

A Comparative Study of the English Translation of the Poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions* from the Perspective of Translation Psychology

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Abstract: Based on the theory of translation psychology, this thesis analyzes the linguistic features of the poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, and then compares the translation strategies and language differences between Yang's translation and Huo's translation. In the end, this thesis analyzes the translation of poetry in the two versions from the perspectives of the translator's cognition, aesthetics and cultural psychology. The theoretical knowledge of translation psychology is used to study the translation of poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, which further promotes the development of "intersections" between translation studies.

Keywords: *A Dream of Red Mansions*, translation psychology, cognitive psychology, aesthetic psychology, cultural psychology

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1. Introduction

A Dream of Red Mansions is the most excellent works of literature and art in Chinese classical novels, it represents a long and splendid Chinese culture. In recent years, many scholars in China and the West are devoted in the research and translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, and there have been many translated versions of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, among which the two most famous full-text versions are translated respectively by the Yang Xianyi and David Hawkes. Scholars commonly regard that the Yang's version adopted the foreignization strategy and David Hawkes' version adopted the domestication strategy^[1]. In the translation, Yang Xianyi and his wife are faithful to the original text and retain the original authentic language. In order to spread Chinese culture better, the method of foreignization is adopted frequently, but the domestication method is also adopted in those difficult expressions. But for western readers understand easily, played down the cultural differences of different countries, Hawkes adopted domestication method, but the expression of some ethnic characteristics and exotic gives reservation^[2]. Through comparative analysis of Yang Xianyi' and Hawkes' versions of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, we know the translator in fact both readers and the double identity of the translator at the same time, in the process of translation by their own personality, values, the influence of the cultural orientation and other aspects^[3].

Recently, poems translation of the *A Dream of Red Mansions* studies mainly base on the following several aspects, such as the relative degree of equivalence, from the perspective of relevance theory, from the perspective of Liu Biqing style symbol system, and from the perspective of German functionalist translation. However, few people have analyzed the translation of poems in different versions from the perspective of translation psychology. Translation psychology is a new interdisciplinary subject. It is the scientific study of the translators' characteristics and principle of cognitive psychology activity, aesthetic psychology activity and cultural psychology activity. The role of the translator in the translation process is influenced by various psychological mechanism, the psychological status of the translator directly impact on the transformation behavior, especially the subject and object of two-way movement: object and subject of a psychological process^[4]. Many scholars have realized the importance of translators in translation. However, from the perspective of discipline construction and development, there are few researches on the translator's psychological activities. In view of this, we believe that translation studies should conduct dynamic studies on the psychological activities of translators, rather than limited to static studies of texts^{[5][6]}.

At the same time, the research in this field is relatively simple. The research methods are not detailed and specific enough. It is urgent for researchers to study the translation of poems and poems in *a dream of red mansions* from a broader and more comprehensive perspective^[7]. Therefore, this study makes a comparative analysis of the

poems in the two versions of *A Dream of Red Mansions* on the basis of translation psychology, starting from the translator's cognitive psychological activities, aesthetic psychological activities and cultural psychological activities.

2. Application of translation psychology to the translation of poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*

2.1 Difference between the two versions of *A Dream of Red Mansions*

In the translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Yang Xianyi aims to introduce China's outstanding cultural heritage. He regards foreignization as the main means of translation, and his translation is closer to the original. For the purpose of pleasing the reader, the main means of Hawkes is making the translation easy, and the translation is more easily accepted by readers.

There are some examples. "Red" symbolizes sunshine, happiness, enthusiasm, prosperity and revolution in Chinese culture, and in English it is associated with violence and bloodshed. There are a lot of "red" in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, but Hawkes thinks that the Chinese "red" is equivalent to the English color of gold or green. So Hawkes used green instead of red in many cases. Jia Baoyu's Yihong courtyard became Court of Green Delight, and the Red Child became Green Boy. It is not hard to see that Hawkes has adopted the practice of sacrificing the original culture in many cases.

There are different translation of the sentence "巧妇难为无米之炊" in their versions. Yang translated it into "A Even the cleverest housewife can't cook a meal without rice." Hawkes' version is that "Even the cleverest housewife can't make bread without flour." Yang Xianyi adopts the foreignization translation. It retains the traditional Chinese food and rice in the English translation, which conforms to the material life habit of the Han nationality. Although it belongs to the Oriental diet culture, western readers can understand it. Hawkes adopted the domestication translation and forced the Chinese to eat the foreign bread, which is more natural for westerners to read, and conforms to the dynamic equivalence principle of Nida. There seems to be a difference between the two translations^[8].

2.2 A comparative study of the translation of poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions* from the perspective of translation psychology

2.2.1 Comparative study on cognitive psychology of translators

There are so many poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, and different people will have different understandings. The difference of the author's thinking can also cause the discrepancy of poems. When different individuals translate the works, they will also integrate into their own personal feelings, which will result in different meanings of the poems in different translations.

Example 1:

“说什么脂正浓，粉正香，如何两鬓又成霜？昨日黄土陇头送白骨，今宵红灯帐底卧鸳鸯。”

——《好汉歌》

Yang's translation:

While yet the rouge is fresh, the powder fragrant,
The hair at the temple turns hoary-for what cause?
Yesterday, yellow clay received white bones;
Today, red lanterns light the love-birds' nest^[9].

Hawkes' translation:

Would you of perfumed elegance recite?
Even as you speak, the raven locks turn white.
Who yesterday her lord's bones laid in clay,
On silken bridal-bed shall lie today^[10].

Cao Xueqin expressed the life of the woman in the Grand View Garden through these poems. Just as the new couple laughed and did not see the old people crying. It also hints at the tragic fate of Qingwen and others. Yang

Xianyi used a third-person narrative perspective to interpret the poems, and interpreted it in an outsider's perspective. It caused that the sentences he translated didn't include emotion of regretful. For example“如何两鬓又成霜?” Mr. Yang translates it into "The hair at the temple turns hoary-for what cause?" He is like a viewer who said this in a neutral manner. In contrast, Hawkes uses the second person pronoun "you" as the subject of the first sentence, you are still feeling the aroma of the fat. While speaking, the hair has been frosted. In the same way, the third and fourth sentences use the personal pronoun as the subject. Hawkes' version expresses the feeling of melancholy. This kind of translation fits the background of the times and corresponds to the role of poetry in the original text.

Example 2

“偶因一着错，便为人上人。”

——《赞娇杏》

Yang's translation:

Raised her status^[9].

Hawkes' translation:

Sometimes by chance

A look or a glance

May one's fortune advance^[10].

This poem is mainly about praising Jiaoxing, the wife of Yucun. She changed from a servant girl into a prominent woman. The author showed that the life of people in feudal society is uncertain by these plots. Yang's translation reflects a sense of class. Mr. Yang's description shows that Jiaoxing has changed herself as if she had got a pie in the sky. The words "hiatus", "status" are the best embodiment. But from Hawkes's translation, we can see that he emphasized that an accident will change our future and that everyone has a chance to move forward. They have different understandings of the meaning of the same sentence, so the versions are distinguishing.

2.2.2 Comparative study on aesthetic psychology of translators

Translation is a complex psychological activity with multiple layers. Translation psychology holds that translation is not only a kind of knowledge and psychological activity, but also an aesthetic psychological activity. Translation psychology researches the influence of the translator's aesthetic setting and style on the translation form, or the translator's pursuit of aesthetic attributes in the process of translation. At the same time, the translation psychology represents the means of aesthetic properties. The organic combination of these attributes forms the translator's style.

Example 3

“花谢花飞花满天，红消香断有谁怜?游丝软系飘春榭，落絮轻沾扑绣帘。”

——《葬花吟》

Yang's translation:

As blossoms fade and fly across the sky,

Who pities the faded red, he scent that has been?

Softly the gossamer floats over spring pavilions,

Gently the willow fluff wafts to the embroidered screen^[9].

Hawkes' translation:

The blossoms fade and falling fill the air,

Of fragrance and bright hues bereft and bare.

Floss drifts and flutters round the Maiden's bower,

Or softly strikes against her curtained door^[10].

Both Yang and Hawkes interpret the poem from a third-person narrative perspective. The literal form of the two

translations is undoubtedly compatible. The "fly across the sky" in Yang's translation gives us a desolate feeling, which makes people feel grief for the scattered flowers. The word group also corresponds to the tragic atmosphere of Daiyu's funeral. With "falling fill the air", there is a kind of romantic atmosphere and a strong sense of painting, which makes people have an immersive aesthetic feeling when they read it. However, it is not consistent with the mood of Daiyu.

The "spring pavilion" in Yang's translation is more similar to the “春榭” in the original text, which also shows the beauty of the garden. But "the Maiden's bower" is the meaning of the girl's boudoir, which is not in conformity with the original meaning.

Example 4

枉费了，意悬悬半世心，好一似，荡悠悠三更梦。忽喇喇似大厦倾，昏惨惨似灯将尽。呀！一场欢喜忽悲辛。叹人世，终难定！

——《聪明累》

Yang's translation:

In vain her anxious thought for half a lifetime,
For like a disturbing dream at dead of night,
Like the thunderous collapse of a great mansion,
Or the flickering of a lamp that gutters out,
Mirth is suddenly changed to sorrow.
Ah, nothing is certain in the world of men^[9].

Hawkes' translation:

And half a life-time's anxious schemes.
Proved no more than the stuff of dreams.
Like a great building's tottering crash,
Like flickering lampwick burned to ash,
Your scene of happiness concludes in grief,
For worldly bliss is always insecure and brief^[10].

It is a song in the classic novel for Wang Xifeng. Through the narration of her mind trick, it reveals her tragic ending as well as the historical destiny that the feudal system will fall. The reason why Wang Xifeng ended up like this was that she was so ruthless and didn't know how to let go. The words“悬悬”、“悠悠”、“喇喇”、“惨惨”correspond to each other. So the poem is well read and catchy. In contrast to the English translation of this poem, it is not difficult to find that Yang's translation and Hawkes' translation focus on different places. Yang's translation is closer to the literal meaning of Chinese, while Hawkes translates more into the author's inner world. Just as the sentence“好一似，荡悠悠三更梦。”In Mr. Yang's version, he only translated the literal meaning, readers can only get the surface information. But Hawke emphasized the deep meaning behind the words. "Proved no more than the stuff of dreams." This sentence vividly shows Wang Xifeng's final miserable ending. It gives the readers a kind of aesthetic feeling.

2.2.3 Comparative study on Cultural Psychology of Translators

The translator must be influenced and restricted by the cultural psychology, so translation is also a transformation of the cultural psychological process. And the great differences between Chinese and western cultures lead to two different psychological patterns.

Example 5

“世人都晓神仙好，惟有功名忘不了！古今将相在何方？荒冢一堆草没了。”

——《好了歌》

Yang's translation:

All Good Things Must End

All men long to be immortals.

Yet to riches and rank each aspires.

The great ones of old, where are they now?

There graves are a mass of briars^[9].

Hawkes' translation:

Won-done Song

Men all know that salvation should be won,

But with ambition won't have done, have done.

Where are the famous ones of days gone by?

In grassy graves they lie now, every one^[10].

From these several verses, we can see the influence of the translator's cultural differences on the translation process. Yang Xianyi translated the word "supernatural being" into "immortals", the word with the meaning of immortality conforms to the people's understanding of the supernatural being in the Chinese traditional culture. This translation conforms to the meaning expressed in the original.

The word "salvation" in Hawkes' translation has the meaning of saving others. In the growth environment of the translator, god is above everything and can save all living beings. The translator integrates his own cultural connotation into the translation process, so we can know that the individual's cultural psychology can influence the translation process.

Example 6

儿命已如黄泉，天伦呵，须要退步抽身早！

——《恨无常》

Yang's translation:

Your child has gone now to the Yellow Spring,

you must find a retreat before it is too late^[9].

Hawkes' translation:

Thus she her final duty paid: "I that now but a shade,^[10]"

In example 6, "黄泉路" is the road leading to the underworld after death, which is one of the ancient Chinese myths and legends. It is also a part of the Dao culture, which is hard to understand for western readers who believe in Christianity as a mainstream religion. What is the road? In Hawkes' version, "Shade" refers to "death". And Yang translates it directly to "the Yellow Spring". Although it is not the same as western religion, it has certain rationality in conveying Chinese religious culture.

3. Conclusion

Translation psychology is an emerging and interdisciplinary subject to be recognized. However, in terms of overall development, people's systematic research on translation psychology is far from reaching the expected scale and level. We should make full use of the theoretical knowledge of cognitive psychology, aesthetic psychology and cultural psychology to study translation, so as to realize the "intersecting" development goal of this discipline.

In this study, we only selected some typical English translations of the poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, and understood the cognition psychology, aesthetic psychology and cultural psychology of the translators. By enumerating the poems of Yang and Hawkes, we find that both translations have advantages and disadvantages. Yang Xianyi, as a translator in China, kept the Chinese elements as much as possible and faithfully conveyed Chinese cultural connotations to western readers. Hawkes is a British translator. He interpreted the Chinese traditional

elements in poems creatively. His changeable and open style has prominent western cognitive psychology and cultural psychology characteristics. But the poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions* are various in category and profound in meaning, everyone has unique understanding when translates them. Therefore, the result we got cannot be effectively extended to other places.

Under the Perspective of translation psychology we find that the systematic study can help us to better understand and interpret the deep cause of different translators' English translations. The comparative study of translation psychology, especially the comparative study of poetry translation, has a strong explanatory power. In the future, when translation psychology is further developed, we can make new research on *A Dream of Red Mansions*.

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