

A Comparative Study of Two Chinese Versions of *Gone with the Wind* from a Social-Cultural Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

Translation Studies has developed by leaps and bounds and taken the cultural turn since the late 1970s in the West. It has been realized that translation doesn't take place in a vacuum by more and more scholars who have begun to analyze translation from cultural perspectives. Now, more attention is paid to the breeding context in the target culture and translation studies are becoming target-culture studies.

In the 1990s, it claimed that Translation Studies had officially taken a Cultural Turn, which the original source-oriented prescriptive approach to translation is now giving way to the target-oriented descriptive approach.

In the paper, there is a case study in order to reveal the importance of social-cultural context in the process of shaping a translation work. It is about two Chinese versions of *Gone with the Wind* in different periods of time. One was translated by Fu Dong hua in 1940; the other was co-translated by Dai Kan, Li Ye guang and Zhuang Yi chuan in 1990.

Attempting to evaluate translation from a macro-perspective, this paper analyzes the social and cultural context of to Chinese versions of *Gone with the Wind* and finally gets the conclusion: translation works should be evaluated from a macro perspective rather than from linguistic or literary perspectives.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional translation theories judge translation works or translators either from literary or linguistic perspectives. Next the paper will review traditional literary approaches and linguistic approaches.

1.1 Traditional Translation Criteria

No matter in the western countries or in China, the discussion about translation criteria has never stopped after the beginning of translation thousands of years ago. Such as, literal (i.e. word-for-word) and free (i.e. sense-for-sense) translation; Alexander Tytler's three principles; YanFu's three criteria; Eugene Nida's dynamic equivalence and Peter Newmark's semantic and communicative translation.

In most aforementioned critics' opinions, traditional translation theories are mainly source-text oriented, prescriptive, and static and some of them are even unsystematic without having enough and rational analysis. The theories presuppose that there is an ideal and perfect translation which is identical with the source text and translators' task is to seek for it. Yet the "ideal" translation is just like a pane of glass through which people can see the original without being aware of anything intervening. Therefore, translators' job is a hard one; translators are much like dancers on ropes with fettered legs.

1.1.1 Literary Approaches

Literary school view translation as an artistic creation by putting forward some standards, such as YanFu's three criteria: faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance, Qian-Zhongshu's transfiguration, Xu Yuanchong's beauty of sound, beauty of meaning and beauty of form and so on.

Literary approaches' criteria which are sharp and convincing are not only abstract and over-generalized but also impressionistic and subjective. Even though the literary school also values the translator's role in the process of translation, they are not so manageable in practical translation.

1.1.2 Linguistic Approaches

Linguistic approaches regard translation as the transfer of texts from one language into another and employ scientific approaches to set up the practical rules and modes for translating, while the scholars and critics of literary school view translation as an artistic creation by putting forward some standards. The scholars of this school think that the central problem of translation is that of finding Target Language translation equivalents and the central task of translation theory is that of defining the nature and conditions of translation equivalence.

The advantage of linguistic approaches lies in the detailed and exquisite description of the inter-lingual transference which is normative and aims at setting up norms and modes to restrict translating activity the defects are also obvious. Linguistic approaches mainly concentrate on the language level without considering outer factors, such as the influence of a particular society, particular time as well as the context in which the translations are produced.

Linguistics fail to take into account broader contextual dimensions and literary schools are too obsessed with making pointless evaluative judgments. Both of the approaches have come to the dead lane. (Zhang, 2004, p. 8)

For quite a long time, the traditional translation theorists only see "what the translation is", but fail to analyze "why the translation is like this" and "how particular translation happens", thus they easily leave the concrete translation context alone and judge translation separately without considering social and cultural factors.

1.2 The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies

The 1980s was a decade of consolidation for the fledgling discipline known as Translation Studies. Having emerged onto the world stage in the late 1970s, the subject began to be taken seriously, and was no longer seen as an unscientific field of enquiry of secondary importance. Throughout the 1980s interest in the theory and practice of translation grew steadily. Then, in the 1990s, Translation Studies finally came into its own, for this proved to be the decade of its global expansion. (Bassnett, 2004, p.1) Translation Studies put emphasis on cultural aspects of translation, on the contexts in which translation occurs. Many famous Western translators have contributed a lot to the shifting of emphasis of translation studies, and such figures as Evan-Zohar, Toury, Andre Lefevere and Susan Bassnett are all well-known in the field.

Since the 1970s, Translation Studies has gradually taken the broader "cultural turn" which is the term used in Translation Studies for the move towards the analysis of translation from a cultural angle. Looking back into the traces of Western translation studies in the latest twenty years, we could find that the emphasis has been shifted from linguistic studies to extra-linguistic studies. (Ke, 2000, p.10)

Translation is more than a practice of bilingual transfer, that is to say, the transfer of two languages and

transfer of different cultures, many other factors, such as culture, history, ethics, beliefs, aesthetic standards as well as ideology in target language context are also involved in the process of translation. In other words, translation is a social product and translators are social beings, translation practice and translators can never escape the influence of a particular society at a given period of time. So attention should be paid to the process that shapes a culture at a given point of time when we study translation. Contrary to traditional translation theories which are mainly source-text oriented, adopting culturally oriented and target-text oriented perspectives have become a general trend for Translation Studies.

2. THE NOVEL AND ITS CHINESE VERSIONS

The novel was written by Margaret Mitchell, a southern American woman writer in 1936. The novel was such a stirring success that it was sold more than 50,000 copies per day after its publishing and later won many prizes in America and occupied the position of best seller for many years. The movie based on it was released in the year of 1939, which then was the greatest winner in the Oscar Academic Award and still remained one of the classical movies till today.

Gone with the Wind is a love story with the American Civil War as its background. The heroine Scarlett O'Hara is a willful daughter of wealthy planter in Georgia who grows up in comfort environment with an affectionate father and an elegant mother. The only thing she cares is to cut a smart figure in all the balls and to attract all the boys. She enjoys the admiration of almost all the boys in the town, except maybe only one, Ashley Wilkes who she does not understand at all. Yet he is the only one who she wants to marry. When Ashley engages with his cousin Melanie Hamilton, she is very shocked and angry. Out of jealousy and spite, she marries Melanie's younger brother, Charles who she does not love at all and soon he dies in the war.

Later the civil war breaks out and all her peaceful and happy life is gone. Her second husband dies also. She struggles to survive the hard life and tries every means to support the whole family after the war; she becomes a strong and shrewd woman. Her capability and firmness win her love and respect from another man named Rhett, who is the same kind of person as her: selfish, clever, capable and practical. They get married and have a lovely daughter. But her selfishness and continuing infatuation for the weak-minded and useless Ashley destroy Rhett's love; he left her soon after their daughter's death. She realizes at last that Rhett is the man she really loves and deserves her love.

The novel was first translated into Chinese in 1940 by Fu Donghua, a famous translator of his time, shortly after

the production of the original novel and the debut of the film in China. Since the first version came out, the novel has been retranslated for many times. The most influential versions are the following five ones: Fu Donghua's, Dai Kan's, LiYeguang's, Huang Zeren's, Youruo's, Chen Liangting's and Li Meihua's.

Two versions are compared in this paper, namely, the versions translated by Fu Donghua in 1940 and the one co-translated by Dai Kan, Li Yeguang and Zhuang Yichuan in 1990. In the following paragraphs I will name them Fu's version and Dai's version respectively just for convenience. The comparative case study will be done under the broad socio-cultural framework and by means of a descriptive approach.

3. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE TWO VERSIONS

Of all the versions, Fu's translation is the most influential and controversial one. His version is characterized by domestication and abbreviation. He adopts a target-culture-oriented translation method. He uses a lot of Chinese-culture-specific words and phrases and also rewrites some of the sentences and paragraphs in his translation, which makes it read like a Chinese novel.

He also cuts out some whole paragraphs of lengthy description and psychological analysis which he thinks is not important to the main story while Dai's version is basically source-text-oriented and more faithful to the original, and the three translators adopt foreignization method and try to keep the original flavor of the novel. On the other hand, the psychological descriptions and narrations omitted in Fu's version are fully preserved and translated in their version.

The most prominent features in Fu's version lie in abridging, supplement and rewriting in content; while Dai's version is strictly faithful to the original novel. Just as what has been discussed above, translators rewrite and adapt the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time so that the translation can be accepted by more readers.

For example, Fu's version is mainly characterized by its abridgement in content, which is also severely criticized by many scholars. Fu's version has about 892,000 Chinese characters, while Dai's version has 915,000 Chinese characters, about 23,000 more characters than Fu's version. The contrast of the Chinese characters between the two versions from one aspect shows that Fu has a lot of abridgement in content. Contrary to Fu's abridgement, there is little abridgement and omission in Dai's version which is a complete and faithful one. Comparatively speaking, Dai's version is a complete one.

Fu Donghua is a famous and creative translator of his time who inevitably rewrites some sentences in order to

make his translation read more beautiful and smooth. In many examples, Fu's translation is quite different from the original text and also different from Dai's translation, he rewrites the original according to his own understanding. Dai's translation is strictly faithful to the original one, but it sounds a little stiff. The grammar in some of Dai's sentences does not accord with Chinese grammar; even readers today feel some of their translation awkward.

Fu's version has been criticized because of its unfaithfulness to the original. Addition in content is another representation of the features. The addition is a typical Chinese one which provides the transition of the whole sentence naturally, but at the same time the addition also deprives the readers of their right of appreciating the text in their own ways. In comparison, Dai keeps the indirectness of the original sentence and adds no subjective explanation, thus the readers are left more space to understand the text.

4. REASONS FOR THE DIFFERENCES OF THE TWO CHINESE VERSIONS

4.1 Different Social Backgrounds

In the late 1930s and the 1940s, China was experiencing two wars: the War of resistance against Japan and the Civil War. The whole country was in a chaotic situation, and people's life and thought were affected by the wars. A new collective ideology came into being and eventually took hold of people's mind, which is termed "war ideology" (Wang, 2003, p.22). Under the influence of war ideology, literary works and translation works produced around the 1940s were mainly connected with wars.

Fu Donghua's version was produced in 1940, at that time, the Anti-Japanese War was going on and China was in a severe national crisis. In order to encourage people to fight against Japanese invaders, the mainstream of translation works were those Soviet pre-war ones and world classics (Chen, 1989, p.290).

From the analysis above, we can say that Fu Donghua's choice of *Gone with the Wind* at that time corresponds with the "war ideology", because the novel sets the American Civil War as its social background and the heroine, Scarlett's strong and brave personality can just encourage the people in the turbulent times to face difficulties and frustration in life. But then a question emerges: why Fu Donghua, the translator, deleted so many words which depict the war and the environment? To answer this question, we need to consider the special circumstance, the special ideology in people's mind in Shanghai around 1940.

Since the reform and opening up policy in the 1980s in China, great changes have taken place in China's society and also in people's mind. "Reform and opening up to the outside world", "to realize the four modernizations of the country" and "to acquire instant wealth and prosperity for

oneself” became the focus of people's life and formed the main ideology. The opening policies, such as “to attract investment from foreign countries” and “the set up of special economic zone” provided the channel for Chinese people to understand foreign countries.

China was going through dramatic and rapid social change from the mid-1980s and early 1990s; ideological transformation and economic reform were the focuses. All these factors -- the conventional tradition, the recent Maoist legacy, the government's new policy for a model of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and strong Western influence, contended with each other and made their impact on people's lives.

After too long isolation from the outside world, people were eager to know more about the other countries, especially the Western countries, America is the very country in which people were most interested. Chinese people's attitude towards the Western culture changed a lot, the cultural differences between China and foreign countries drew people's attention. During this period of time, an upsurge of going abroad appeared, more and more Chinese went abroad and brought back new ideas and new style of life. There was a very popular book called *The Beijingers* in New York which vividly depicted the upsurge of going abroad.

Since China embarked on the road of opening up to the outside world and learning from the developed countries, people became more open-minded. Thereupon, an enlightened atmosphere was formed, different ideas and concepts flooded to people's mind, people began to show more respect and tolerance to the diversity and multiplicity of foreign cultures, which in turn promoted communication and reduced conflicts between China and other countries.

4.2 Different Readers in Two Decades

When Fu Donghua translated the novel in 1940, most of his readers were fashionable and disengaged ladies and gentlemen who yearned for American-style of life but didn't know much about American culture and American language. Before Fu Donghua translated the book, the film of *Gone with the wind* had been put on screen for quite a long time. Due to the demand and limit of screen, the film adapted the original book in some parts and couldn't fully render the content. The film gave audiences an impression that the novel was a romantic story of love and life adventures. The Chinese title of the film also made people think that the novel told the experiences of a beautiful lady in turbulent times. So the film shown before Fu's translation formed the pre-understanding of the novel in the mind of the general readers.

The readers in 1989 were different from the readers in 1940. With the deepening of China's opening to the outside world and the enhancement of international communication, Chinese readers' English level improved and their horizon was widened. Readers' knowledge kept increasing with the development of society, their reception

ability and reception inclination also changed accordingly. (Qin, 1999, p.55)

Translation is an important way for international communication. Since the 1980s, the translation of foreign literary works has become very active. Those translated works expanded Chinese reader's vision and improved their aesthetic appreciation level. Chinese readers began to appreciate literary works from different perspectives and angles, for example, they became more interested in the detailed psychological description in foreign works.

As time went on, more and more Chinese readers realized that *Gone with the wind* is by no means a popular one, it is an excellent novel which depicts the life of the southern planters of America in the middle of the 19th century and a significant aspect of the Civil War and post-war construction though there is some distortion about the Civil War and American reality. Readers began to evaluate the novel and their aesthetic attitude changed greatly, they paid attention to the description about the war and the post-war construction rather than just the plot. Hence, the readers' expectation changed, they needed a new version which could faithfully translate the original novel. Thus, the second version which differed greatly from Fu's version came into being naturally in 1990.

4.3 Different Translation Purposes of the Two Versions

Any translation is stimulated by a certain motive and serves a certain purpose. Skopos theorists assert that any action has an aim, a purpose. From their standpoint, translation is considered not as a process of transcoding, but as a form of human action which has its own purpose basically decided on by the translator. Translators are social beings; their purposes are deeply influenced by the social and cultural factors and the needs of the particular readers.

Translation from 1919 to 1949 aimed at serving the national salvation movement, most of the translated works were those progressive ones which could boost the morale of Chinese people. Due to the turbulent social situation, those progressive works occupied the primary position in the system of translated literature. *Gone with the Wind* was regarded as a popular novel which of course was in the secondary position in the 1940. According to polysystem theory, the translation of the novel at that time had to follow the target cultural norms concerning the translation of popular fictions.

While translation in the last two decades of the 20th century was resumed to fulfill the need of cultural exchanges as translation is an important way for promoting communication. Introducing new ideas from abroad and setting up Chinese special ideology frame were the main translation purposes in the 1980s (Wang, 1999, p.54).

Every translation work serves certain readers. The target readers of Dai's version were both the refined and the common readers. The purpose of their translation was

to make compensation for Fu's translation and produced a complete version which could better reflect the historical background of the original novel. Chinese readers after 1980 expected more foreign flavor in the translation so that they could appreciate the uniqueness of foreign literature. They hoped more foreign elements could be preserved in the retranslations of foreign literary works so that they could appreciate the works from multi-faceted perspectives and get more fresh thoughts.

4.4 Language Change During the Two Periods

Language is a social phenomenon and keeps changing with time and society. The change of social life can lead to change of language, including change of sound, vocabulary and grammar, vocabulary is the most conspicuous. On the other hand, language is a mirror which reflects social change. It's important to analyze the relation between language changes and the social reasons that cause its changes. The two versions of *Gone with the Wind* were produced in 1940 and 1989 respectively; the long time interval and the tremendous change in society caused the language differences of the two versions.

Great changes took place from the turn of the 20th century to the end of this century. All these changes were faithfully reflected in the change of Chinese language. The language changed from the ancient Chinese to semi-ancient and semi-modern Chinese after the Vernacular Chinese reformation in 1910s, and then to modern Chinese.

The Vernacular Chinese was proposed after the May Fourth Movement and it replaced Classical Chinese to introduce foreign works into China. Nonetheless, Vernacular Chinese at that time was not mature, the vocabulary and syntactic patterns were far from sufficient. Hence it was urgent to enrich the language.

Fu Donghua strongly inclined to the Classical Chinese. His position was clearly revealed from his discussion with Zheng Zhenduo: "I think it's too superficial to hope to reach the great goal that purpose 'great advances in the art of literature' and innovation by means of Europeanization" In the 1930s and 1940s, the inheriting and absorbing of Classical Chinese greatly enriched the literary language. At the same time, the interlanguage between Classical Chinese and Vernacular Chinese kept evolving. Then the conception of "populace's language" was raised. The striking features of the "populace's language" lay in its suppleness and understandability. Fu Donghua was one of the representatives who supported the "populace's language", otherwise, he proposed that the language should learn from the masses.

Fu Donghua's language style and the choice of words and expressions which we have discussed in Chapter Three were in conformity with the general tendency of the development of Vernacular Chinese at the end of the 1930s.

Language phenomenon is related to the socio-cultural

background in which it is produced. It is just a product of history and some concrete situations, which will change in accordance with the specific situations. The Vernacular Chinese was in its primitive stage when Fu translated *Gone with the Wind* in 1940. After several decades' development, the Vernacular Chinese was mature and had already been well accepted by Chinese people. It has more Europeanized expressions and grammatical structures as a result of deepening of international communication and the influence of translated works. Inter-communication and translation practice are important ways to make Chinese Europeanized.

As time goes on, Europeanized Chinese have been accepted by most Chinese and people are used to the enriched language because people have been more tolerant and open-minded since 1980. On the other hand, modernism in the 1980s also exerted influence on Chinese literary creation, and bold creation and new attempts in language were used. Dai's version produced in 1989, so the language in this version was more Europeanized and formal in terms of syntax, grammar and vocabulary.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, a case study is done about two Chinese versions of *Gone with the wind*, which were translated by Fu Donghua in 1940 and by Dai Kan, Li Yeguang and Zhuang Yichuang in 1990 respectively. The two versions are different from their own social and cultural contexts and the reasons that cause the differences have been analyzed.

Based on the analysis of the case study, the following conclusions can be drawn: Owing to every translation work has its own specific social-cultural context and is distinctively marked with some particular features of a given culture at a given time, especially literary translation, Translation is the product of a particular time, place and a particular context. It is deeply influenced by the social network. So versions of the same original work translated by different translators at different times are quite different. When we evaluate a translation work, we should take the social and cultural factors into consideration. And then retranslation is necessary and inevitable; it is the outcome of social-cultural and language development. So retranslation should be encouraged, but the quality should be put on the first place at any time.

Through comparative study and analysis of the two versions, it cannot be said that which version is better and which version is worse just according to the poetics and ideology of our time. The right way is to put each version in its own social and cultural context to analyze. Anyhow, different readers have different tastes and aesthetic values at different times. Each translation belongs to its own social-cultural context and each version has its historical and existential significance.

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