

Study on the English Translation of Willis Barnstone's Snow from the Perspective of Cultural Filtering

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Abstract: Chinese poetry has long been continuously popular in our history, and has aroused the interest and passion of foreign countries and scholars. Due to the differences in diverse languages and cultures, cultural filtering is inevitable and plays an important role in cross-cultural communication. This paper mainly analyzes the Willis Barnstone's translation of Snow, which was written by Mao Zedong, the Chairman and poet of China. And other translations will be used as references to discover the manifestations of "cultural filtering" in translations and how does the translator deal with the difference brought by this foreignization translation, as well as the compensation strategies

Keywords: Snow, Cultural filtering, Willis Barnstone, English translation.

1. Introduction

With the realization of the first centenary Goal and the arrival of the second goal, the new chapter of history written by China has attracted the attention of the rest world. "Telling Chinese stories well" is not only to spread the excellent Chinese culture, but also an important step to realize the goal of rejuvenation and Chinese dream. It is an important responsibility of translators to disseminate and carry forward the Chinese ancient books to the whole world, and to improve the soft power of culture is to focus on the foreign side not the domestic side, that is, cultural foreign translation is the leading role of "Telling Chinese stories well".

Mao Zedong has integrated the image of a great leader with the image of an excellent poet, and has promoted the dissemination and research of his poems because of his international reputation. To translate his poems into foreign languages is to carry forward the revolutionary spirit of China, and its research significance is extraordinary. Nowadays, his poems are beloved and studied by foreign scholars. The published "World Vision: Mao Zedong's 100 Poems from English and Chinese" is enough to illustrate his influence and research boom. As one of his famous poems, *Qing Yuan Chun Xue* is more worthy of scholars' attention and exploration, especially the investigation of the English translation, which can highlight the views of foreign scholars on Chinese culture and the differences between the two cultures, and is more conducive to the cultural and spiritual transmission of "telling Chinese stories well".

2. Mao Zengdong: Qin Yuan Chun • Xue

As a poet, Mao's poetry achievement is remarkable. The combination of revolutionary experience and poetry is the integration of hardness and softness, which is also the coalition of ideal and reality, even the evidence of revolutionary history. Most of the poems were written on the Long March, and "Qin Yuan Chun • Xue" was completed in 1936 as part of a series of poems on the March. He became known to the West as a poet because Edgar Nord, an American journalist, included "The Seven Rules • The Long March" in the Western Odyssey [1]. At present, there have

been a number of translations of relevant poems published abroad and collected into volumes. The earliest one is "Mao Zedong Poetry" by Nie Hualing, the later one is "Ten Poems of Mao Zedong" by Wang Huiming, and the recent edition of *World Vision: One Hundred Contrasting Poems of Mao Zedong between English and Chinese* [2].

Since ancient times, there have been many poems praising snow, such as Liu Zongyuan's *Jiang Xue*, Li Bai's *Difficult Road* and Du Fu's *Quatrains*, etc. However, *Qin Yuan Chun • Xue* has been constantly interpreted and translated by scholars at home and abroad due to its literary status, political color and revolutionary spirit [2]. The whole poem is divided into upper and lower parts: the upper part describes the magnificent snow scenery of the north, shows the magnificent atmosphere, the lofty and heroic land, and expresses the poet's love for the great rivers and mountains of the motherland, while the next section borrows scene lyric, show the revolution current high morale and determination to win.

Although there are numerable of his poems, *Qin Yuan Chun • Xue* has the highest popularity and publicity. Because of its ambitious words and unique poetic themes, which are well known and reflected in history, heroes and allusions, the translation of these things is worth exploring and studying, so as to spread the revolutionary thoughts and spirits in Chinese culture in a more comprehensive way. At the same time, due to the particularity of the subject matter of "Qin Yuan Chun • Snow", foreign readers do not know much about Chinese poetry (especially the Ci), so it is worth paying more attention to the dissemination of Chinese poetry culture.

3. Cultural Filtering

The concept of cultural filtering was first proposed by the German scholar Julian House as a means of capturing socio-cultural differences in expected norms and stylistic conventions between the source language and the target language cultural community [3]. She believes that when the translator changes the original text in order to preserve the function of the original text rather than applying the cultural filter objectively, the situational dimension of the recessive version will be generated, that is, recessive translation [3]. In his book *Translation Quality Assessment*, Julian House divides explicit translation and implicit translation from the perspective of functional linguistics. The function of implicit

translation is to recreate, copy or reproduce the function of the original text in its language and cultural framework and discourse world in the translated text. At the level of genre and text function, equivalence is necessary. In order to achieve equivalence, "cultural filtering" is needed to adjust cultural factors [4]. Due to the difference of the two languages and cultural backgrounds, the translator has to change the original text under the influence of ideology in the translation process, so the phenomenon of cultural filtering appears in the implicit translation. Due to the rich cultural deposits of our country and the huge difference between the western cultural concept, it is inevitable that there will be understanding barriers in the process of translation. Therefore, we should eliminate the differences in translation so as to achieve cultural communication and exchange.

Since cultural filtering exists throughout cultural communication, it is of great guiding significance to translation studies. Integrating culture and translation, it is important and meaningful to study translation in culture and culture in translation. Later Chinese scholars have divided cultural filtering into three aspects: norms, values, language and symbols, and believed that there were both subjective and objective reasons for cultural filtering [5]. According to the variability of norms, the contents filtered by many translations of the same original text are different, and there are values as the dominant ideology, so the treatment of cultural filtering is also different. The role of translation behavior in cultural exchange makes the theoretical circle pay more attention to the two translation strategies of foreignization and domestication. In translation activities, the target language culture is like an invisible net filtering all aspects of translation activities [6], so as to realize the effective transmission and communication of information between cultures. In fact, most of the information to be filtered and processed in translation is at the spiritual and cultural level, such as values, religion, aesthetics and so on. The formation of translation has gone through layers of screening, first of all, the subject matter is filtered by the public; then, the translator's ideological filter; next, the interest filtering of publishers; ultimately, the filtering of the reader's subjective thoughts.

So far, in translation studies, whether in comparative literature or translation studies, the technique of "cultural filtering" has been widely used. It is usually used to compare many translations of ancient Chinese books from this perspective, such as "*Study on the English Translation of Li Qingzhao's Ci from the Perspective of Cultural Filtering*". At the same time, the study of Mao's poems is also very in-depth, but most of them focus on the translation strategies and skills of poems, such as the English translation of revolutionary culture. In today's advocacy of "telling Chinese stories well", Mao's works have attracted the attention of translators at home and abroad, and *Qin Yuan Chun • Snow* has been translated by many famous artists. However, few scholars analyze its translation from the perspective of cultural filtering and discuss the cultural differences contained in the translation, such as Willis Barnstone, Xu Yuanchong, Zhao Yanchun, Li Zhengshuan and other famous translations.

4. Willis Barnstone: Snow

Mao's poems are accepted by foreign scholars because of their heroic tone, broad vision and rich literary character, but there are still more researches and discoveries to be made in the field of translation. Trying to interpret from different

perspectives and theories may bring new experiences and experiences, and also inject new vitality into the original work. As Benjamin mentioned in *The Translator's Task*: the translated text is born from the "later life" of the original text [4]. The translated text gives the original text a new language system and new vitality, so the translator plays an extremely important role in the translation process. While "cultural filtering" is indispensable in cultural communication and translation, its importance is self-evident, but its shortcomings are also obvious. Foreign scholars include Willis Barnstone, Michael Bullock, Paul Engle, etc. This paper focuses on Barnstone's English translation.

Willis Barnstone began studying Mao's poetry at school under the influence of Robert Payne. He regarded Mao as the English poet Robert Frost who has had a great influence in English poetry and literature, and thought that in Mao's new poems, written in the traditional style of "old and new China merge", and did a lot of research and preparation for Mao's poetry. Also proficient in the rhyme and tone of Chinese characters [2]. Therefore, Willis Barnstone is chosen as the analysis object because of his translator and foreign identity, how his translation without the influence of Chinese reflects the cultural filtering and the alienation strategy advocated by most translators. However, in analyzing Willis Barnstone's translations, other translations are cited for contrast, including those by Xu Yuanchong, Zhao Yanchun and Li Zhengshuan.

In the field of translation, the study of Mao's poetry advocates "foreignization as the primary, domestication as the secondary". While spreading culture, Mao's style should be preserved, and the preference of foreign readers should not be blindly caters to [1]. For readers, the style of the translation tends to be foreignizing, so the translator should not arbitrarily filter things in the original text to fit the public, and take this as the basis to study Willis Barnstone's translation *Snow*

In the English translation of *Snow*, recessive translation is mainly used in allusions, history and culture-loaded words involved in the source language culture. It is necessary to introduce these features into English in a more obscure way [7], that is, to use natural and smooth translation of the target language to explain the expressions in the source language that are difficult to be understood by the target language readers. Because *Snow* is essentially a *Ci* (a variant of Chinese poetry) with brand names, and contains rich literature in vocabulary, syntax and rhetoric, the first analysis is the translator's translation of brand names, and then the analysis of scenery names, things related to history, that is, the familiar culture-loaded words.

4.1. Tune Title

The tune title (*Ci* *Pai Ming*) refers to the name of a kind of system tune of the word, with a fixed format and rhythm, determining the tempo and temperament of the word. And after the Song Dynasty, the tune title is not related to the content of the word, when the word completely out of the song, the tune title is only as a type of text, phonology structure [8], such as "*Qin Yuan chun*" is the tune title, "*snow*" is the title. There are two types of word names: the first is a word name with clear meaning and no allusion; The second kind is rich in historical allusions [9], and "*Qin Yuanchun*" is a brand name without allusions.

Secondly, there are three sources of word and sign names: one is from folk tunes and the second is from poetry. Third, the word itself is the lexical title, or has nothing to do with the

content [8]. And "Qinyuan Chun" refers to the spring scenery in Qinyuan this place, while the content of the word is snow scenery, and the two are not related to the object of discussion. But the scenery of spring comes after the winter. As Shelley's famous poem says, "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" Mao was also determined to win the revolution. So "Qin Yuan Chun" is just the music of words, conveying the hope of the poet.

There have always been four types of methods to translate the tune title of Mao's poetry: translation meaning, transliteration, transliteration adding, zero translation. The representative of translation meaning is Xu Yuanchong and the representative of zero translation is Barnstone. Willis Barnstone[8], omits the tune title "Qinyuchun" and directly translates the title as "Snow".

Table 1. Different translations of "Qin Yuan Chun"

	Willis Barnstone	Xu Yuanchong	Zhao Yangchun	Li Zhengshuan
Qin Yuan Chun (沁园春)	no	Tune: Spring in a Pleasure Garden	Spring at Soothing Garden	Qin Yuan Chun

Considering the the cultural differences, there is no such genre as Ci in foreign countries, which are famous for poetry, not to mention the appearance of tune title. The title of a foreign poem is usually a word or short phrase that can summarize the main idea of the poem or is without title. The exception is Emily Dickinson's poem, which has no title. Generally, the first sentence of the poem is the title, so the public is accustomed to this form of title. Willis Barnstone takes into account the audience group, namely the cultural characteristics of the target language, as well as the two factors of "Qin yuan chun" without allusions, and omits it in translation. This is the difference between Chinese and Western culture in poetry, so it adopts cultural filtering, and the translation technique used is omitting. However, several other Chinese translators were influenced by their own culture when translating, so they retained the status of lexical names.

4.2. Cultural-loaded

The word on the upper part mainly describes the scene, and the picture is majestic, even the momentum is magnificent, thus giving a person with a sense of grandeur. There are many images mentioned in the poem, such as snow and ice, the Great Wall, the Yellow River, mountains and plateaus, which are all natural scenery. The following part is dominated by characters, but there is also no lack of physical words, such as: Jiangshan (江山), Dadio (大雕), and the description of the characters are: Fengshao (风骚) and Fengliu (风流). In Willis Barnstone's translation, cultural filtering exists in the translation of scenery and characters, such as: the Great Wall, Yaorao (妖娆), Hongzhuang Suguo (红妆素裹), Fengshao (风骚) and Fengliu (风流).

Table 2. Different translations of culture-loaded words

	Willis Barnstone	Xu Yunachong	Zhao Yangchun	Li Zhengshuan
长城	the Long Wall	the Great Wall	the Great Wall	the Great Wall
妖娆	tease	an enchanting sight	a brilliant show	a charming sight
红妆素裹	white dress and rouge	the fair bask in sparkling sunshine	all red clad in white hue	all bathe in sunlight
江山	Rivers and mountains	Our motherland	Hills and rills	our country
风骚	no	nor wide read	talents	literary art
风流	no	Brilliant	the greatest	great

First of all, the "Great Wall" in "Looking Inside and Outside the Great Wall" does not only emphasize its length. The Great Wall itself contains the blood, sweat and life of ancient Chinese people, and is also a symbol of Chinese architecture. In addition, it has derived rich spirit of the Great Wall, which is a symbol of China's successful defense against foreign invasions. Therefore, Willis Barnstone's translation here does not show the rich connotation of the Great Wall, but filters out the rich historical connotations related to the Great Wall in traditional Chinese culture. Instead, he only sees the superficial meaning of the word and translates it as "the Long Wall" instead of "the Great Wall". The translation technique he uses is literal translation.

Secondly, the words "enchanting" (分外妖娆), "slightly coquettish"(稍逊风骚) and "romantic characters"(风流人物) also have a tendency of cultural filtering in Willis Barnstone's translation. "Yaorao" in traditional Chinese culture meant "beautiful, charming, literary and brilliant. Willis Barnstone interpreted it as" tease", which was not intended as an appreciation, but more consistent with the use of the word

today. Similarly, "Fengshao" and "Fengliu" are both exclusive words in the field of literature in ancient times, which also meant praise and admiration. Willis Barnstone may not have connected with the ancient cultural words in translation, but chose to omit them, which is also a reflection of cultural filtering. The compensation strategy adopted by Willis Barnstone is to omission. Compared with the translations of several other translators, the obvious sense of praise and criticism comes out apparently.

However, "Hongzhuang Suguo"(红妆素裹) is now an idiom. On the surface, it means a woman's red dress and elegant attire. In fact, it describes the magnificent scenery of sunny days, red sun and white snow reflecting each other after snow. The translation of Willis Barnstone is literal and needs to expand the meaning of the idiom. Finally, the word "Jiangshan" in "Jiangshan So many beauties"(江山如此多娇) is also a loaded word of culture. Since ancient times, there has been the attitude of Kings to "not love Jiangshan and love beautiful people"(不爱江山爱美人). The whole Ci has a

broad vision, is magnificent, and its tone is full of pride. Combined with this, "Jiangshan" not only refers to rivers, seas and mountains, but also refers to the whole territory. It was also a symbol of power and status in ancient times. Here, it is more about the magnificent scenery and rich culture of the whole country. Although the translation of Barnstone as "rivers and mountains" is easy for readers to understand, it lacks the broad vision and broad mind of the poet in the original text, and lacks the understanding of Chinese history, so it adopts the technique of literal translation.

5. Conclusion

It examines the translation of *Qin Yuan Chun · Xue* by Willis Barnstone from the perspective of cultural filtering. The main findings are as follows: First, due to the differences in language and culture, cultural filtering is inevitable in the process of translation, and accompanied by the translator's subjective ideology, it has the characteristics of uncertainty, subjectivity and wide scope; Second, in this paper, the reasons for filtering are mostly due to the translator's unfamiliarity with the culture of the source language, the limitation of the text content leading to the loss of the cultural connotation, and in particular, the translation of culture-loaded words only expresses part of the content, such as the translation of the Great Wall. Thirdly, cultural filtering seems to be related to mistranslation and adaptation. For conflicted cultural information, acculturation means include dilution, rewriting and deletion [6]. Therefore, translation with subjective awareness may lead to mistranslation, which is also related to the translation techniques used. Fourthly, cultural filtering is not negative. It promotes cross-cultural communication and the exchange of poetry and translation between Eastern and Western cultures, enriches the subject culture, broadens the understanding of the target language culture, and guarantees the continuation of the life of cultural works [5]. In this respect, it has similar connotations with "creative treason".

It only discusses the specific manifestations of cultural filtering in Willis Barnstone's translation. For the dissemination of Mao's poetry and even the dissemination of excellent traditional Chinese culture, scholars should pay attention to both domestic and foreign translators when studying foreign translation, and there are scholars with different cultural backgrounds among foreign translators.

Comparative study is a more comprehensive approach, in-depth analysis of works from different perspectives, to lay a solid foundation for "telling good Chinese stories". In the future study, there are many aspects of Mao Zedong's poetry worth us to explore, such as the translation of words and names, translation strategies of allusions and so on. At the same time, it only explains the cultural filtering of translators, but does not involve the cultural filtering of target readers, which needs to be further studied in the future. In addition, foreign translations are limited, and later translations of other native English translators can be added for comparative analysis. Therefore, many other aspects need to be expanded.

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