

Realistic Enlightenment of Yang Xianyi's Translation of Ancient Chinese Poetry "Going Out"

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Abstract:

Mr. Yang Xianyi, a leading translator in China, has made remarkable achievements in translation practice. However, unfortunately, the academic circles mainly focus on the English translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions* and Lu Xun's series. However, they pay less attention to the English translation of ancient poems with the same high quality, and few scholars have systematically extracted Practical Enlightenment from them. In order to make up for the regret, this paper summarizes the successful translation experience of Yang Xianyi's ancient poetry through the study of his English translation and the concrete examples of Yang Xianyi's poetry, which provides practical enlightenment for the current "going out" of Chinese ancient poetry.

Key words: Yang Xianyi, English translation of ancient poetry, Realistic Enlightenment

1. Introduction

In order to carry forward China's excellent traditional culture, the great translator Yang Xianyi and his wife translated together hundreds of classical literary masterpieces such as *Dream of Red Mansions*, Lu Xun's *Collections* and *Historical Records* into English, making outstanding contributions to the spread of Chinese literary works in the world. Besides, Yang and his wife also translated a large number of classical Chinese poetry. A set of Chinese-English translation series published by Foreign Language Publishing House in 2001 systematically included their translation works and published them into books, including *The Book of Songs*, *Chuci*, *Yuefu*, *Tang Poetry* and *Song Ci*. The quality of their translation is obvious to all, and they are loved by Western readers. Huang Youyi, deputy director of the Chinese Foreign Language Administration, once told reporters that his translation is a classic in the eyes of all Western scholars who study Chinese culture.

"With the continuous enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength, Chinese culture is playing a more and more important role in the world cultural pattern. At present, it is right time to promote the "going out" of Chinese culture and enhance the international influence of Chinese culture. Ancient Chinese poetry occupies a place in Chinese literature, just like a bright pearl on the crown, like a magnificent flower in a multitude of flowers, like a shining star in the vast star river. Therefore, in order to show the charm of ancient Chinese poetry on the world stage and let the world understand its value, translation becomes the most important link. Yang and his wife succeeded in translating and introducing a large number of ancient poems, and they can be regarded as a role model for Chinese translators. Summarizing their valuable experience can provide practical enlightenment for the "going out" of Chinese ancient poetry culture.

2. Realistic Enlightenment

Yang and his wife succeeded in translating and introducing ancient Chinese poetry, which contributed a lot to promoting the "going out" of ancient poetry culture. Their experience is worth summarizing. The author puts forward practical enlightenment from two aspects of translation strategy and translation mode.

2.1. Foreignization is the basic strategy

Lawrence Venuti (Venuti, 1995,p.20)advocated foreignness in translation, noting that foreignized translation can “restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation”. Antoine Berman(2000) criticized that earlier translations tend to suppress the “foreign” elements, arguing that the aim of the translating act was “receiving the Foreign as Foreign” in order to preserve the exoticism in culture.

The exotic elements in Chinese ancient poems contain a large number of excellent and unique images of Chinese traditional culture, which has opened a window for foreign readers to understand the history and culture of China for five thousand years. However, many translators, who are "flattering" the readers of the translated versions, usually adopt free translation as the main translation method. The style of the original poem has been greatly damaged, even totally different from its face. It is already a "localized" work before the readers of the translated versions, and the exotic features of the original poem have long disappeared. In this regard, Yang advocates that "translation should not make too many explanations and should be as faithful as possible to the image of the original text, neither exaggeration nor anything else" (Yang Xianyi, 2011:4-6). This foreignization strategy is also vividly embodied in the practice of translating ancient poems into English. Two methods are mainly adopted: literal translation and flexible annotation. The author will analyze this strategy with concrete examples.

(1) literal translation.

In order to make a more intuitive analysis, the author compares the translation of Mr. Xu Yuanchong, a translator, with that of Mr. and Mrs. Yang Xianyi, with the following examples:

Example 1:

ST: 汉皇重色思倾国，御宇多年求不得。

TT: Appreciating feminine charms,

The Han emperor sought a great beauty.

Throughout his empire he searched

For many years without success. (Yang)

The beauty-loving monarch longed year after year

To find a beautiful lady without peer. (Xu)

This sentence comes from the Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai's "Yellow Crane Tower Sends Meng Haoran's Guangling". The poem tells the story of my old friend saying goodbye to the poet and going to Yangzhou in March in Yangchun. Yang and his wife adopted literal translation as the main method, supplemented by free translation, equating "March" with "Spring", while Xu Yuanchong did not translate directly. In view of the place name Yangzhou, Yang and his wife adopted literal translation, while Xu Yuanchong translated freely as River Town. In contrast, Yang and his wife retained the unique heterogeneity of Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, in order not to damage the original poem text, the author believes that in the process of translating poems, literal translation should be adopted to foreign elements as far as possible. Restore the exotic features of the original poems.

(2) Feasible notes

The strategy of foreignization is bound to make the heterogeneous components of the source language culture "violence" appear in front of the target language readers. Therefore, in order to eliminate the obstacles of readers' understanding, it is an effective way to use annotations actively. On the one hand, it can keep the style of the original poem. On the other hand, it can let the Western readers understand Chinese culture, and love Chinese culture and eventually be willing to actively disseminate Chinese culture. Yang and his wife used annotations in the English translation of ancient poems to add to the translation. Examples are as follows:

Example 3.

ST: 势拔五岳掩赤城

TT: Tower over the Five Peaks* and the Scarlet Fortress.

*Five high mountains in China: Mount Tai, Mount Hua, Mount Heng, Mount Heng and Mount Song.

This sentence comes from the poem of Li Bai, a poet of the Tang Dynasty, entitled "Sleeping in Heaven Grandma's Sound of Farewell". It tells readers that the mountain of Heaven Grandma is so steep that it even surpasses the five mountains. Although Wuyue is well known in China, it is relatively unfamiliar to Western readers. Therefore, Yang, on the basis of literal translation of Wuyue, supplemented by annotations, not only retains the style of the original text, but also disseminates common knowledge of Chinese traditional culture, which can be said to kill two birds with one stone. But the drawback is that the Pinyin of Hengshan and Hengshan are the same. And so Yang adopts

Mount Heng, which makes readers feel confused. The author believes that the translation will be clearer if further annotations and explanations are added, such as Mount Heng (located in Hunan Province) and Mount Heng (located in Shanxi Province).

Example 4.

ST: 空中闻天鸡

TT: Heard the Cock of Heaven crow.

According to Chinese's mythology, this cock roosted on a great tree in the southeast. When the sun rose it crowed, and all the cocks in the world followed suit.

The poem also comes from Li Bai's "Sleeping in Heaven Grandma's Remembrance". It tells us that the poet stands on the top of the mountain and hears the rooster crowing in the sky at sunrise. "Tianji" is a kind of divine chicken in ancient Chinese legend. It lives on a big tree on the top of Taodu Mountain in the East China Sea. When Tianji crows, the chickens all over the world follow. "Tianji" is a cultural blank for Western readers. Therefore, Yang also adopts the method of literal translation and annotation in his translation to enable western readers to understand ancient Chinese legends, stimulate their interest in Chinese culture and successfully translate and introduce Chinese traditional culture.

Example 5.

ST: 赠汪伦

TT: To Wang Lun

When Li Bai was staying in Jingxian in present-day Anhui, Wang Lun often brought him good wine to drink and came to see him off when he left.

When translating, ordinary translators often only focus on people's names, place names, time and cultural knowledge, ignoring the poet's creative intentions. From the perspective of readers, Yang believes that the background and intention of annotation creation are also very necessary. This title comes from Li Bai's poem "Giving Wang Lun". It is one of the most popular works in Li Bai's poems. It describes the scenery of Wang Lun, a good friend of the poet, when he wants to go on a boat, and conveys their sincere friendship. On the basis of translating poems, Yang supplemented the poet's creative intention, so that readers could not only "know what it is" but also "know why it is".

Yang not only annotates the place name, person name and time, but also considers the poet's creative background and intention. He really uses annotations flexibly, which not only makes the translation more beautiful, but also preserves the essence of the original text and disseminates Chinese traditional culture. It can be said to kill two birds with one stone.

2.2. Sino-foreign cooperation model is an important means

The process of "going out" in ancient Chinese poetry must not be smooth sailing, and it is bound to achieve twice the result with half the effort by adopting efficient means. Many scholars believe that Sino-foreign cooperation is an effective mode. Huang Youyi believes that "Chinese translation and foreign translation must not be translated by one person, and there must be cooperation between China and foreign countries". According to an important inspiration from my personal work in translation, it is better to form a translation partner that includes both native speakers and foreigners. Yang also said: "I think that at present a more feasible way is to work with overseas Sinologists to formulate a set of translation programs of Chinese literary works."

Speaking of Yang and his wife, people always call them "husband and wife translators" (Yang Xianyi, 2011:29), and their cooperation is brilliant and unique. During the long period of more than half a century, they devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the cause of Chinese translation, translating and publishing more than 200 translations, totaling more than 10 million words. His works are also widely loved by Western readers. The way they work is usually like this: Yang interprets the original text and Gladys Yang types the translated version after making some necessary improvements. Gladys Yang is a sinologist. In her cooperation with Yang in translating and introducing Chinese classical literature, she has given Yang great help, mainly in the following two aspects:

(1) Bilingual Cultural Literacy of Chinese Scholars

Gladys Yang has a dual national cultural identity. Her father, J.B. Taylor, was one of the British missionaries sent to China by the London Society in the early 20th century. He has been in China for nearly 40 years. While engaged in Christian missionary work, he actively participated in the establishment of the Department of Economics of Yanjing University, devoted himself to the investigation and research of China's agricultural economy, and devoted himself to China's "industry". Cooperative Campaign. (Preliminary Study on the Activities of London Missionary Dai Leren in

China) Under the influence of her father, Gladys Yang loved Chinese traditional culture from an early age. When she was a teenager, she received a typical Westernized education. After marrying Yang and returning to China, she made great efforts to improve her Chinese language ability and devoted her whole life to the translation and introduction of Chinese literature.

"Gladys Yang has both English and Chinese proficiency skills and dual cultural background knowledge, making her an ideal Chinese literary translator. When translating with Yang Xianyi, she decorated the language of Yang 's translation to make it more authentic. (Gladys Yang 196) is also reflected in the translation of ancient poetry:

Example 8.

ST: 身无彩凤双飞翼，心有灵犀一点通。

TT: We can't fly wing to wing like a pair of phoenixes

Yet our hearts closely linked beat in harmony.

This sentence is from the Tang Dynasty poet Li Shangyin's *Titleless*, describing that although lovers are separated in two places, they cannot meet, but their hearts are like the elusive rhinoceros horns. In the translation of this sentence, Yang and his wife not only add the subject, but also use "yet" as a turning point, vividly conveying the hero's psychological activities, and in line with the English syntactic habits, which can be regarded as a model of "Chinese-Western integration" translation.

Therefore, Chinese scholars' bilingual cultural literacy plays an important role in cooperative translation.

3. Channels of Spread

Literary spread is an arduous task. Relying on the channels of translation and spread of overseas Chinese scholars, including the publication, distribution and dissemination of translated works, it can promote the "going out" of Chinese culture. "We can try to attract the participation of overseas sinologists and translators to enhance the actual translation and dissemination effect of Chinese culture by virtue of their identity advantages, the advantages of the target language and the advantages of their contacts in overseas publishing circles." (Go out of P202)

For a long time, books and periodicals have been an important medium of cultural exchange. As a professional translator and foreign expert of Chinese Literature, Gladys Yang successfully translated

and introduced a large number of Chinese literary works to Western readers. "In the 1980s, Chinese Literature entered a golden period of development, with more than 150 countries and regions selling its publications." (Gladys Yang 192) Gladys Yang brought the translator's subjectivity into full play and built a bridge for cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. In addition, when translating and introducing *The Heavy Wings*, Gladys Yang invited her friend and feminist Davin to make prefaces and postscripts for her English translation, in order to expand the overseas influence of his works and cooperated with the British Villago Publishing House to publish the English version of the book, so as to make Chinese literature "go out" successfully.

By analyzing the successful cases of Yang Xianyi's and Gladys Yang's co-translations, the author draws the conclusion that in the process of promoting the "going out" of Chinese ancient poetry culture, the mode of Sino-foreign co-translations can achieve twice the result with half the effort.

4. Conclusion

Translation of poetry "can give new vitality to national literature. It can go deep into the center of language, shake it in new ways, hone it, and make it sensitive and active again. Chinese ancient poetry is the treasure of Chinese culture. Therefore, the "going out" strategy of Chinese ancient poetry is an important part of the "going out" strategy of Chinese culture. Yang and his wife, through their high-quality translation, made the publication of overseas ancient poetry popular with Western readers, which made an inestimable contribution to the translation and introduction of Chinese ancient poetry. To sum up, the study of Yang Xianyi's English translation of ancient poetry has important practical implications for the development of Chinese ancient poetry into the world.

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