



## A Study on Hu Shi's Strategy of Building New Literature: A Perspective of Literary Manipulation

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### Abstract

Manipulation always means a kind of extraordinary alteration for some purpose. All translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose. Hu Shi's literary translation serves for his literary creation, which aims to advocate for the use of written vernacular Chinese and to build New Literature. Literary translation is the foundation of literary creation, or rather, its important strategy. The paper, from the perspective of Manipulation theory, analyzes the purpose and strategy of Hu Shi's literary translation and explores the way through which Hu constructed New Literature in terms of ideology, poetics and patronage.

**Key words:** Manipulation; Literary translation; Literary creation; Hu Shi

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### INTRODUCTION

At the time of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the New Culture Movement, Hu Shih was selected as the cover character of *Global People* magazine in memory of his great contributions to the literature revolution during the May

4<sup>th</sup> movement. Actually, as early as in the 1950s, Hu Shih was held up by American *Prospect* magazine as one of the most important people in the world of that time, saying "he has invented a simplified Chinese language" in praise of his role in the vernacular movement. He published the first vernacular poetry *Changshi Ji (Attempts)*, the first vernacular play *Zhongshen Dashi (Marriage)* and the first vernacular translation *A Collection of Short Stories* in China. However, his literary achievements cannot be separated from his literary translation. He believed that the creation of new forms of literature must be combined with the reference of the Western perfect literary system. In his view, literary translation is a key strategy of his literature revolution as well as a base of his literary creation. Based on it, this paper will explore the strategies that Hu Shih tried both in his literary translation and in literary creation to construct his new literature.

### 1. MANIPULATION OF TRANSLATION

The manipulation theory of literary translation originated in Europe in the late 1960s; however, the concept of "manipulation" was officially recognized in the late twentieth century. Theo Hermans, in *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, pointed out that all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose (1985, p.11). Later, the concept was developed by André Lefevere who, in *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, stated that "translation is a rewriting of an original text," and "rewriting is manipulation. Rewriting can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation." (2004a, p.i) Translation always exists in the context of two different literary traditions and will surely be restricted by many factors. Of all these factors, the most important ones are the patronage, the translator's ideology and the poetics dominant in the receiving literature at

the time the translation is made. Lefevere argued that “faithfulness” is just one translational strategy that can be inspired by the collocation of a certain ideology with a certain poetics (2004a, p.51).

In Manipulation theory, translation is not a simple conversion between languages, but a kind of literary presentation closely related to social systems, political consciousness, mass psychology and so on. In the translation, a translator uses new expressions, integrate into his/her own understanding of the original text and applies new literary genres to promote the development and communication of literature. These new elements which are borrowed from different nations, may be absorbed and assimilated by the translator in his/her translation works and eventually transfer to and affect his literary creation.

## 2. IDEOLOGY

According to *Webster's Tenth New Collegiate Dictionary*, “ideology” is “a systematic body of concepts especially about human life or culture,” or “a manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture.” Generally, ideology can be put into two: social ideology and personal ideology. The former is the systematic viewpoints of the world and society of a certain class while the latter represents one's personal character, education, outlook and life experience. Schäffner claims that all translations are ideological since “the choice of a source text and the use to which the subsequent target text is put are determined by the interests, aims, and objectives of social agents” (2003, p.23). Similarly, André Lefevere confirms that “the ideology dictates the basic strategy the translator is going to use and therefore also dictates solutions to problems ...” (2004b, p.41).

Hu Shi has studied in the United States for seven years, which completely changed his outlook on life, world and values. Just as he himself said:

Two persons affected me most: One is Huxley and the other is Mr. Dewey. Huxley taught me how to doubt: Not to trust anything without sufficient evidence. Mr. Dewey taught me how to think: To keep a watchful eye on the current problems, to take all the theories as assumptions that need to be proved and to attend to the results of the thought. (Tang, 1993, pp.94-95)

Dewey stressed that all theories must be examined in practice and only those that can solve practical problems are “useful”. Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism had a direct impact on Hu Shi's late literary translation and literary creation and ultimately contributed to his new literary revolution.

Hu's pragmatic philosophy is first reflected in his translation thoughts of “pursuit of truth” and “good translation”. “Pursuit of truth” means to seek for the authenticity and fidelity of the translation and endeavor to restore the original form and content. “Good translation” is an ideal translation, which both restores the original

form and ensures the acceptability of the target text in the target language. In the translation of Byron's “the isles of Greece”, he translated “The Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece/ Where Delos rose and Phoebus sprung” into “嗟汝希腊之群岛兮，亦羲和素娥之故里。” Here he turned ancient Greek deities of the Moon (Delos) and the Sun (Phoebus) into corresponding Chinese ancient deities “素娥” and “羲和”，which makes the translation poetic, easy and clear to understand. When comparing with other two translators Su Manshu's free translation (“征伐 Conquest” and 亲策 Appeasement”) and Ma Junwu's transliteration (“德娄 De Lou” and “飞布 Fei Bu”), Hu commented that Junwu's translation is incorrect and Manshu's obscure. The former results in the distorted meaning and the latter fails to express the full meaning: Both are not good translation (1999, pp.50-51).

Where Delos rose, and Phœbus sprung!

征伐和亲策陵夷不自葆。(Su Manshu's translation)

德楼飞步两英雄，渊源皆是希腊族。(Ma Junwu's translation)

亦羲和素娥之故里。(Hu Shu's translation)

Hu Shi's pragmatic philosophy is also reflected in his translation strategies, and specifically, his attitudes to “literal translation” and “free translation”. From a pragmatic point of view, translation, as a means of communication between different languages, aims at clearness and easiness in understanding. So, free translation that attempts to convey the content of the original text by shattering its formal constraints has become Hu Shi's first choice for his literary translation. Obviously, his early and middle translations are mainly based on free translation. For example, when translating the passage from Chekhov's *An Artwork*, Hu completely cast off the original structure and rendered it into three clauses in line with Chinese writing habits, separately introducing the years of his birth and death, the background of his family and his fame in Russian literature, which makes the translation natural and smooth.

Chekhov, who has been called the Russian de Maupassant, was born of humble parents in the suburbs of Moscow in 1860, and died of consumption in 1904. Though he received the degree of M.D., he never practiced medicine.

Anton Chekhov 生于一八六〇年，死于一九〇四年。他是一个穷人家的儿子，曾学医学，但不曾挂牌行医……人称他做“俄罗斯的穆白桑”。

In his late translation, Hu Shi cared more about the source language, particularly its original forms of expression and cultural characteristics. At that time, writing in vernacular language has just started in China and new forms of expression are deadly needed. And the best way to create new forms of expression is “borrowism” which Lu Xun advocated—directly borrowing new forms

of expression from foreign languages by the translation so as to enrich and develop the national language. Just for this function of translation, Hu was in favor of literal translation as well. Hu argued that Europeanized vernacular which borrows the fine structures of western languages can convey more complex ideas and theories. (1935, p.24) In the preface of his Translation *A Collection of Short Stories II*, Hu said, "my translation of these six novels seems much more precise than the first one and some translations are strictly literal due to the influence of the times." (Ouyang, 2000, p.348) The following is an excerpt from his translation of Teleshov's "Duel", which basically retains the original sentence order with few shifts in Chinese.

Teleshov was born in 1867 and studied at the Moscow Academy of Applied Sciences. He started on his literary career in 1884 and met with almost immediate recognition. In his choice of subjects, as well as in the strong objective way in which he treated them, Teleshov is a disciple of Anton Chekhov, and his affinity with that great artist has been pointed out by the foremost Russian critics.

泰来夏甫 (Nikolai Dmitrievitch Teleshov), 生于一八六七年, 尝肄业于莫斯科工业学校。至一八八四年, 氏时仅十七岁耳, 即以文学见称。其所著作, 大抵师事俄国当代文豪契诃夫 (Chekhov), 今其年未及五十, 而名满东欧, 为新文豪之一云。

Hu Shi's translation thoughts of "pursuit of truth" and "good translation" directly influenced his literary creation. His "pursuit of truth" aimed at seeking for the truth in his writing. He particularly opposed "empty verbiage" and advocated "Speak only when you have something to say." In an article originally published in *New Youth* in January 1917 titled *A Preliminary Discussion of Literature Reform*, he stressed that the language should be directed at the truth and literature should contain real feelings and human thoughts, only by which can literature have life.

Hu's "good translation", attending both to the expressiveness and the fluency, is the unity of form and content. As to the form of language, Hu offered two suggestions for creating Chinese New Literature: one is about the tool and the other is about the method. Hu said that we need to prepare the "tool" for the New Literature and our tool is vernacular (Ibid.). Adhering to the pragmatism, Hu believed that language as well as action must have utility and that practice is the only way to promote the transformation and development of ideas while language is the tool of practice. Thus, the best way to reform the literary thought is to reform the language itself. At that time in China, people spoke in vernacular Chinese but wrote in classical Chinese, speaking and writing separated. Hu advocated to combine them into one, speaking and writing in the same language. He said that speak what you want to say and say it in the way you want to say it (Ibid.). Written in the vernacular Chinese, the New Literature got closer to the general readers, which greatly enhanced the education of Chinese people at that time. In this way, Hu launched an ambitious "literary

revolution" from the "vernacular Chinese" movement, which led the Chinese literature from the classical to the modern.

As to the method, Hu Shi pointed out that Chinese literature is far from perfect and the methods used in western literature were much better than ours. So, "I think that there is only one way out; that is, we should translate more western classic literary works and set them as our examples." (Ibid.) Hu believed that by using the vernacular Chinese as the tool and by drawing on the advanced methods of Western literature, we could create new Chinese literature.

### 3. POETICS

In Lefevere's manipulation theory, poetics studies the role of literature in the social system as a whole (2004a, p.26) It focuses not on the meaning of a text, but rather its understanding of how a text's different elements come together and produce certain effects on the reader. In order to make his/her works acceptable, the author has to wrestle on the choice of literary devices, subjects, genres, styles and so on. Lefevere reduced, "accordingly, translators often try to recast the original in terms of the poetics of their own culture, simply to make it pleasing to the new audience and, in doing so, to ensure that the translation will actually be read." (2004b, p.26)

The influence of poetics on Hu Shi's literary translation can be seen in many respects. Firstly, it is in the purpose of translation. During the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement, China was experiencing a cultural, social and literary revolution. Learning advanced western science and technology and introducing their progressive ideology and culture for the development and prosperity of China has become the historical mission of Chinese scholars of that era. But all these take changing thoughts as a precondition. In order to achieve the goal, the best way is to create new words and new literature because the word is a tool of thought and literature the home of thought. Therefore, Hu's literary translation is not simply for the translation itself but for creating a new literature. Just as he said: "Today, to build a new literature for our nation should start from the input of the western classic works so that we can have examples to follow and then we can have our own new literature." (Hu, 1992, p.270)

Secondly, it is in the choice of the source texts. During the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement, a large number of western literary works flooded into China and greatly impacted on the Chinese traditional ideas. At that time, the selected source materials varied and their translation qualities were uneven. Some translation works did not introduce advanced concepts but caused chaos to the original thoughts. So, what kind of work should be translated? Hu Shi believed that literary translators should only translate literary works of famous writers. He suggested that we should translate those famous works, not those under

second-rate because only famous works have typicalness, wide recognition and high artistic value (Hu, 1918).

Finally, it is in the form of translation. Hu Shi, as the standard bearer and pioneer of vernacular literature in the New Culture movement of 1919, strongly advocated the use of vernacular Chinese in translating and writing. At that time, the vernacular language has just started, far from perfect, urgently wanting more new forms of expression. And translation was undoubtedly the most direct means, by which not only can advance science and technology and progressive ideology of the west be introduced, but also different types of literary devices and language expressions.

The poetics shaped in Hu Shi's literary translation directly influenced his literary creation. His new views of literature were related to the long-term influence of Western ideology and culture as well as to the continuous language practice between the two languages. Inspired by Huxley's thought of evolution, Hu believed that literature is developing and new era requires new literature, saying "Literature will change with the times." ("literary improvement") only to get rid of the shackles of the classical concept of classical doctrine, to create a new era of new literary genres and literary style. Under the influence of this new view of literature, Hu boldly undertook his literary experiments, in particularly, his vernacular poetry innovation.

As early as 1917, Hu Shi published eight vernacular poems in the *New Youth* magazine and later his new collection of poems "*Attempts*" came out. His vernacular poems had a great breakthrough in the aspects of form, theme, style and so on. But at that time, the vernacular poetry was just emerging and it is hard to break the barriers of traditional poetry for a few examples can be referred to. His poetry innovation, starting with the poetic language with focus on the change of poetic form, benefitted from his translation of English free verse in vernacular Chinese, in particular, his abridged translation in 1920 of a lyric poem *Over the Roofs* written by American female poet Sara Teasdale.

I said, "I have shut my heart, As one shuts an open door, That Love may starve therein And trouble me no more."	我说, "我把心收起, 像人家把门关了, 叫爱情生生的饿死, 也许不再和我为难了。"
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But over the roofs there came The wet new wind of May, And a tune blew up from the curb Where the street-piano play,	但是五月的湿风, 时时从屋顶上吹来; 还有那街心的琴调, 一阵阵的飞来。
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My room was white with the sun And Love cried out in me, "I am strong, I will break your heart Unless you set me free"	一屋里都是大阳光, 这时候爱情有点醉了, 他说: "我是关不住的, 我要把你的心打碎了!"
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Hu Shi broke the translation mode of the old literary system, abandoned Chinese traditional metrical patterns of five-word or seven-word verse and used almost literal

translation in vernacular language to reproduce the "structure" characteristics of the western poetic language. These colloquial verses, natural and rhythmic, laid a solid foundation for the later vernacular free verses. No wonder Hu Shi claimed in the "Preface" to the reprint of his collection of new poetry that this poem was the beginning of "new poetry" era.

#### 4. PATRONAGE

Another important factor that influences the translators is patronage and "it will be understood to mean something like the powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature." (Lefevere, 2004a, p.15) Translation is not a translator's personal action, but a multi-faceted literary practice. From the choice of the source texts to the decision of translation strategy, and then to the formation, publication and dissemination of the translation, every process will be subject to the control and constraints from the patronage.

The patronage that influenced Hu Shi's literary translation and creation comes from *New Youth* magazine and Peking University. *New Youth* was an influential magazine in the 1910s and 1920s that played an important role in initiating the New Culture Movement and spreading the influence of the May Fourth Movement. Hu, as a writer for the magazine and later an editor, startlingly concurred with the views of its founder Chen Duxiu on literary translation and literary creation.

Firstly, both had the same literary translation purpose. In reply to Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu said:

I greatly appreciate your comment on how to build new literature.... You means that now, for us Chinese, translation is more preferable to creation when doing literary works. It is, I agree. If it is so in literature, how is it with the others? (Ren, 1993, p.183)

Obviously, Chen Duxiu also intended to use translation to create new literature and to construct new culture.

Secondly, both advocated the translation of famous works. Adhering to the principle "Be internationalist and not isolationist", *New Youth* accepted a variety of genres and writers of foreign literature, introducing many masterpieces of great writers through translation such as Russia's Tolstoy, Turgenev, Golgi, Norway's Ibsen, France's Maupassant, Britain's Wilde, India's Tagore etc.

In addition, both advocated using vernacular Chinese to translate. Chen Duxiu is committed to remold Chinese national character, so it is undoubtedly the most effective to use the vernacular language of the general public as the language of translation. Through translation, the vernacular Chinese gradually replaced the classical one, which promoted the construction of New Literature and New Culture as well as the change of the traditional way of thinking. Finally, both preferred to the literal translation methods. *New Youth* explicitly required its contributors: "If

you translated from foreign languages, please attach the source text as well." Moreover, it even published quite a few translation works with the source texts for reference. That's to say, the translator had to be strictly faithful to the original text, keeping consistent in the form and content. It was because of the agreements above that Hu Shi and his patronage benefitted each other: Hu earned a reputation from *New Youth* and *New Youth* became more popular for his participation.

When it comes to Hu Shi's patronage, we have to mention the Peking University. Hu, after returning from abroad, was invited by *New Youth* as an editor and later was recommended to Peking University as a professor by Chen Duxiu. This position was, to a certain extent, an impetus for Hu's late literary development, not only guaranteeing his economic sources but also upgrading his social status. At that time, the president of Peking University Cai Yuanpei, one of the most important leaders of Chinese new intellectuals, gave much care and help to Hu Shi, which facilitated his later academic achievements. Peking University gathered a large number of scholars with new ideas and, at that time, almost all of the advanced thoughts stemmed from there. That has played a strong role in promoting the publication of Hu Shi's new literary views and the dissemination of his literary works.

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## CONCLUSION

Manipulation always means a kind of extraordinary alteration for some purposes. Hu Shi's manipulation of literary translation serves for the New Culture Movement that advocates new language expressions, new literary genres and new ideology. His strategy is to select Western classical works and use literal translation method of so-

called "Pursuit of truth" and "Good translating". Hu's manipulation of literary creation serves for his personal ambition to advocate for the use of written vernacular Chinese and to build new Chinese literature. The method he applied is the literary translation, though which new language expressions and literary genres have been introduced into Chinese and eventually become an essential part of modern Chinese language.

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