text for complete meanings. The other is to creatively leave blank for the expression of Chinese cultural connotations and the actualization of imagery, allowing readers ample room for imagination.

With the development of translation aesthetics in China, research on the translation of Chinese literary works using Gestalt theory has emerged. In the poetry translation, taking the English translation of *Night-Mooring by the Maple Bridge* as an example, Jiang and Xu (2010) divided the image-G in ancient poetry into "higher-level ones" and "lower-level ones", and analyzed how the principle of continuity affects the translation of the ancient poetry imageries. Taking the English translation of *On the Frontier-Chapter One* as an example, Guo and Gao (2020) discussed the enlightenment of Gestalt principles including graphics and background, heterogeneous isomorphism, and closure to the English translation of frontier poems. As for the drama translation, Chen and Li (2008) put forward the process of image-G actualization in drama translation according to image-G actualization theory, so as to solve the long-standing problems in the drama translation, such as the performance unsuitability of the translated drama and the audience inability to accept its aesthetic interest. As for the novel translation, Leng (2017) who compared two Chinese versions of *Million Pound Note* based on the principles of Gestalt theory found that the translated versions following the principles of Gestalt theory express richer thoughts and emotions with more vivid and full characters, which affirms the positive influence of Gestalt theory on the novel translation.

According to the literature review, despite of broad translation studies based on Gestalt theory, few studies are on prose translation. Although many scholars are aware of the importance of imagery integrity, when applying Gestalt theory to specific text analysis, they basically use a Gestalt principle to analyze a language detail, ignoring the interactive relationship between individual imagery and overall imagery. Therefore, the author holds that this method itself violates the continuity principle of Gestalt theory. In addition, the above studies overlook the translator's psychological mechanism in the image-G actualization. Although people's psychological activities are implemented in the "black box" with complexity, we can analyze the translator's deep-thinking consciousness from the linguistic representation in the targeted text. Language depends on and reflects thinking. The translator's psychological mechanism not only reflects the cognition of the author's writing intention, but also determines the readers' aesthetic perspective and aesthetic experience.

### **3. Imagery Actualization in English Translation of Taoyuanming Ji from the Perspective of Gestalt Theory**

#### **3.1. Top-Down Image-G Actualization at the Discourse Level**

Tao Yuanming, a poet in the Eastern Jin Dynasty of China, is known as "the sect of reclusive poets in ancient and modern times". *Taohuayuan Ji* was written by him after retiring to the countryside in his later years, which describes the story of a Wuling fisherman who accidentally discovered and traveled to a peach blossom wonderland (Taohuayuan), depicting a beautiful society without war, exploitation, and oppression but equality for all and self-sufficiency. It can be said that *Taohuayuan*

*Ji* is the artistic epitome of his retreat experience (Zhang, 2003). In his youth, Tao Yuanming had the ambition of “helping and saving the people at his best”, but the environment at that time failed his ambition. Inheriting the gentry system, the Eastern Jin Dynasty where the officialdom competed for fraud with heavy tax and corvee tortured people. In this society, Confucianism lost its orthodox dominance and Daoism rose, “nature” and life consciousness returned, and literati began to cherish the simple nature of pre-civilized society with the primitive warmth and peace of life. In *Taohuayuan Ji*, the prototypes of imageries such as “valley”, “boat”, and “cave” are all “wombs of the earth” (Hong, 2005). Xiao and Ye (1994) argued that “valleys (especially those with water) often represent women or their sexual organs”. In addition, “fish” and “peach blossom” are also metaphors for women (Ye, 2005), so the Wuling fisherman can be regarded as unconscious reappearances of returning to their mother from the cave to Taohuayuan. Feeling the pleasure of living with the working people and the beauty of labor in his long-term pastoral life practice, Tao Yuanming especially hoped that there would be a paradise to help working people save their lives in troubled times as well as seek peace, warmth, and innocence like human beings in the maternal body, leading a stable and leisurely life. Thus, the higher-level image-G in *Taohuayuan Ji* is “pastoral utopia”, which is characterized by the illusion-reality coexistence. As for its “reality”, no immortals, gold treasures, and secrets of immortality can be seen there, but a pure and simple place with fertile farmland, mulberry, bamboo forests, old people, and children. As for its “illusion”, it is only an ideal society for Tao Yuanming, which cannot be realized in the Eastern Jin Dynasty with frequent wars. Hence, when recreating the imagery of “pastoral utopia”, the top-down translation mode should be first adopted by translators to initially extract the image-G structure of *Taohuayuan Ji*. Besides, translators should not only focus on translating the realistic story details, but also on creating the hazy and romantic beauty of artistic conception to convey Tao Yuanming’s unique philosophy of seclusion.

### 3.2. Bottom-Up Image-G Actualization at the Semantic Level

Symbols and metaphors are the core of the imagery that contains the author’s emotional and psychological state as well as their expressions (Wang, 2013). The image-G in *Taohuayuan Ji* features the aesthetic style that has “meanings captured in imageries” and “imageries hidden in meanings”. The transformation of image-G includes the effective transmission of aesthetic experience, the transformation and reproduction of aesthetic factors. The aesthetic constituents involved in the aesthetic object (original text) can be divided into over aesthetic essential factors and covert aesthetic essential factors. Over aesthetic essential factors refer to the formal language beauty of the original text, including words, syntax, and rhetorical structure. Covert aesthetic essential factors refer to the verve, character, vigour, and sentiment of articles, which are immaterial in form and non-intuitive, instead of being directly related to language forms (Liu, 2005). Therefore, when translating *Taohuayuan Ji*, translators should understand the core characteristics of covert aesthetic essential factors such as artistic conception, emotion, and cultural implication under the overall consideration of image-G, and then grasp the interactive relationship between individual imageries and grouping imageries formed by over aesthetic essential factors such as title, four-word phrases, verbs, and style, so as to integrate and optimize the “meanings” and “imageries” in the text in terms of “quality” and “beauty”.

#### 3.2.1. Title Translation

##### (1) 桃花源记

Translated by Lin: The Peach Colony

Translated by Hightower: The Peach Blossom Spring

After the violent turbulence in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, China’s feudal society became calmer during the Han Dynasty. However, in the Wei and Jin Dynasties, war broke out again, the government was corrupt, and the people were even more miserable. Faced with such a cruel social reality, some people with more progressive ideas regarded monarchy as the root of this disaster and hoped that society would regress to the early stage of slave society or even earlier

(Zhang, 1993). This thought echoes Tao Yuanming's "consciousness of returning to the maternal body". In Western literature, Washington Irving, the father of American literature, satirized in his short story *Rip Van Winkle* that the bourgeois revolution at that time did not bring essential free development to poor peasants. Besides, he also expressed his nostalgia for the pastoral life before the outbreak of the American Civil War. Taohuayuan Ji (桃花源记), as the title of the article, is an important carrier to summarize its content and imply the theme of the full text, which will greatly affect the image-G of the target readers at the higher level. "The Peach Colony" translated by Lin Yutang borrows the narrative background of *Rip Van Winkle* in the American countryside during the Dutch colonial period. As for the principle of closure, Lin Yutang realized that "pastoral utopia" as the higher-level image-G with Chinese historical and cultural characteristics is difficult to gestalt in the mind of the target readers due to cultural heterogeneity, so he chose creative treason on the title to help target readers understand the profound meaning behind the article. As a translator non-native to Chinese culture, Hightower found it hard to grasp the cultural connotation beyond the language structure, and the schema constructed in his mind is relatively incomplete. Hence, "The Peach Blossom Spring" is completely equivalent to the original title in form, but it lacks the gestalt quality that the whole is higher than the sum of parts.

(2) 乃不知有汉，无论魏晋。

Translated by Lin: They had not even heard of the Han Dynasty (two centuries before to two centuries after Christ), not to speak of the Wei (third century A.D.) and the Chin (third and fourth centuries).

Translated by Hightower: ... for they had never heard of the Han, let alone the Wei and the Jin.

In *Taohuayuan Ji*, Tao Yuanming specifically used precise time and real characters in this fictional story, which played a key role in shaping the beauty of artistic conception featuring both truth and illusion. When translating proper nouns of Chinese dynasties, Lin Yutang adopted literal translation and Christian chronology. On the one hand, based on the principle of continuity, Lin Yutang realized the importance of gestalt quality formed by over aesthetic essential factors such as "Han", "Wei and Jin Dynasties", etc. to the actualization of the higher-level image-G "pastoral utopia" for target readers. On the other hand, under the historical background of "Western cultural centralism", Lin Yutang vigorously advocated the cultural view of the "Westward spread of Eastern learning" and the translation view of the "deliverism". Therefore, from the perspective of the principle of closure, this translation method can avoid the gap in Chinese cultural output to the greatest extent, and bring aesthetic enjoyment of "alternating in the world" to the target readers. As an internationally recognized expert in Chinese literature, Hightower knows a lot about Chinese chronology. However, as a sincere lover of Tao Yuanming's poems, Hightower reproduced Tao Yuanming's prose precisely and faithfully. Hence, he adopted literal translation, which ensured the fluency of the translation to a certain extent, while he did not consider readers' acceptability of such culture-loaded words, which may cause obstacles to their image-G configuration.

### 3.2.2. Four-Word Phrases and Implantation of Cultural Meanings

(3) 芳草鲜美，落英缤纷。

Translated by Lin: While the beautifully green ground was covered with its rose petals.

Translated by Hightower: The wild flowers growing under them were fresh and loved, and fallen petals covered the ground.

Just two four-word phrases in the original text show the picturesque beauty of the peach blossom forest. The peach is a vital spiritual symbol in ancient Chinese cultural system. First of all, the peach tree is one of the most important living materials of the ancients, which promoted the emergence of "peach worship" as a cultural phenomenon in ancient China (Pan, 2000). *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, a collection of myths and legends from the Warring States Period, contains the story of "Kuaifu Capturing the Sun" that Kuaifu died of thirst on the way to capture the sun. Before he died, he cared for his people and threw out his wooden staff, which turned the place where it landed into a peach

forest, so as to quench thirst and provide the coolness for people in the past. Thus, the cultural imagery of peach is “deified” (Luo, 1989). Besides, the peach blossom is the creation of spring, symbolizing spiritual health and ethnic reproduction. As a reader interested in *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, Tao Yuanming used a peach forest to construct a quiet and tranquil spiritual resting place in *Taohuayuan Ji*, which sketched the concrete figure of Kuafu who pursues human ideals and is willing to give up his life, expecting a return to nature and a happy human life. In the original text, “luo ying” (落英) refers to falling peach blossoms that symbolize the peach forest changed from Kuafu’s wooden staff, which is the object of Tao Yuanming’s lyricism and ambition. Zhu Guangqian, the founder of modern Chinese aesthetics, pointed out in *On Translation* that such a “peach” as cultural imagery has unique functions in building an “emotional atmosphere” (Zhu, 2019).

Based on the understanding and cognition of the full text, Lin Yutang felt the beauty of artistic conception formed by combining the imagery of “luo ying” and the author’s emotion. In addition, an image-G in his mind has been formed for the language information of the original sentence and the beauty of artistic conception displayed as a whole. Meanwhile, “luo ying” is translated into “rose petals” to actualize this schema. On the one hand, the word “rose” generally refers to rose plants, including peach blossoms and roses, which is a pun. In Western culture, the red rose has become the king of flowers through historical changes, which symbolizes the Virgin Mary and even points to Jesus himself with some sublimity and seriousness (Jiang, 2015). On the other hand, for Westerners who pay attention to external form and emotional publicity in aesthetics, red is a positive color, which can produce a vital and enterprising attitude (Wang, 2006). According to the principles of heterogeneous isomorphism and closure, Lin Yutang’s translation not only fits Tao Yuanming’s emotional expression to the greatest extent, but also reasonably enriches the existing cultural schema for target readers and avoids the loss of symbolic meaning of image-G in the target text. Hightower literally translating it as “fallen petals” helps the target readers to get the dynamic picture of falling flowers implied in the original text. However, due to the cultural heterogeneity, Hightower is unable to empathize with “luo ying”, therefore, his translation lacks the cultural implication, which hinders the image-G of his target readers from being configured. From the perspective of the principle of continuity, Lin Yutang did not mechanically translate the original text word by word, but converted two four-word phrases into a short passive sentence, which drew the attention of the target readers to the ground, highlighted the beautiful scene of red peach blossoms in the green fields, and preserved the coherence of the overall meaning. However, Hightower was disturbed by individual imageries in the four-word phrases and triggered deviations in the understanding. With mistakes in the psychological actualization of image-G, “fang cao” (芳草) is translated into “wild flowers”, which leads to the deformation of image-G in the translation.

#### (4) 阡陌交通，鸡犬相闻。

Translated by Lin: Farmers were working and dogs and chickens were running about.

Translated by Hightower: ... and cross-cross paths skirted the fields. The sounds of cocks cropping and dogs barking could be heard from one court to the next.

These phrases in the original text mean that the paths in fields extend in all directions, and chickens’ crowing and dogs’ barking in every household can be heard from each other. By depicting the harmony between people and man-nature unity, this sentence creates a plain and harmonious aesthetic conception for the full text, which embodies Tao Yuanming’s seclusion thought of pursuing “harmony between man and nature”. This cultural psychological structure about pursuing spiritual destination and natural purity is also connected with Western nations. Thoreau, an American writer in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, vividly described the natural landscape, vegetation, birds, animals, insects, and fish in detail in his famous prose *Walden Lake*, which expressed the lifestyle of pursuing simplicity, thrift, and closeness to nature, leaving an immeasurable influence on American citizens’ character (Wang, 2008). From the perspective of the principles of continuity and heterogeneous isomorphism, Lin Yutang paid close attention to the beauty of the four-word concise form in his translation, instead of implanting his empathy from the source language into the target language.

Firstly, he did not translate “qian mo jiao tong” (阡陌交通), which weakened the beauty of quiet and harmonious artistic conception. Secondly, his simple paraphrase of “dogs and chickens were running about” implies the philosophy of harmonious coexistence between man and nature to a certain extent, but it still brings obstacles to the target readers’ interpretation of the cultural connotations. Through aesthetic imitation of the original text, Hightower actively attuned to Tao Yuanming’s life experience and emotional stance, activated the existing cultural schema in the minds of the translated readers, so that the target readers have roughly the same aesthetic experience as the source readers. On the one hand, according to his perception and experience, Hightower matched the similar cultural schema in his mind and accurately translated “criss-cross paths skirted the fields”, which reproduced an orderly, stable, and harmonious life picture. On the other hand, based on his understanding of the original text, Hightower realized that “ji quan xiang wen” (鸡犬相闻) is an ideational passive sentence. Hence, he unshackled the language structure of the original sentence and transformed the active voice verb “smell” into the passive voice “be heard”, manifesting the existence of “man” and cleverly implanting Tao Yuanming’s seclusion thought of “man-nature harmony”. At the same time, under the overall consideration of image-G, he held that hearing chickens’ crowing and dogs’ barking is a positive element to show neighborhood friendship, thus adding “from one court to the next” to realize the “fusion of horizons” between the target text and the source text.

### 3.2.3. Verbs and Reproduction of Artistic Conception

(5) 便舍船，从口入。

Translated by Lin: He tied up his boat and decided to go in and explore

Translated by Hightower: The fisherman left his boat and entered the cave.

(6) 既出，得其船，便扶向路，处处志之。

Translated by Lin: The man found his boat and came back, marking with signs the route he had followed.

Translated by Hightower: After the fisherman had gone out and recovered his boat, he carefully marked the route.

The higher image-G of *Taohuayuan Ji* is an “idyllic utopia” with Chinese cultural characteristics, which features the unity of illusion and reality, enabling the beauty of artistic conception for the whole text. The discovery and disappearance of Taohuayuan increased the mystery. Historical information such as time, place, characters, and detailed descriptions are the necessary elements to enhance the documentary sense of the full text. Meanwhile, China’s imagery is a ‘mental image’ that is intertwined with the heart and soul instead of the sight; while in the West, the imagery tends to be scenic and figurative, which is a ‘visual image’ (Gao, 2008). Therefore, when translating sentences with detailed descriptions, translators should start from the continuity of image-G, consider the translation methods of verbs, and enrich the “sense of reality” of artistic conception, so as to manifest image-G in the target text. As a key detail description in the prose, “bian she chuan, cong kou ru” (便舍船，从口入) is the premise for the fisherman to enter the pastoral utopia, which is in line with the plot of “ji chu, de qi chuan, bian fu xiang lu, chu chu zhi zhi” (既出，得其船，便扶向路，处处志之). From the perspective of the principles of continuity and closure, Lin Yutang realized that the information coding of “she” (舍) and “de” (得) as two aesthetic essential factors played an important role in the higher-level image-G in the translation. According to the visual psychology and association ability of target readers, he connected the two plot fragments logically and rhythmically through montage. On the one hand, he paraphrased “she” as “tied up”, which turns the instantaneous action imagery of “She Chuan” (舍船) into a dynamic picture of the fisherman fixed with a rope after landing, thereby increasing the authenticity of protagonist’s social identity as a “fisherman”. On the other hand, he put the verb “de” in front, which narrows the distance between the two plot fragments, so that the target readers can understand the development of the story more accurately, and then immerse themselves in the fisherman’s trip to the Taohuayuan. Under the principle of closure,

Hightower realized that the translation of the verb “zhi” (志) made a difference in the higher-level image-G in the translation, so he translated it as “carefully marked”, which reproduces the picture of the fisherman marking everywhere and keeping the marked scenery firmly in mind, enriching the “real feeling” of the artistic conception of the full text. However, Hightower failed to grasp the continuous meaning among the over aesthetic essential factors from the overall aspect, which may separate the fragmentation of imagery groups in the target text, thus hindering the image-G configuration of target readers.

### 3.2.4. Style and Expression of Emotions

(7) 此中人语云：“不足为外人道也。”

Translated by Lin: The villagers begged him not to tell the people outside about their colony.

Translated by Hightower: ... the people said, “There’s no need to mention our existence to outsiders.”

In most Chinese classical novels, outsiders who break into wonderland must pay a price if they want to return to reality. For example, the protagonists of *Hidden and Visible Realms-Liu Ruan Coming Across a Fairy* and *Tales of Strange Matters-Watch Chess Till the Ax Rotten* find that their time has passed after returning from wonderland, and their relatives and houses are gone. However, in *Taohuayuan Ji*, the fisherman is only advised not to tell others about their existence. On the one hand, the innocent and kind people there with their attachment to the existing quiet life and fear of war can be manifested. On the other hand, it shows that people in Taohuayuan are not omnipotent immortals, which adds the beauty of artistic conception to the text and triggers readers to dialectically distinguish between reality and illusion. In addition, Tao Yuanming, the author, expressed his indifference to officialdom and desire for a simple and tranquil pastoral life through people in Taohuayuan. From the perspective of the principles of heterogeneous isomorphism and closure, realizing the inner emotion of the Tao Yuanming and filling the vague meaning of “bu zu” (不足) in a creative manner, Lin Yutang translated it into “begged” and reshaped the structure of the original sentence by using indirect speech, which focused on depicting the kindness and humility of people there and the fear that the quiet life of small countries with few citizens would be broken by outsiders, thus promoting the image-G in the translation. However, Hightower did not consider the overall metaphorical prose meaning before translation, so he failed to grasp the logical meaning contained in the source text and mistranslated it as “no need”.

(8) 南阳刘子骥，高尚士也，闻之，欣然规往，未果，寻病终。后遂无问津者。

Translated by Lin: Liu Tseci of Nanyang was a great idealist. He heard of this story, and planned to go and find it, but was taken ill and died before he could fulfill his wish. Since then, no one has gone in search of this place.

Translated by Hightower: A high-minded gentleman of Nan-yang named LiuTzu-chi heard the story and happily made preparations to go there, but before he could leave he fell sick and died. Since then there has been no one interested in trying to find such a place.

At the end of *Taohuayuan Ji*, from the perspective of third-person narration, the events of future generations looking for Taohuayuan are stated in a few words in an outsider’s tone, which does not contain any emotions without a trace of deliberation but a strong sense of documentary. In addition, Liu Tzu-chi, the character in the ending story, is a real person with historical records. His love of collecting herbs in the mountains is recorded in *A New Account of the Tales of the World, Book of Jin*, and *Postscript of In Search of the Supernatural*, which increases the logical authenticity and credibility of his search for Taohuayuan. In addition, the meaning of “wei guo, xun bing zhong” (未果，寻病终) is very vague, which does not explain whether Liu Tzu-chi went to find it or not, nor whether his death is related to finding Taohuayuan, further enhancing the mystery. From the perspective of the principle of continuity, Lin Yutang grasped the overall image-G structure. His translation does not contain emotional words such as “happily” and “interested” like Hightower, so his style is more documentary than Hightower's. As for the principles of closure and heterogeneous

isomorphism, Lin's translation is closer to Tao Yuanming's position. In his translation, Lin Yutang retained the ambiguity of the meaning, which leaves readers room for imagination.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper, the Gestalt theory is used as the research paradigm to study the English translation of classical Chinese prose, which is a brand-new perspective. First of all, the thesis explores the translator's image-G actualization by using "top-down" and "bottom-up" research methods, which grasps the deep cultural connotation in *Taohuayuan Ji* and the interaction of image-G at different levels, solving the one-sided problem that the existing related studies only focus on textual and linguistic details. Secondly, by analyzing the translator's psychological mechanism in the imagery actualization, this paper finds that the principles of continuity, heterogeneous isomorphism, and closure of Gestalt theory as well as the image-G actualization theory proposed by Jiang Qiuxia provide a vital thinking framework for translating Chinese classical prose, such as word meaning selection, cohesion, and coherence between texts and effective transmission of the aesthetic experience of the original text. However, this paper also figures out that the Gestalt theory is limited in its application to non-native translators, because it cannot solve the obstacles of discourse comprehension caused by cultural heterogeneity. In addition, some shortcomings still exist in this study. First of all, Gestalt theory belongs to the category of psychology, involving abundant professional knowledge. Because of the limited specialty in psychology, the author does not have enough in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the theory. Secondly, due to the limitation of time and space, the author's perception of two translators' life experiences and translation ideas may not be in place, and the application of Gestalt theory to the analysis of imagery actualization is subjective, so there will be some misunderstandings and biases in the evaluation of translations. Thirdly, considering the typical factors, the author only chooses *Taohuayuan Ji* as the research object. Nevertheless, Chinese classical prose is extensive and profound, so more Chinese classical prose can be included in future research to promote the scientific research of English translation of Chinese classical prose. In a word, the Gestalt theory enables a solid theoretical basis for the study of imagery actualization in the English translation of Chinese classical prose, which can scientifically guide the relevant translation practice. Besides, its limitations deserve more attention and consideration from researchers.

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