

# A Study of the Preface and Translation Criticism of *Written on the Edge of Life* from the Perspective of Receptive Aesthetics

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**Abstract:** *Qian Zhongshu published the essay collection *Written on the Edge of Life* in 1941, a work widely recognized as a model of scholarly essay writing. The preface, though brief, contains profound philosophical insights and stands as one of the classic prefaces in Chinese literature. In 2003, Zheng Yali published the first complete translation of *Written on the Edge of Life* by a Chinese translator. Guided by Receptive Aesthetics, this paper interprets Qian Zhongshu's preface and analyzes Zheng Yali's translation through a comparative study of the source and target texts. It offers critical insights to serve as a reference for the translation of scholarly essays. Zheng Yali's translation is generally faithful; however, due to the translator's limited understanding of certain words and phrases and the failure to integrate anticipatory horizons, some mistranslations occur. When translating scholarly essays with strong academic content, translators should reconstruct the author's style, reproduce the tone through careful wording, and respond flexibly to the author's stance. Considerations should also be given to readers' anticipatory horizons, aesthetic needs, and cultural habits.*

**Keywords:** *Written on the Edge of Life*, Qian Zhongshu, Zheng Yali, Receptive Aesthetics, Translation.

## 1. Introduction

As one of the most distinguished Chinese scholars and essayists of the 20th century, Qian Zhongshu (钱钟书) published his essay collection *Written on the Edge of Life* (“写在人生边上”) in 1941, a work that has become a cornerstone of Chinese scholarly essays, celebrated for its intellectual rigor and literary elegance. This collection comprises ten essays, marked by witty prose, unique perspectives, and extensive literary and philosophical references. The work is particularly renowned for its satirical wit and intellectual depth, which challenge conventional thinking and offer profound insights into human nature. Scholars have widely acknowledged the significance of this work. Sima Changfeng (1978), for instance, describes it as a seminal contribution that expands the possibilities of the essay genre through its unique style. Similarly, Ke Ling (1990) highlights the refreshing quality of *Written on the Edge of Life*, attributing it to Qian Zhongshu's lively, profound, and incisive thinking—ranging from imaginative and free-spirited to penetrating and sharp.

In 2003, Chinese scholar Zheng Yali (郑雅丽) published a bilingual edition of translation of *Written on the Edge of Life* by the Joint Publishing, a prestigious academic press in China. This translation, titled *The Marginalia of Life* holds particular significance as the only complete version produced by a native Chinese scholar, offering a unique perspective on Qian Zhongshu's work and thus serving as a valuable subject for further study. Despite its publication over two decades ago, Zheng's translation has garnered limited scholarly attention and has yet to be the subject of critical reviews. This lack of engagement may be attributed to the challenges of translating Qian Zhongshu's complex prose and the limited application of theoretical frameworks in evaluating such translations. This paper analyzes the quality of Zheng Yali's translation *The Marginalia of Life* through the lens of Receptive Aesthetics, offering constructive criticism and proposing strategies to enhance the translation of scholarly essays, with the aim of providing insights for future translation of

scholarly essays.

## 2. Receptive Aesthetics and Its Implications for Translation

Receptive aesthetics theory, pioneered by Hans Robert Jauss in 1967, centers on the dynamic relationship between literary texts and their readers, emphasizing the role of readers in constructing meaning (Ren, 2022). This theory laid the foundation for reader-response criticism, shifting the focus from authorial intent to the interpretive act of reading (Zhou & Dai, 2011). According to Jauss (2005), readers bring their own “horizon of expectations”—shaped by historical, social, and cultural contexts—to the act of reading. As a result, the meaning of a literary work emerges through an interactive process between the text and the reader, rather than being fixed by the author's original intent.

The value of a literary work is continually redefined through readers' interpretations across different historical periods. Jauss highlights that readers' horizons of expectations are shaped by their unique historical, social, and cultural contexts, leading to diverse interpretations of the same text. This dynamic process underscores the concept of “aesthetic distance”, which reflects the evolving relationship between a text and its readers over time. This theoretical framework has informed subsequent scholarship, enabling multiple interpretations of works like *Written on the Edge of Life* across different periods. Such interpretive diversity is not only justified but also essential to understanding the evolving significance of literary texts.

Receptive aesthetics theory provides a valuable framework for understanding translation as a multidimensional process. Translation, from this perspective, involves a complex interplay between the source text, the target text, the original author, the translator, and the target-language reader, each contributing to the construction of meaning. Therefore, the translator assumes a dual role: as both a reader and a

secondary creator of the source text. In the translation process, the translator first engages with the source text as a reader, interpreting its meaning and contributing to its re-creation. Simultaneously, the translator acts as a secondary creator, transforming their interpretation into the target language and conveying it to the target-language readers (Ma, 2000). To produce an effective translation, the translator must navigate the tension between fidelity to the source text and the cultural expectations of the target audience. This requires not only conveying the literal meaning but also employing strategies such as cultural adaptation, domestication, and foreignization to ensure the text resonates with target-language readers.

### 3. A Probe of the Preface to *Written on the Edge of Life*

Previous researches on *Written on the Edge of Life* have predominantly emphasized Qian Zhongshu's wit, humor, satirical language, free-spirited style, and incisive arguments (Gong, 2013). However, the preface, which serves as the intellectual cornerstone of the collection, has received comparatively little attention despite its profound philosophical and literary significance. The preface, as the intellectual core of the collection, encapsulates Qian Zhongshu's creative intentions and philosophical outlook. It exemplifies the art of preface writing, blending literary elegance with profound insight. This paper, therefore, focuses on a detailed analysis of the preface to uncover its layered meanings and its role in shaping the reader's engagement with the text.

The preface is characterized by its lucid and engaging prose, enriched with vivid metaphors, concise sentence structures, and a tone that balances levity with profundity. Qian employs a range of rhetorical devices, such as irony and paradox, to convey his humor and wisdom, creating a text that is both accessible and intellectually stimulating. Despite its brevity—spanning just over 340 characters—the preface employs straightforward sentence structures and unadorned language, yet it is imbued with profound philosophical insights. Within this concise passage, Qian articulates his early literary philosophy, offering a glimpse into his intellectual development.

Qian employs the metaphor of life as a book, framing his reflections as marginal notes on its edges. This metaphor is not only intellectually stimulating but also serves as a lens through which readers can contemplate the nature of existence. The opening lines immediately engage the reader, prompting reflection on whether life can be likened to a great book—a testament to Qian's characteristic intellectual depth. Qian presents two contrasting attitudes toward life, inviting readers to reflect on their own approach to the great book of life. By humorously casting himself as an overzealous book reviewer who writes extensively without thorough reading, he critiques the superficial engagement with life. In contrast, he extols the virtues of those who approach life with calm and leisure, encouraging readers to consider the value of a more contemplative and deliberate existence.

Through the preface, Qian articulates his philosophy: rather than approaching life with the intent to critique or summarize, it is more meaningful to engage with it through marginal

notes—posing questions or exclamations at the edges (Zhang, 2002). He reassures readers that such annotations need not be definitive judgments but can instead serve as playful and personal reflections, free from the constraints of formal critique. The preface exemplifies Qian's characteristic blend of casual elegance and incisive critique, reflecting his willingness to diverge from mainstream thought. Functioning as a declaration of intellectual independence, it establishes the tone for the entire collection, challenging the dominant narratives of the May Fourth Enlightenment. Qian's voice, marked by its counter-cultural stance, invites readers to question established literary and philosophical norms (Luo, 2009). Drawing on Qian Zhongshu's literary career, two key themes emerge from the preface as follows:

#### 3.1 Avoiding the Rush for Immediate Success

Qian Zhongshu commences his preface with the profound statement life is said to be a great book. This raises the question that does Qian approach life as a meticulous book reviewer, delving into its depths, or as a leisurely amateur reader, savoring its pages at his own pace. From the preface, it becomes evident that the author resonates more with the latter persona. He portrays himself as an amateur reader, adopting a relaxed and unhurried demeanor. Far from indicating indifference towards life, this reflects his advocacy for a serene yet contemplative approach to existence. Qian writes not for the sake of fame or recognition, but merely to add his marginal insights to the grand narrative of life.

In stark contrast to those who eagerly pursue swift success, Qian's self-identification as an amateur reader accurately mirrors his self-assessment. The term "amateur" serves as a modest self-deprecation, underscoring his detachment from fame and material gains. His decision to refrain from engaging in excessive discourse exemplifies his preference for steering clear of unnecessary entanglements, focusing instead on scholarly diligence and introspection. By unequivocally stating that it is not his role to guide readers or lecture authors, Qian exemplifies the integrity of an intellectual committed to clarity and the independence of thought. In this regard, his stance emphasizes the notion that life should not be rushed towards immediate results or instant gratification, but rather savored and appreciated in its entirety.

#### 3.2 Rejecting the Pursuit of Perfection and Moderation

In the preface, Qian Zhongshu mentions that his marginal notes are not intended to be systematic reflections on the entire work. These spontaneous annotations, which may at times be contradictory or excessively blunt, are not meant to be scrutinized too seriously. This shows that Qian adopts a tolerant attitude toward excessive remarks. If one always strives for perfection and moderation in social interactions—holding a neutral stance to avoid causing offense—who will seek the truth and articulate it clearly?

In fact, Qian's rejection of the blind pursuit of perfection and moderation, coupled with his willingness to express his views candidly, reveals his intellectual independence and his courage to challenge established norms. He does not conform to the mainstream expectation of maintaining a mild and conciliatory demeanor but instead dares to question

conventional wisdom and offer critical insight. This approach marks his unwavering commitment to intellectual honesty and the pursuit of truth.

#### 4. Translation Criticism of Zheng Yali's *The Marginalia of Life*

As previously discussed, the preface to Qian Zhongshu's *Written on the Edge of Life* is replete with profound significance, not only reflecting the author's literary characteristics but also encapsulating his critical perspectives. Within this compilation of essays, the preface serves as a linchpin that synthesizes the central themes of the entire work. Given its unique role, the translation of the preface requires meticulous attention to both linguistic and stylistic fidelity. In assessing the quality of its translation, it is imperative to evaluate whether the translator has successfully grasped the essence of the preface and adeptly conveyed its stylistic nuances to the target readers.

Zheng Yali's translation, titled *The Marginalia of Life*, represents a significant attempt to introduce Qian Zhongshu's literary thought to English-speaking readers. However, given the preface's concise yet dense linguistic structure and distinctive stylistic features, the translator faces significant challenges in reconciling the source text with the target readers' expectations, aesthetic preferences, and cultural milieu. To achieve fidelity in transmitting the stylistic attributes of the original, the translator may need to employ subtle adaptations. Yet, in navigating the delicate balance between loyalty to the source text and accommodation of the target readers' preferences, the translator inevitably confronts the intrinsic tension between explicit and implicit transformations inherent in the translation process.

This paper undertakes a case study of Zheng Yali's translation, leveraging the theory of Receptive Aesthetics to explore the multifaceted challenges faced by the translator in her dual role as both a reader and a translator. Receptive Aesthetics, with its emphasis on the reader's role in constructing textual meaning, provides a robust framework for analyzing how the translator mediates between the author's intent and the readers' Reception. Through this lens, we will dissect the strategies adopted by Zheng Yali to overcome these challenges and offer a critical assessment of the translation's quality, shedding light on the intricacies and nuances of translating a literary preface.

##### 4.1 The Translator as a Reader of the Source Text

Receptive Aesthetics recognizes the critical role that the reader plays in the interpretation of a text. According to Jauss, the meaning of a work is the sum of the meaning given by the author and the meaning ascribed by the reader. The translator, as a special reader, actively engages in the interpretative process of the source text during translation. The translator's reading and comprehension of the source text can be conceptualized as a process of rendering implicit meanings into explicit forms. This process is inherently active and constructive, as understanding involves not only interpretation but also creative engagement with the text (Ma, 2000).

However, the translator's understanding of the source text and their explicit rendering of its meaning are not arbitrary or subjective. The translator must strive to align their interpretation with the content, form, and stylistic nuances of the source text, ensuring a harmonious relationship with the original throughout the translation process. To enhance the quality of the translation from the reader's perspective, the translator must elevate their level of engagement with the text, achieving an effective integration of the horizon of expectations (Ma, 2000). To illustrate this, we will analyze the translation of uncertain elements in the preface to *Written on the Edge of Life* as a case study. This analysis will focus on the strategies employed by Zheng Yali, both as a reader of the original text and in relation to the implicit and explicit transformations.

**Source Text 1:** 人生据说是一部大书. (Zheng, 2013, p.93)

**Target Text 1:** People say life is one fat book. (Zheng, 2013, p.4)

**Source Text 2:** 假使人生是一部大书, 那末, 下面的几篇散文只能算是写在人生边上的. 这本书真大! (Zheng, 2013, p.93)

**Target Text 2:** If life is one fat book, the essays which follow are just the *marginalia* of my life. Such a fat book! (Zheng, 2013, p.5)

Receptive Aesthetics posits that a text possesses a quality that actively engages readers, meaning that the literary aesthetic process is one in which the reader fills in the gaps and constructs meaning. It refers to the process of merging the reader's horizon of expectations with the author's horizon of understanding. Qian Zhongshu introduces the discussion of two approaches to life through the phrase, “人生据说是一部大书.” The translator, as a reader, should first consider who is making this statement and what the book actually signifies. The treatment of such implicit information requires the translator to carefully consider the author's intentions.

From the context, we can infer that the phrase “据说” serves two functions in the original text. First, it serves to capture the reader's interest, as it is commonly used at the beginning of a story to indicate that the statement is based on others' opinions. Second, it extends the reader's aesthetic experience by introducing an element of uncertainty and controversy, prompting the reader to reflect on whether life truly is a great book. Zheng Yali's translation of “据说” as “people say” is semantically close to the original, but it shifts the subject of the sentence, thus diverging from the author's intent. Qian Zhongshu does not aim to emphasize the identity of the speaker but instead seeks to present an idea that stimulates the reader's reflection. Therefore, a more appropriate translation might retain “life” as the subject, such as “It is said that life is a great book,” to better reflect the author's intended meaning.

Furthermore, the phrase “一部大书” can be literally interpreted as a very large or thick book, but its translation depends on the translator's understanding of the source text. At the conclusion of the preface, Qian Zhongshu elaborates further, stating that if life is indeed a great book, then the following essays are merely written on its margins. It is difficult to finish in one sitting, and even the margins that have

been written on still leave much blank space. These expressions echo the opening statement, “人生据说是一部大书,” as they suggest that the book referred to by the author leans more toward a horizontally expansive notion of size, while the translation of “fat book” implies a more vertical, thick dimension. This discrepancy highlights how the translator’s understanding of key imagery in the source text directly influences the quality of the translation.

Through this example, it becomes evident that the translator’s role as a reader is crucial in navigating the complexities of implicit and explicit meanings. Receptive Aesthetics provides a valuable framework for understanding how translators mediate between the author’s intent and the readers’ expectations, ultimately shaping the aesthetic and cultural reception of the translated text.

**Source Text 3:** 他们有一种业余消遣者的随便和从容，他们不慌不忙地浏览。每到有什么意见，他们随手在书边的空白上注几个字，写一个问号或感叹号，像中国旧书上的眉批，外国书里的Marginalia。这种零星随感并非他们对于整部书的结论。(Zheng, 2013, p.93)

**Target Text 3:** Carefree and relaxed as freelancers, they casually scribble a few words, a question, or an exclamation in the margin—like those headers in Chinese classics, or *marginalia* in foreign books. If an idea occurs to them when they are browsing leisurely through books, they jot down bits and pieces of notes written in a desultory fashion. These are not their impressions of the whole book. (Zheng, 2013, p.4)

From a syntactical perspective, the translator has split and reorganized these three sentences, significantly altering the original structure. The revised version flows more naturally, fitting the typical English preference for clearer logical connections. However, does this modification preserve the original style of the text? Let’s examine these sentences more closely. Qian Zhongshu uses a series of short, accumulated sentences, with frequent pauses, which endows the language with a sense of casualness and ease. Furthermore, a few simple and unadorned verbs connect the components of the sentences, creating a fluid, almost effortless mental image for the reader—their browsing is casual and unhurried, and whenever an opinion arises, they casually jot it down in the margins. In contrast, the translator’s focus on emphasizing the sentence logic leads to longer sentences, which lose the original rhythm and the sense of ease created by the short sentences and pauses.

From a lexical perspective, the translator’s misinterpretation of the source text has affected the quality of the translation. The term “随手” can have three meanings: immediately, casually, or randomly. The translation “casually scribble” implies haphazard or careless drawing. However, considering the context and Qian’s position, the most likely intended meaning of “随手” here is “immediately” or “at once”, as the meaning of casually scribbling carries a pejorative connotation that conflicts with the author’s stance. Furthermore, Qian first uses the term “眉批” and then directly follows with the English word “Marginalia”, aiming to help foreign readers understand the concept of “眉批” in Chinese and to introduce the foreign term “Marginalia” to Chinese readers. This distinct fusion of Chinese and Western elements

is one of Qian’s writing style. However, the translator may have overlooked this crucial point. By translating “眉批” as “margin”, the distinct Chinese-Western fusion is lost, and the readers are deprived of the opportunity to learn about Chinese culture. Therefore, we suggest that “眉批” be transliterated as “Meipi”.

The above three examples demonstrate that when the translator functions as the source text’s reader, in order to improve the quality of the translation, the translator should enhance their receptive competence to ensure the maximum possible understanding of the source text. Subsequently, when translating, the translator should concretize the uncertain elements in the original, making the implicit explicit, and participate in the construction of the original’s meaning. However, this does not imply that whenever encountering uncertain information, the translator should present a specific interpretation in the translation. Under the perspective of Receptive Aesthetics, while striving for the integration of the horizon of expectation with the source text, the translator must also consider the relationship between the translation and its readers, and the issue of horizon fusion between the translation and its readers (Ma, 2000). If the translator fills all the gaps, it would deprive the translation’s readers of their right to interpret both the target text and the source text. In this way, an appropriate aesthetic distance is disrupted between the horizon of expectation of the readers and the translation itself.

#### 4.2 The Translator as a Secondary Creator of the Source Text

The theory of Receptive Aesthetics establishes the centrality of the reader. As a secondary creator of the source text, the translator should strive to enable the readers of the translation to fully comprehend and accept the meaning of the original. Reproducing tone and style has always been a challenge in literary translation. If the translator fails to adequately reproduce the tone and style of the original, it will inevitably affect the readers’ interpretation of the original work. When translating literary works, the translator should anticipate the horizon of expectation of contemporary readers, taking into account their aesthetic preferences and receptive competence, so that the horizon of expectation of the readers and the translation can merge a second time. In the following, we will use the translation of the tone in the preface to *Written on the Edge of Life* as an example to explore the translator’s approach to making the implicit explicit as a secondary creator.

**Source Text 4:** 假使人生真是这样，那末，我们一大半作者只能算是书评家，具有书评家的本领，无须看得几页书，议论早已发了一大堆，书评一篇写完缴卷。(Zheng, 2013, p.93)

**Target Text 4:** That being the case, more than half of our writers are only critics. Having acquired the skills of a critic, they glance through no more than a few pages before they make loads of judgments about the book. A review is finished and done. (Zheng, 2013, p.4)

In this example, the phrase “我们一大半读者” serves as a form of self-deprecation employed by Qian Zhongshu. By

utilizing the first-person narrative, Qian softens the tone of his critique, embedding himself within the collective “we” to diminish his own authoritative stance. This rhetorical strategy not only conveys a sense of humility and politeness but also aims to reduce the psychological distance between the author and the reader, fostering a sense of shared identity. Consequently, Zheng Yali’s translation of this phrase as “our writers” constitutes a literal rendering that fails to capture Qian’s deliberate positioning of himself within the group of book critics, thereby missing the nuanced intent of the original text.

Moreover, in the translation “they glance through no more than a few pages before they make loads of judgments about the book”, Zheng Yali replaces the first-person plural “我们一大半读者” with the third-person pronoun “they”. This shift introduces a significant psychological distance, as the third-person perspective implicitly excludes Qian Zhongshu from the group of critics being described. This choice reflects the translator’s interpretive judgment, subtly guiding the reader to perceive Qian as an external observer rather than a participant in the critique. However, from the perspective of Receptive Aesthetics, readers of essays typically seek to engage with the author’s style and derive intellectual or spiritual enrichment, often hoping to establish a sense of resonance with the author’s voice. The use of “they” creates an unnecessary barrier to this connection, failing to align with the readers’ horizon of expectations. To preserve the original’s intended intimacy and alignment with the reader, the first-person form should be retained. Specifically, “我们一大半读者” should be translated as “over half of us” and the subsequent “they” in the second sentence should be replaced with “we” to maintain consistency and coherence.

Additionally, it is essential to consider whether Qian Zhongshu’s depiction of the critic’s ability—portraying them as individuals who can deliver extensive commentary after reading only a few pages—is meant to be taken at face value. Clearly, it is not. Qian’s portrayal is laced with irony, as he later emphasizes that competent critics possess commendable abilities and bear the significant responsibility of guiding readers and advising authors. Thus, when Qian mentions the critic’s ability, he is not praising their skills but rather employing irony to critique their superficial engagement with texts. A literal translation of “具有书评家的本领” as “having acquired the skills of a critic” would obscure this ironic undertone, hindering the target readers’ ability to fully grasp the intended meaning. To make the irony more accessible, the phrase could be rendered as “having acquired the ‘commendable’ skills of a critic” to signal the author’s sarcastic tone. This approach would better align with the readers’ horizon of expectations, enabling them to appreciate the subtle critique embedded in the text.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the translator’s choices in rendering key phrases significantly impact the interpretation and reception of the source text. By carefully considering the author’s rhetorical strategies and the readers’ expectations, the translator can more effectively bridge the gap between the source and target texts, preserving both the literal meaning and the underlying nuances of the original.

**Source Text 5:** 他们也懒得去理会,反正是消遣,不像书评家负有指导读者、教训作者的重大使命.谁有能力和耐心作那些事呢?(Zheng, 2013, p.93)

**Target Text 5:** But they couldn’t care less as they only do it for pleasure, unlike the critics whose main mission is to provide guidance for the reader and offer criticism to the author. Well, they do not have the qualifications and patience to do the job anyway, do they? (Zheng, 2013, p.4-5)

In this case, expressions like “懒得去理会”, “反正”, “消遣”, “谁有”, laden with rebellious undertones, vividly underscore Qian Zhongshu’s sarcastic and humorous tone. Especially the rhetorical question “谁有能力和耐心作那些事呢” intensifies the author’s sarcastic delivery. In the translation “well, they do not have the qualifications and patience to do the job anyway, do they?”, Zheng Yali employs modal particles “well” and “anyway” to convey the sarcastic tone of the original. However, transforming the rhetorical question into a declarative statement followed by a tag question somewhat dilutes the original tone, making the explicit emotion in the source text implicit in the target text. Additionally, rendering “懒得去理会” as “couldn’t care less” significantly reduces the casualness and ease of these individuals and fails to capture the colloquial flavor. Therefore, it is suggested that “turn a blind eye” will be a better alternative translation.

From these two examples, it is evident that in Chinese-to-English translation, translators, as both the reader of the source text and the secondary creator, often find themselves in a dilemma. On one hand, they must stand in the shoes of the reader to explicitize the implicit information in the text. In this way, the meaning of the source text can be realized through the dual construction of the author and the translator. On the other hand, as a secondary creator, they strive to ensure that the readers of target text fully understand and accept the intended meaning of the original. Guided by the Receptive Aesthetics, anticipating the horizon of expectations of current readers and considering their aesthetic tastes and reception levels can help translators in making choices and finding balance in this dilemma.

## 5. Conclusion

After a meticulous comparison between the source text and its translation of *Written on the Edge of Life*, this paper finds that Zheng Yali’s translation is generally faithful to the original. However, due to insufficient comprehension of certain phrases and a failure to merge horizons of expectations, some mistranslations have emerged. The translation of Qian Zhongshu’s essay should not merely satisfy literal fidelity. The translator must deeply understand Qian’s literary thoughts, grasp the profound connotations of the source text, and ensure maximum fusion of horizons in the process of communication and dialogue with the original. More importantly, the translator should consider the receptive psychology and cultural habits of English readers, striving to restore the linguistic style and cultural ambiance of Qian’s works while ensuring that readers can understand and appreciate the translated language and style.

This paper also finds that when translating scholarly essay like *Written on the Edge of Life*, which is characterized by a distinctive authorial style and profound ideological content, the translator often faces the challenge of handling explicitness and implicitness in semantics and logic. After a detailed analysis of Zheng Yali's translation, this paper proposes that to achieve an appropriate balance between explicitness and implicitness, the translator should pay attention to "three identifications and three considerations". Specifically, three identifications refer to identifying the original's style and reconstructing it in the translation; identifying the author's tone and reproducing it through wording; and identifying the author's stance and responding flexibly to it. Besides, three considerations refer to considering readers' horizons of expectations, aesthetic needs, and cultural habits. In brief, three identifications emphasize the translator's role as a reader, requiring active participation in constructing the meaning of the original text and maximizing the transformation of the original's style, the author's tone, and stance from implicit to explicit within the constraints of the original content and form, while three considerations focus on the translator's role as a secondary creator, demanding flexible handling of the degree of explicitness and implicitness in semantics and logic based on readers' horizons of expectations, aesthetic needs, and cultural habits.

We should recognize that Zheng Yali's English translation has positively contributed to the dissemination of Qian Zhongshu's *Written on the Edge of Life* in the English-speaking world and the healthy development of Qian Zhongshu studies. Although inevitable minor imperfections from a translation perspective exist, considering the profound significance of the original work, we should grant the translator the understanding and empathy. This paper analyzes the quality of Zheng's translation from the perspective of Receptive Aesthetics and offers appropriate critical feedback, aiming to facilitate healthy academic dialogue and provide a reference for the future translation of scholarly essay into foreign languages. We hope that such errors can be corrected in the future and look forward to a better, meticulously revised edition of this book.

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