



## Sidney Shapiro's Translation Style: On the English Translation of the Wine Names in the *Outlaws of the Marsh*

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### Abstract

Pearl Buck's version *All Men are Brothers* has always been widely praised as the most faithful version, and Shapiro's version has been called in line with the reading habits of Western readers. Based on the comparison of the translated wine names in Pearl S. Buck's *All Men are Brothers* and American Jewish scholar Sidney Shapiro's *Outlaws of the Marsh*, it is found that the syntactic form of the Sidney Shapiro's version is flexible, meanwhile the cultural image and semantic processing of wine names are relatively accurate. It conveys the connotation of the original text. Then the author tries to explain the conclusion of the text research through the background and process of Shapiro's translation of *水浒传*. The acceptance of his version in the western world also proves that Shapiro has made an important contribution to the cultural communication between the East and the West.

**Key words:** English translation of wine names; Translation background; Reception of *Outlaws of the Marsh*

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### INTRODUCTION

*水浒传* has been translated into many languages, the

English translated version *all men are brothers* by American writer Pearl S. Buck and the other English version *out laws of the marsh* by Chinese American Jewish scholar Sidney Shapiro are regarded as two of the most classic English versions in English world. From the comparison of word frequency and word order between Pearl S. Buck and Shapiro from ANC, we can see that Shapiro's translation is more consistent with the expression habits of English readers and Buck's translation is more faithful to the original. (Ren Xiaofei, 2016:89) most of the research comparing the two translations come to the conclusion that the translation of Buck is more faithful to the original text, and the translation of Shapiro conforms to the expression habits of the readers. Shapiro's translation takes the reader's aesthetics and acceptance into account. Then the questions come, are there any misreading and misinterpretation in Shapiro's translation in order to consider the target language reader? Does his translation violate the basic principles of translation? Does it distort the cultural image in classical Chinese literature? With these problems in mind, the author carefully examined Shapiro's translation text, his background information and translation activities. This paper used the method of comparing the similarities and differences between the two translations strategies in the choice of wine name from corpus search in *水浒传*, in order to explore the translator's translation style. In particular, this paper investigates the choice of the translation strategies and makes the conclusion, and then it tries to use their translation ideas, activities and backgrounds to interpret the choice of their translation strategies.

### 1. THE CHOICE OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES: A COMPARISON OF THE TRANSLATED WINE NAMES IN *水浒传*

Wine appeared 1900 times in the original work *水浒传*. There are descriptions of drinking, drinking utensils and

liquor stores in every episode in this novel. (Ren, 2016, p.89) in the original text, the large-scale liquor stores of Song Dynasty are described from the perspectives of geographical location, origin, plaque culture, wine flag and the decorations inside the liquor stores, and the custom and dishes of drinking wine are mentioned many times. Therefore, *水浒传* can be called a classic epic about wine in ancient China, which shows the rich connotation of wine culture in Song Dynasty. Whether it is to express one's ambition by wine, to express one's feelings by wine, or to narrate by wine, the cultural image of wine is full of the rich emotional connotation of life, such as bitterness, sorrow, joy, separation and reunion, which has a very distinct literary symbolic significance. Among them, the classic characters and important plots related to "wine" are all well-known, such as Wu Song drunken fighting with tiger in Jing Yang Gang; Song Jiang and others drinking "Yu Lou Chun" in Pi pa Pavilion; Lu Zhishen's two drunken brawls in Wutai Mountain. *水浒传* can be said to be full of "wine" shadow everywhere. The wine names in this literary work are very aesthetic and poetic: 青花瓮、透瓶香、玉壶春、蓝桥风月美酒 etc.. and I listed the wine name translation from Buck and Shapiro for comparative observation.

Example 1: 青花瓮酒

Buck's version: Green flowered jar

Shapiro's version: Wine in a flowery jug

From the comparison of the wine name 青花瓮酒, it can be seen that Pearl S. Buck adopted a more rigorous translation attitude. In Buck's version, 青花瓮酒 is translated into "green flowered jar", while in Shapiro's version, the word "green" is omitted from "wine in a flowery jug". The author speculates that the translator, Shapiro, does not fully understand that the word 青花 belongs to a special cultural term in Chinese culture. 青花, abbreviation of blue and white porcelain, means a special kind of ceramics, which is the treasure of firing technology of Chinese ceramics. It is one of the main varieties of Chinese porcelain. It belongs to under glaze colored porcelain. The original blue and white porcelain has been seen in Tang and Song Dynasties, while the mature blue and white porcelain appeared at Hutian kiln in Jing De Town from Yuan Dynasty. The blue and white porcelain in Ming Dynasty became the mainstream of porcelain, and reached the peak in Kangxi of Qing Dynasty. It can be seen that the historical origin of the word 青花 is rich in traditional cultural connotation.

Example 2: 透瓶香/出门倒

Buck's version: Smell of it leaks through the bottle/wine that makes a man fall outside the door

Shapiro's version: Seeps through the bottle fragrance/collapse outside the door

In Shapiro's version, 透瓶香 is translated into "seeps through the bottle fragment", in which the consonant overlap of "seeps" and "through" pays attention to the sense of tonality and is catchy; in Buck's version,

"Smell of it leaks through the bottle" is comparatively lengthy; however, the "collapses outside the door" used in Shapiro's version are slightly ambiguous in subject and meaning, which can only be explained through the following context. The original context of 透瓶香 is as follows:

洒家道：“我这酒，叫做‘透瓶香’；又唤作‘出门倒’：初入口时，醇浓好吃，少刻时便倒。”

Shapiro's version: "my wine is called 'Seeps Through the Bottle Fragrance'. It is also called 'Collapse outside the Door'. You don't feel anything at first. But a little later, down you go."

Buck's version: The wine shop keeper said, "My wine is called 'Smell of It Leaks through the Bottle' and is so named. And it is named also 'Wine That Makes a Man Fall outside the Door.' When it is first taken into the mouth it is mild and full-flavored, but in a little while it makes a man fall down drunken."

It can be seen that in the translation of this paragraph, the translated version from Shapiro pursues concise and compact writing, it combines literal translation and free translation. while Buck's version mainly adopts literal translation. Compared with Shapiro's version, Buck pays more attention to the integrity of semantics, while Shapiro pays more attention to the beauty of rhyme and artistic conception.

Example 3: “玉壶春”酒

Buck's version: Jade spring wine

Shapiro's version: Spring time in jade bottles

Shapiro pays attention to the beauty of artistic conception. He translated 玉壶春酒 into "spring time in jade bottle". He added the translator's interpretation and understanding to describe a picture of 玉壶春 for the readers. In Buck's translation version, "jade spring wine" adopts the traditional literal translation of words, without too much explanation, leaving more space for the readers.

Example 4: 蓝桥风月美酒

Buck's version: Wine of the southern wind and moon

Shapiro's version: Moon light breeze on lover's Bridge

In dealing with the wine name 蓝桥风月美酒, Buck used "wine of the southern wind and moon". Although the artistic conception of "south wind" and "Moon" is beautiful, She mistakenly puts "blue" into "south" (sound the same in Chinese), which has semantic deviation and be largely changed. 蓝桥 (blue bridge) here is a Chinese word with multiple interpretations. The first interpretation refers to the place where the fairy Yunying met Tang Peihang, located in the southwest of Lantian County, Shaanxi Province. The second interpretation was recorded in *Shiji Suqin biography* that in 320 B.C., it is said that a man named Mr. Wei want to date a beautiful girl under the bridge. But the girl didn't come. In order not to break his promise, Mr. Wei died holding the column under the bridge because of the water rising on the bridge deck. According to *Xi'an Official Records*, the bridge called 蓝桥 is located on the Lanyu River in Lantian County,

Shaanxi Province. Since then, “soul broken blue bridge” has been used to describe the lovers out of contract and one of them suffered martyrdom. Here Shapiro understands that the meaning of “blue bridge” related to lover’s relationship according to Chinese traditional cultural images, so his translation of blue bridge into “lover’s bridge” is obviously a good understanding of Chinese culture. Shapiro translated 蓝桥, 风月 into “moon light breeze on lover’s bridge” by means of free translation, the artistic conception here is wonderful, which means that under the moonlight, the breeze blows on the love bridge, it’s like a reproduction of a Chinese landscape painting.

Although the sentence pattern of *Outlaws of the Marsh* translated by Shapiro has changed a lot, he pays attention to the translation of cultural and semantic meaning. He has done a more detailed translation of semantic and cultural connotation in several examples above, and has faithfully conveyed Chinese classic literature to readers in the western world. In the process of translating literary works, the translator’s creative treason is inevitable. If it is intentional misreading, the translator is likely to take into account the language habits, cultural background and literary aesthetics of the target country’s readers and deliberately filter the culture. The communicative translation used by Shapiro takes care of the feelings of western readers. On the whole, he pays more attention to the readers, satisfies the English expression habit and meanwhile pays attention to the accurate expression of Chinese traditional cultural images.

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## 2. SHAPIRO’S OUTLAWS OF THE MARSH IS LIMITED BY TIME AND POLITICS

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In the 70’s, the acceptance and influence of Chinese literature in the west is still in the very early stage, more Chinese literature that been translated to the west is cater to the taste of the western readers, in hope to get the aesthetic identity of the western world. Such as the early English version *a Dream of Red Mansions* translated by Wang Jizhen has cut a lot of plot in order to obtain a concise style for western readers. Shapiro’s fluent sentences in English translation conform to the western readers’ reading habits as well. His consideration for the western reader can not be scolded since his domestication translation strategy to western readers is an understandable behavior at that background. and we discover from his translation from above that definitely conveys the Oriental beauty and the unique Chinese cultural images.

When Shapiro was young, he left his hometown and came to China. When he was middle-aged, he joined the Chinese nationality and became a real Chinese. Because of his love for Chinese culture, he chose translation as his career. He worked with famous translators Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidi in the magazine of *Chinese Literature* published by Foreign Language Publishing House and

devoted his whole life to promoting Chinese literature. The historical and political background of his translation of the *outlaws of the marsh* is rather complex. Chairman Mao criticized capitulationism and revisionism by raising example of Song Jiang in 水浒传, and appointed the translation expert Shapiro from foreign language publishing house to retranslation the masterpiece. The subjectivity of the translator was greatly restricted for his translation activities were supported and supervised by the national government from the beginning to the end. For instance, the famous dispute over name translation: at first, Shapiro translated the book name “outlaws of the marsh” into “heroes of the marsh”, but it was dissatisfied by Jiang Qing(the Gang of Four) because Song Jiang in 水浒传 was a traitor in her opinion. Shapiro cleverly changed “heroes” into “outlaws”. This word is a positive word in English, often used to describe a hero like Robin Hood. (Fang and Zhuang, 2017, pp.601-614) from his autobiography, we can see his difficulties in translation:

When we finished translating about fifty-four chapters, we met with difficulties. The gang of four published quotations from Chairman Mao and Lu Xun criticizing Song Jiang’s surrender to the emperor and his subsequent conquest of Fang La. The gang of four declared that Jin Shengtang intended to delete these plots from the original 100 chapters, in order to conceal Song Jiang’s capitulationism. (Shapiro, 1984)

Then the literary editor of the Foreign Language Publishing House was horrified, and asked Shapiro to give up the version of Jin Shengtang and translate the version of Rong Yutang from People’s Literature Publishing House. Then, Shapiro translated the 50th to 70th chapters according to the Chinese version of Rong Yutang. During that time, Shapiro, Tang Bowen and Ye Junjian all strongly oppose this approach, because most Chinese scholars agreed that Jin Shengtang’s version is superior to Rong Hetang in literary quality. After the Gang of Four was smashed in 1976, Shapiro asked the editorial comrades for permission to translate the first 70 chapters of Jin Shengtang according to the original plan. (Shapiro, 1984) We can see His insist on the principle of translation; he used his ingenuity and flexibility to resist the hegemony behind translation and the control of political forces. Therefore, from the whole tortuous process of his translation of the *Outlaws of the Marsh*, we can see that he has requirements for the selection of the original text and insists on choosing the version of Jin Shengtang that he thinks is excellent under the circumstances of great political resistance.

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## 3. THE SUCCESSFUL RECEPTION OF OUTLAWS OF THE MARSH IN THE ENGLISH WORLD

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“As long as a book is misunderstood, it has vitality,” said American comparative literature writer Weisstein

(Weisstein, 1986, p.60), he discussed the relationship between the formation of literary classics and creative treason. A great literature is a living work that continuously betrays and accepts. It affirms the importance of translator's interpretation and reader's acceptance in the process of classic spreading. It can be said that the acceptance of Shapiro's translation in the western world by Western readers are successful. Literary critics in the United States and Canada wrote book reviews for the book. Joseph McClellan published a book review in the *Washington Post* on July 19, 1981, admitting that it is a masterpiece, praising the fact that "the clear and simple characters are suitable for the complex plot and the universal human characteristics that endow the book with endless fun." Professor Robert E. Hegel, Washington University, St. Louis, wrote a book review in *world literature today*, the journal of literature quarterly of the University of Oklahoma, in the spring of 1982. He praised the novel very much, compared the new translation with Pearl S. Buck's translation, and said that the Shapiro's version is easier to read, and it faithfully reproduced the original artistic conception and vitality. He call it a complete and accurate translation, and everyone will like it very much. Professor Bolton Lafayette, of the University of Denver, published an article in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* on August 27, 1981, strongly recommended the translated version of Shapiro, saying that "with his cheerful writing style, Mr. Shapiro makes this novel very interesting, which has been very popular in China for hundreds of years. His bold translation is a vivid representation of the characters in the novel. The narrative part of the original work and its potential meaning are also vividly reflected in Mr. Shapiro's translation. "L. Carrington Goodrich, a famous sinologist in the United States, published a book review on the spring 1982 issue of *Current Affairs in the Pacific Ocean* in Canada, praising the book as both a literary work and a historical document. "Their language is vulgar," he said, "but Mr. Shapiro still retains the local flavor of language." (Shapiro, 1984) The

above comments fully show that Shapiro's version of 水浒传 has been recognized by the English academic fields, and this Chinese literary classic is even more brilliant in his works.

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## CONCLUSION

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Through the comparison of the two translations, it is found that although the syntactic form of Shapiro's translation is flexible, the cultural image and semantic translation all convey the connotation of the original text accurately. he always adhered to his own translation principles and presented a faithful and beautiful translation under the political control and interference. It is received a high degree of affirmation and praise from the western academic field, which showed his translation proficiency. Shapiro, with a unique cultural identity, be keen on translation for 50 years. He translated tens of millions of words, making a significant contribution to the spread of Chinese literature in the West. (Fang and Zhuang, 2017, p.625)

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