A Comparative Analysis of the Two Classic Translations of A Dream of Red Mansions by David Hawkes and Yang Xianyi

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Abstract: A Dream of Red Mansions is one of the Four Great Masterpieces of China, which enjoys a high reputation in the international community. The story told in it is actually a rather complex system, and with the in-depth exchange of cultures from different countries, A Dream of Red Mansions has also been translated by many translators in later times, and these translations have their own characteristics, distinctive styles, and strong readability. This paper examines the translation strategies of various English translations of A Dream of Red Mansions from the perspective of Functional Equivalent Theory, in order to appreciate the aesthetic value of the translations.

Keywords: A Dream of Red Mansions, C-E Translation, Translation Theory, David Hawkes.

1. Introduction

As we all know, A Dream of Red Mansions is a world-famous literary masterpiece, and literary scholars have studied it in depth over the past hundred years. In the process of translating it, literary scholars use some established translation theories to make new researches and innovations on A Dream of Red Mansions, not only to present the content in another language, but also to deepen the content and export the connotation. In this paper, we take A Dream of Red Mansions as an example, combine the functional equivalence theory in translation with the translator's subjectivity and corresponding translation strategies, and make a comparative analysis of the contents of the two classic translations of A Dream of Red Mansions.

There are many translations of A Dream of Red Mansions in the literary translation market, and new literary scholars continue to study and translate it. However, one of the most popular versions is the joint translation by Yang Xian Yi, a famous Chinese translator, and his wife Dai Nai Die, which basically satisfies readers and allows readers all over the world to share in the profundity of Chinese culture. At the same time, the famous British translator David Hawkes, who also loves traditional Chinese culture and has studied A Dream of Red Mansions in-depth, produced the world-famous translation of A Dream of Red Mansions, both of which are very different in style but both of which show the translator's deep understanding of the work. Translators are the intermediaries of cultural transmission and are essential to the inheritance and dissemination of foreign cultures.

Translators' translation styles are different due to the translator's subjectivity. The translator's subjectivity refers to the subjective initiative of the translator who occupies the main position in the activities of translation practice and respects the object of translation as a premise for realizing the purpose of the translation. The translator's subjectivity runs through the whole process of translation activities, which is reflected not only in the translator's understanding and interpretation of the work and artistic recreation at the linguistic level, but also in the selection of the translated text, the cultural purpose of the translation, the translation strategy, and the manipulation of the expected cultural effects of the translation in the preface to the translation (Cha Jianming, 2004). In short, the translator will manifest his or her subjective role in the translation. On this basis, the translator is given a certain amount of freedom to make adjustments in the translation without being bound to the form of the original text, so it is all the more important for the translator to understand subjectivity. In order for foreign readers to grasp the essence of the original text, all versions of the translation must accurately convey the message and content of the original. From the perspective of translation theory, the essence of the famous linguist Eugene Nida's theory of functional equivalence is that translation should not aim to achieve a rigid correspondence between words but to achieve functional equivalence between the two languages. The theory of functional equivalence has a strong guiding role in translation, especially literary translation, due to its great scientific and practical nature. This paper analyses the two famous English translations of Cao Xueqin's A Dream of Red Mansions in light of the theory of functional equivalence and the subjectivity of the translator.

2. A Brief Introduction to A Dream of Red Mansions

A Dream of Red Mansions, of high ideology and high art, representing the highest achievement in the art of classical fiction, is known as "the encyclopedia of Chinese feudal society". The story focuses on the daily life of Rongguo Mansion and Ningguo Mansion, the love tragedies of Jia Baoyu, Lin Daiyu, and Xue Baochai, and the minutiae of life in the Da Guan Yuan, with countless vivid and distinctive characters. The history of the four noble families of Jinling, Jia, Shi, Wan, and Xue, from their heyday to their downfall, is the dark line that shows the inevitable trend of the end of feudal society.

A good literary work requires a translation that accurately reproduces the message and content of the original, so that readers who do not understand the foreign culture can grasp the main idea of the original text. The pioneer of literary translation, Fu Lei, once suggested that a translation should be like a painting in terms of effect, not in terms of form, but in terms of sense. Literary translator Zhang Ruogu also believes...
that "the translation should be consistent with the original work in terms of connotation and ideological content, so as to achieve the same divine charm", and generally speaking, good literary works always have rich feelings and strong artistic influence. If you simply translate the plot faithfully to the original text, the literal meaning will be translated but not the spirit, the language will be smooth but the taste will be lost, and it will not be very exquisite. It was only under the guidance of some translation theories that a series of classical translations came into being.

3. History of the Translation of A Dream of Red Mansions

In the process of translating, A Dream of Red Mansions, many excellent translators have appeared, such as the Japanese sinologists Otaka Iwa, Izuoka Lang, Tatsuma Shosuke, Shimura Ryoji, Takebe Toshio, Matsue Shigeo, Ogata Kazuo, the Soviet sinologists Rivkyo and Maishikov, the former Czechoslovakian sinologist O. Kral, the German sinologist Franz Kuhn, the British sinologist David Hawkes, etc. From 1892, when the first Japanese translator of Hong Lou Meng, Samuel Mori, the "Tokyo genius", translated the first volume of A Dream of Red Mansions into Japanese, to 1980, when the British sinologist David Hawkes completed the translation and publication of the 80-volume version of A Dream of Red Mansions, why has it attracted so many foreign sinologists? The German sinologist Franz Kuhn said: "The content of A Dream of Red Mansions is fascinating, the characters are vivid and fully personalized, and the story is set in an unforgettable context". I think this could be a preliminary footnote to the fact that Dagoyan is called a big fan of this book, which according to Shigeo Matsue is a great masterpiece of the Chinese nation, which is more than anything else a "foreigner's glimpse into A Dream of Red Mansions". "The history of Redology is long. All in all, the history of Redology is long, and the translations of A Dream of Red Mansions by great translators have spanned countless epochs and continue to advance and develop.

The cultural beliefs of a people are an important part of their culture and therefore have a great influence on the development of their language. The different cultural beliefs of the two peoples, the English, and the Chinese, are naturally reflected in the language. A Dream of Red Mansions, a classic Chinese masterpiece, concentrates on the essence of traditional Chinese culture, and traditional Chinese cultural ideas are present throughout the work, which is unfamiliar to many Western readers. Translation, which has played an inmeasurable role in the formation and development of civilization in both East and West, has enriched culture.

4. A Comparative Analysis of the Translations of A Dream of Red Mansions by Yang Xiangyi and David Hawkes

Among the foreign sinologists who have translated and studied A Dream of Red Mansions, David Hawkes is the one whose understanding of Chinese culture is "masterly in its perception and thought". In his introduction to the English translation of this great work, he says: "A Dream of Red Mansions is one of the great secular novels of Chinese literature, recounting the rise and fall of the Jia family, a prestigious family of 100 years. The setting for the activities of the book's two main characters, Baoyu and Daiyu, is a glorious tapestry woven with humor, practical details of life, and beautiful poetry that rightly reflects the red tape of Chinese family life. In addition, the book often suggests that "there is another ideal kingdom beyond the earth". With such an original and incisive understanding, it is not unreasonable that David Hawke's English translation of A Dream of Red Mansions remains a unique classic in the Western world.

It is difficult to present David Hawkes's decades of work through the theories of translation and Wang Guowei's views on "gapping" and "no gapping" here, so the writer will just leave out a little of his treatment of names in his translation of A Dream of Red Mansions. In dealing with the diverse characters in A Dream of Red Mansions, David Hawkes adopts four "basic principles" to make the characters in the story meaningful to English readers. The first is to give all the names of the masters in the Jia Mansion in Pinyin; the second is to translate the names of the maids with their corresponding Chinese meanings; the third is to Frenchise all the names of the opera actors; and the fourth is to use Latin for all the names of the Taoist priests, monks, and nuns. With regard to the first treatment, Mr. Yang Xin Yi, the translator of the first complete English translation of A Dream of Red Mansions in China, also followed this principle. The third and fourth treatments will not be discussed as they are less relevant to this paper. A discussion of "translating the names of the maids into their respective Chinese meanings" is in order here, to see what insights it can give us. Since there are many maids in A Dream of Red Chamber, and many names for maids, to take just one example, "袭人" and "晴雯", in Hawkes' translation, "袭人" is translated as "Aroma", so the name is derived from Baoyu, and is derived from an old poem by Lu You. The name is changed to Raider because of its surname, Hua, and the translation of the name here reflects the love of the Master, Baoyu, so Hawkes' translation as Aroma is appropriate, as a direct phonetic translation as "袭人" would have greatly diminished the reader's experience. The translation of "晴雯" as "skybright", meaning sky with a bright sun, makes the name catchy and emphasizes the characterization of "晴雯" as having a proud heart, which is appropriate and conveys the connotation of the work.

Before translating, the translator needs to have a certain degree of adaptation to the original text, which means understanding the overall structure of the text. From the perspective of the translator's subjectivity, the translator must create his or her own translation through multidimensional adaptation and selection. Without understanding the original text, it is impossible to talk about the translation standards and strategies chosen by the translator out of adaptability. On the basis of understanding and adaptation, the translator, as a bridge, must understand the context of the original work and put himself in the shoes of the author's intentions. Here is an example of Yang Xiangyi and Hawkes' adaptation and choice for this masterpiece, using the title of the English translation of Dream of the Red Chamber as an example.

Yang Xiangyi translates the title as "A Dream of Red Mansions" and Hawkes translates it as "The Story of Stone".

Volume 10 Issue 3, 2023
www.jissr.net

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which makes it easy to see that Yang keeps the "red" in the title and translates the buildings as "mansions" in the plural. The wording is precise. First, "mansion" is interpreted as "a large, stately house", which is the original description of the luxurious mansions on display, which is very close to the original text and accurately expresses the semantics. It also reflects the translator's accurate understanding of the novel's content and context, as A Dream of the Red Chamber focuses on the mansions of Rongguo and Ningguo, so the plural form is used here, which is very evocative. However, to avoid misunderstanding of the word "red" by Western readers, Hawkes, who is well versed in the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, used the name "The Story of the Stone" as the main title of the translation. However, it is certainly difficult for Western readers to understand the meaning of "The Story of the Stone", so Hawkes took the compensatory measure of adding a pseudonym to the translation, making The Story of the Stone Also Known as A Dream of the Red Chamber a clever blend of the two languages, making it easy for the target readers to understand.

For the sake of functional equivalence theory, translators need to understand that there is no need for rigid textual correspondence when translating, but rather for dynamic equivalence. Due to the differences in the structure and idiomatic expressions of the two languages, there are many cases of missing semantics. In order to fully reproduce the information in the source language, and to make the response of the readers of the translated language to the translation basically the same as the response of the readers of the source language to the original language, the translator must add some necessary words to fill these semantic gaps, and this is the method of translation enhancement. This is called augmentation. It is a way of expressing in an obvious language form the hidden elements or contents of the original text, especially some information related to the background of the original text, so that the semantics are clearer and the reader can understand them more easily.

Here is another example sentence, which describing the decoration and furnishings of a house, where the two main translators use different translation strategies, but each has a different meaning.

**Example1:**

案上设着武则天当日镜室中设的宝镜,一边摆着飞燕立着舞过的金盘,盘内盛着安禄山掷过伤了太真乳的木瓜。上面设着寿昌公主于含章殿下卧的榻，可卿亲自展开了西施浣过的纱衾，那被里是真丝的，是身上衬的，是裙下罩的。宝玉在宁府，见了刘姥姥，便说道："这屋子，两边摆着飞燕立着舞过的金盘，盘内盛着安禄山掷过伤了太真乳的木瓜。上面设着寿昌公主于含章殿下卧的榻，可卿亲自展开了西施浣过的纱衾，那被里是真丝的，是身上衬的，是裙下罩的。宝玉在宁府，见了刘姥姥，便说道："这屋子，两边摆着飞燕立着舞过的金盘，盘内盛着安禄山掷过伤了太真乳的木瓜。上面设着寿昌公主于含章殿下卧的榻，可卿亲自展开了西施浣过的纱衾，那被里是真丝的，是身上衬的，是裙下罩的。宝玉在宁府，见了刘姥姥，便说道："

**Hawkes' translation:**

On a table stood an antique mirror that had once graced the tiring room of the licentious empress Wu Ze-tian. Beside it stood the golden platter on which Flying Swallow once danced for her emperor's delight. And on the platter was that very quince which the villainous An Lu-shan threw at beautiful Yang Gui-fei, bruising her plump white breast. At the far end of the room stood the priceless bed on which Princess Shou-yang was sleeping out of doors under the eaves of Han-zhang Palace when the plum flower lighted on her forehead and set a new fashion for colored patches. Over it hung a canopy commissioned by Princess Tong-chang entirely fashioned out of ropes of pearls. And she unfolded a quilted coverlet, whose silk had been launched by the fabulous Xi Shi, and arranged the double head-rest that Hong-niang once carried for her amorous mistress.

**Yang Xianyi's translation:**

On the dressing table was a rare mirror from Wu Zetian's Hall of Mirrors. In the gold tray by it, on which Zhao Feiyan once danced, was the quince thrown in fun by An Lushan at Lady Yang, which had wounded her breast. At one end of room stood the couch on which Princess Shouyang had slept in the Hanzhang Palace, and over it hung the curtains strung from pearls by Princess Tongchang. With her own hands she spread a gauze coverlet washed by Xi Shi and arranged the bridal pillow carried by Hongniang.

The reader will find that in both translations the literal meaning of the text is already the same as in the original. However, because of the richness and color of the cultural information in this passage, the flavor of the original text cannot be revealed without careful processing and analysis, and the adoption of appropriate translation strategies. This is a brief description of Qin Keqing's bedroom furniture in the fifth chapter of Dream of the Red Chamber. From the word count of the original and the translation, it seems that both translations are much longer than the original, which means that the translation has added something to the original to make it easier for the reader to understand, and this is a common feature of both translations.

Speaking of differences, it is well known that there is a rich national culture and deep historical heritage in the masterpiece A Dream of the Red Chamber, and many phrases would be difficult to convey the meaning intended by the original text through direct translation alone. Yang Xian Yi's translation obviously adopts the method of literal translation combined with the method of adding notes, adding notes to some historically loaded words on the basis of preserving the cultural characteristics of the original text, so that the original text retains its rich connotation. The translation is concise and clear.

However, when the translator translates directly from the original text, it can also be a burden for readers who want to enjoy the original text and have a smooth reading experience, as it takes time to search for background information and digest the content of the translation. The author, on the other hand, finds this translation by Mr Hawkes to be more to the point. Rather than preaching a rigid correspondence, the translation has something of its own. For example, the translation of "武則天", known to all Chinese as the only female emperor in history but not necessarily to foreign readers, is translated as "licentious empress". The word "licentious" alludes to the unhealthy culture of cultivating toy boys that prevailed in Wu Zetian's late court. Yang Guifei and Xi Shi were both famous for their beauty in Chinese history, so the term "incredible beauty" is used to describe their beauty. An Lushan was the originator of the An-Shi Rebellion, a notorious coup in Chinese history, and was historically portrayed as a rebellious minister, so the translation uses the word "villainous" to describe him. In the original, the phrase "
飞燕过” is also translated as "Flying Swallow once danced for her emperor's delight". Mr. Hawkes' translation respects the original text, but with appropriate additions, it fully reflects the connotations of the work and allows foreign readers to read and understand it better. We can learn from the theory of functional equivalence in literary translation, that the translator does not have to rigidly copy the linguistic form of the original text, but should choose expressions with similar functions in the translated language to reproduce the information in the source language. From this we can draw inspiration: in the translation of novels, those units of language that are superfluous, too cumbersome, or contrary to the linguistic conventions of the translation, can be deleted without translation. This is the method of omission. The omission method of translation simply removes some redundant information from the original text, without its form, but with its meaning, so that it does not affect the reproduction of the original message. There is, of course, plenty of evidence for the omission in the translation of The Dream of the Red Chamber. The original phrase was originally a local hysterical saying, still in use today, which probably means that the person is quite confused. In Dream of the Red Chamber, it is clearly meant as a criticism of the maid's clumsiness. Mr. Hawkes does not translate this sentence word-for-word here, and if he did, I am afraid the meaning would be difficult to convey. For such a dialect word with Chinese characteristics, Mr Hawkes' translation directly adopts an omission translation method, translating only the central meaning of the original text, using only two English words to concisely and accurately reflect the meaning of the original text, successfully realizing the application of the theory of functional equivalence in literary translation.

Here is another example. In this case, the limerick that Liu Laolao read is also worth thinking about.

Example2:
“老刘，老刘，食量大如牛；吃个老母猪，不抬头！”

Hawkes' translation:
“My name it is Liu, Im a trencherman true; I can eat a whole sow, With her little pigs too.”

Yang Xiangyi's translation:
“Old woman Liu, I vow, Eats more than any cow, And down she settles now, To gobble an enormous sow.”

In Hawkes' translation, the first person 'I' is used in the translation, which is closer to the readers and makes the readers feel that this is what Liu Laolao said, which increases the credibility and sense of humor. The rhyming of every two sentences in the translation is more like a common saying, which also shows the low cultural level of Liu Laolao and is closer to the character characteristics. In Yang's translation, the form of first person and the third person is used, which are described from the perspective of Liu Laolao's (first person) view of Lao Liu's (third person) behavior, and the expression is more objective. The rhyme of each sentence is used in the text, which makes it more elegant to read. However, according to the fact that Liu Laolao is an illiterate farmer in the original work, the author believes that Hawkes' translation is closer to the image of Liu Laolao.

When it comes to rhetorical devices, it has to be said that in literary translation, translators often use appropriate rhetorical devices to translate the original text, so that the language style of the original text can be preserved and the charm of the original text can be shown, as the following examples.

Example3:
水荇牵风翠带长。

Hawkes' translation:
Green duckweed-trails on the water bright.

Yang Xiangyi's translation:
The wind-trailed weeds seem belts of malachite.

This verse is from Du Fu's poem 曲江对雨, which means that the clear water is like the green ribbon of women's cloth. The translation by Hawkes, however, omits the metaphor and is simpler and more accessible to readers who do not understand Chinese poetry. On the contrary, Yang Xian Yi's translation adopts a metaphorical approach, which translates the original meaning more closely and leaves space for the reader's imagination.

In addition, the free translation method is often indispensable in literary translation, and this is certainly more evident in literary works of the level of Dream of the Red Chamber, where there is also a classic example.

Example4:
秦鲸卿天逝黄泉路.

Hawkes' translation:
Qin Zhong is breached for departure on the journey into night.

Yang Xiangyi's translation:
Qin Zhong died before his time sets off for the Nether Regions.

This phrase is found in the sixteenth chapter of the original text, implying that Qin Zhong died young. In ancient cultures, out of respect for life, we generally use euphemisms to express our respect for the dead. In English, we generally use the words "To depart" or "To pass away" instead of "die". However, both Yang Xian Yi and Hawkes' translations are excellent, and both are very good translations. However, there are some differences between the two translations. For example, the Yang translation translates the euphemism for "天逝" as "die", which is faithful to the original text but does not reflect the euphemistic message of the original text; the Huo translation translates it as the meaning of "premature departure", which is not literal but takes into account. This is a commonality between Chinese and Western cultures, and seems flexible and natural, since death is seen in both
languages as "leaving forever".

Even the theories of translation summarised by previous generations may have certain limitations. To take the functional equivalence theory as an example, it brings modern linguistics, communication science, and semiotics into the field of translation, which is a kind of breaking the shackles of traditional thinking and provides a new perspective for translation research and lays a solid foundation for modern translation science, but it is still not perfect. At the same time, due to the subjectivity of the translator, different translations have relatively different styles, which need to be carefully understood by the reader and studied in comparison, in order to help the reader understand the original text deeply and better understand the different translation strategies.

Firstly, the translator has changed some of the information in the original text based on his own understanding and has also concealed some cultural differences, which is objectively a kind of cultural naturalization, but the differences between cultures are inevitable, and it is impossible to achieve an exact equivalence, and if it is necessary, it may even be counterproductive. For example, in his translation of Dream of the Red Chamber, Hawks avoided the word "red", which in Western culture carries a very dangerous and extreme emotion, and so he translated Dream of the Red Chamber directly as "The Story of The Stone", which in a way makes the sense of wealth and glory in the original title disappear.

The second is that some culturally loaded words in different cultures actually have many unique meanings based on the national culture, but often such words become obscure in another culture, and finally, functional equivalence is very difficult to fully realize in literary translation. The meaning of language as a tool of social communication is often literal and rich in meaning and can be understood in a logical way by virtue of its socio-cultural context. But literary language is the language of a literary work, and the meaning expressed in the language of art may be hidden between the words and in the depths of the language, and often the specific meaning of a literary work cannot be understood according to conventional rules, but can only be grasped by exploring the writer's personal style and the specific context of the work. In some works, where translatability is already quite low, there is, of course, no question of functional equivalence.

5. Conclusion

A Dream of the Red Chamber is already considered a fairly famous literary work, which is an important bridge between Western society and China, so it will certainly be studied in depth by later generations. When translators translate this great work, they must use some translation theory, which is a means to help them make the translation more detailed. Only then will there be more and better translations and more readers. As for cultural differences, we cannot demand their elimination, but we should only translate and export the connotations as much as possible while preserving the original meaning.

On the whole, Hawke's method of translation tends towards naturalization, while Yang Xiangyi strives to preserve traditional Chinese cultural colors and convey cultural elements. Both translation strategies are justifiable, and both have their advantages and disadvantages. Hawkes tries to preserve as much of the original as possible, striving to reproduce it. Yang Xiangyi, on the other hand, in most cases translates the text only literally; he is in favor of expressing the meaning clearly and retaining some characteristic elements, including some omissions. For reasons of translation fidelity, the author prefers Hawke's translation, which is more lively and interesting. However, Yang Xian Yi's translation has also had a profound impact on the entire field of nuclear research on the foreign dissemination of Dream of the Red Chamber, as it is difficult to distinguish between the two translations precisely because of the different translation strategies adopted, but rather each has its own merits and developments, and both have played a pivotal role in the dissemination of Chinese culture.

In short, literary translation and aesthetic research are inseparable. Translators must find beauty in literary works and recreate it in translation so that more readers can feel and experience the beauty of words and cultural differences, which requires translators to have more social experience, life experience, emotional experience, literary recreation ability, and translation level.

References