

The Manipulation of Poetics in Literary Translation—A Case Study of *Journey to the West* by W.J.F. Jenner*

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Abstract—*Journey to the West* is one of four Chinese classical classics whose cultural and literature value has been explored and studied by countless experts and scholars and it has been translated into many different languages. Since the late twentieth century, with the advent of the cultural turn in translation studies, the problem of cultural translation has moved to the forefront. According to Andre Lefevere's Rewriting Theory, translation is not merely an act completed by the translator's personal preference, but an act influenced by various forces including ideology, poetics and patronage in the overall environment. This paper attempts to probe into W.J.F. Jenner's translation of *Journey to the West* through some approaches including the contrast between Chinese and Western poetics and the trend of poetics in W.J.F. Jenner's time and his individual poetics. It aims at demonstrating how poetics plays an important role in translation.

Index Terms—manipulation, poetics, literary translation, *Journey to the West*

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1990s, the “culture turn” of Translation Studies has been formally ushered in the collection of essays named *Translation, History, and Culture* co-edited by Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere. The “culture turn” of Translation Studies demonstrates that translation research has shifted from the traditional linguistic and aesthetic model towards culture-oriented approach. The culture-oriented translation studies also shows that translation activity is not a simple transformation between different languages, but an activity closely related to extra-textual factors, such as politics, economy, culture, ideology, etc. In 1992, with the publication of *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* and *Translation, History and Culture*, Andre Lefevere put forward the important concept of “rewriting” as well as the well-known three-factor theory. “Rewriting” refers to a variety of processing of literary texts, such as anthologizing, criticizing, editing, adapting, and translating, etc. The three-factor theory points out that in different historical conditions “rewriting” is undertaken with three major constraints: ideology, poetics and patronage. That's to say, translation is defined as a rewriting of the original text and rewriting is manipulation under the restriction of ideology, poetics and patronage. The development in Translation Studies provides a wider stage for translation researches in the future.

The theories brought forward by Andre Lefevere enjoy a wide fame and have a great impact in translation field. Not only in the West appear a great many works on translation owing to Lefevere's theories, but also in China translation scholars are eager to introduce his theories into China and apply his viewpoints to the translation study. However, we find that translation scholars in China focus mainly on the ideological constraint and the patronage influence on the translated literature of China while little attention has been paid to the factor of poetics, the individual poetics of translators in particular. In addition, although Lefevere put forward the poetics constraint on literary translation, he did not elaborate upon how this factor impacts on literary translation. Therefore, it is very meaningful to study the impact of poetics on literature translation.

II. A BRIEF STUDY ON POETICS

The definition of “Poetics” is varied and enriched with the development of western literary theory. In his great works *Poetics* which began in the “discussion of the components of a literary work” (Bressler, 1999), Aristotle put forward some general principles of tragedy, poetry and other literary patterns. “The title, the Poetics,” Bressler commented, “reveals Aristotle's purpose, for “poetics” in Greek means “things that are made or crafted” (Bressler, 1999). And according to *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literature terms*, poetics is defined as:

The general principles of poetry or of literature in general, or the theoretical study of these principles. As a body of theory, poetics is concerned with the distinctive features of poetry (or literature as a whole), with its languages, forms, genres, and modes of composition. (Baldick C, 2000).

Andre Lefevere held that a poetics consists of two components: one is an inventory of literary devices, genres, motifs,

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prototypical characters and situations, and symbols; the other a conception of what the role of literature is, or should be, in the social system as a whole (Lefevre, 2004). He further pointed out that a poetics or any poetics is historical variable because it is not absolute.

The term “poetics” in Chinese literature is also variable. As is known, China is a country noted for her high quality and great quantity of poetry in the world. Writings about poetry are traditionally titled with “shi hua”, “ci hua”, “shi lun” or “shi xue” (literally, “words about poetry”, “comments on poetry” and “study of poetry”), among which there are “Cang Lang Shi Hua” by Yan Yu in the Song Dynasty and “Ren Jian Ci Hua” by Wang Guowei in early modern China. The literary revolution led by Han Yu in the Tang Dynasty resulted in an invention of more genres of literature, such as prose, drama and novel, and later man critics paid more attention to other forms of literature. The connotation of “poetics” is shifted from principles or techniques of poetry to “a knowledge of poetry creation, appreciation, criticism and of series of issues concerned with aesthetics, thoughts and culture” (Chen, 2005). Thus, “poetics is a conception that consists of many contents, including theories of poetry, other general principles of literary and artistic works and even aesthetics as well” (Cao, 1988).

As discussed in the above, poetics is variable in different literary systems. However, it is clear that poetics refers to the general rules for writing a poem in the narrow sense and the general rules for the inventory of any literary works in the broad sense. Meanwhile, it is necessary for us to classify the poetics when we analyze the influence of the translators’ poetics on their literary translation. We can classify poetics into the central poetics and the peripheral poetics, that is, main poetics and individual poetics developed from Even-Zohar’s literary polysystem. The Central Poetics refers to the dominant poetics which influences decisively most of the creators of any literary works at a specific stage in a literary system. There are different central poetics in the history of Chinese literature when observed from different angles. When great thoughts with a great influence on the principles of literature are taken into consideration, Confucianism and Taoism are the central poetics from the Zhou Dynasty to the Han Dynasty. Metaphysics that tried to integrate Taoism with Confucian doctrine is the dominant poetics from the Wei Dynasty to the early Tang Dynasty, and aesthetics is the main poetics from the Tang Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty.

There also exist central poetics in the history of western literature. In the Western literature, Plato and Aristotle took drama as the norm and therefore considered imitation the essentially functional feature of their poetics which influenced most of the creators of literary works in Ancient Literature in the West. Originated in Provence and owed nothing to Aristotle, the medieval literature that was based on lyrical poetry and become the basis of the whole medieval system of European literature. And in China, poetry and prose played important roles as the central or dominant poetics in ancient Chinese literature, and novels and drama rendered from the western literature becomes the central poetics in Modern Chinese literature.

The Peripheral Poetics refers to those poetics that exists with the central poetics simultaneously but not taken into consideration at the same degree. The central poetics exert a much stronger influence on the creation of literary works than that peripheral poetics is able to. This kind of poetics has a dominant influence on just a few writers. Legalism and Mohism from the Zhou Dynasty to the Han Dynasty, Buddhism from the Wei Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty and the Politics and Education-oriented poetics from the Tang Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty are such poetics in Chinese literature. And so is Imagism in the early 20th century in American literature.

In a word, both the central poetics and the peripheral poetics are representation of many similar individual poetics which together constitute either a central school or peripheral school in a literary system and impact writers decisively or less decisively. However, it seems not so valuable to say that any central or peripheral poetics is made up of individual poetics. But it still remains a truth that a poetics is of a society, of a specific historic stage as well as of individuality. The poetics of a school always consists of many individual poetics. Every individual who belongs to a school has his or her own poetics that may be identical to or deviated from the bigger poetics. For example, in China Mencius poetics that belongs to Confucianism is, to great extent, identical to Confucianism, and in the United States, Pound’s poetics belongs to Imagism but is not completely identical to it.

III. INFLUENCES OF POETICS ON LITERARY TRANSLATION

The poetics of translation firstly appeared in Meschonnic’s masterpiece *Pour la poétique Epistemologie de l’écriture, Poétique de la transduction*. In his view, translation should not belong to the linguistics field, but should be a new branch of the literary field. He pointed out that the translation theory should belong to the poetics. Since the second half of the 20th century, the research of translation began to breakthrough the traditional linguistic mode and took a reflection of culture. Traditional translation theory thinks that the process of translation is a process of the conversion between two different linguistic systems. While the “cultural turn” advocated that translation should be a process of the conversion between two different cultures. Susan Bassnett’s cultural translation theory was the most popular in her time. Firstly, she thinks that the unit of translation should be the culture. Secondly, translation is not only a simple process of decoding and recombination, and also a behavior of communication. Thirdly, translation should not be limited to describe the source text but to make the translation fit for the target culture. Fourthly, there are different principles and rules of different periods of time which are used to meet different needs.

The poetics of translation should be the aesthetic realization of cultural pluralism. Fei Xiaoping (Fei, 2005) put forward that the object of the research of the poetics of translation should be several aspects as follows: firstly, how to

choose a source text to translate? Secondly, which role translator plays in choosing a source text? What is his motive? Who is the translator? How about his qualifications and background? What he knows about the culture of the source text and how he knows? And why people are willing to accept the translator? Thirdly, which role the editor or patron plays? Fourthly, how does the text can be accepted by the system of the target language? Which kind of readers will read this kind of translated works? How about their qualifications and backgrounds? Why do they accept foreign thoughts and works? What do they expect to obtain from translation? Fifthly, what are the characteristics of the contemporary social-cultural institution? What are the principles of ideology and poetics in this institution? How do these principles restrict the translation activities? From his five aspects, we can find that the research methods of the poetics of translation are deeply influenced by the methods of cultural research.

To sum up, in the early period of Meschonnic's time, the poetics of translation was a translation theory which belongs to the poetics. In the second half of 20th century, especially in the late of 20th century, the researchers have paid attention to consider about the culture which is an external factor in the traditional translation research. So the traditional poetics of translation is gradually changing into a descriptive translation theory.

Under the background of the "cultural turn", we should keep a dialectical attitude to the poetics of translation. We should see both its positive role and its negative one. And at the same time, we should be vigilant of culture's deprivation of translation ontological research.

Firstly, the literary change of translation research adapts to the trend and provides a new theoretical perspective for translation research. It's beneficial to develop translation subject and will have a positive influence on other subjects. While this new poetics of translation under the circumstances of the "cultural turn" is still a new researching field and its theory is strict enough. Last but not least, although it is positive for the new poetics of translation to consider the influence of culture, translation ontological research is necessary in translation field.

A. *The Social Mainstream Poetics in Jenner's Time*

Poetics is about the essence and function of literature, or the whole background from which the poetics stem. A poetics is a historical changeable element. There is no any poetics which is absolute. The poetics which is dominant in the present literary system, here we call the social mainstream poetics, is quite different from the poetics which was dominant in the literary system of the past age.

A range of extra-literary factors, namely economic, pragmatic and audience-related, must be taken into consideration before any statement on the poetics of translation can be made. Generally speaking, with regard to the so-called strong culture, the poetics of receiving culture has a strong influence on the translation decision and most literary translations. They may conform to the constraints imposed by the target system. With regard to the so-called weak culture, the poetics of translation may tend to favor the forms of source text. Literary translation also should be studied in link with text-type and register, and in link with attempts to integrate different universe discourse. Each culture has its own particular literary norms of poetics, which exerts should be translated and what translation strategies should be taken (Bassnett & Lefevere, 2004). Translators are consciously or unconsciously influenced by the poetics of their own culture. If their translation can adapt this social poetics of their culture, they and their translation can have a main position in this culture. They must define themselves in terms of the dominant poetics in the target literature of their time and place. Meanwhile, they have to recast the source texts in terms of the poetical conditions.

The poetics also includes the reader's acceptance and preference to the translation. Therefore, translators often adapt and rewrite the source texts to make them to be accepted by the literature of their own culture and by the target readers. Just as what Lefevere points out, "to make a foreign work of literature acceptable to the receiving culture, translators will often adapt it to the poetics of that receiving culture (Lefevere, 1992)."

Translation literature plays different roles in different time in a country's literary system. In the studies of poetics of translation, the cultural and historical specification of translation should be considered and understood in the particular social and cultural background under concern.

In the early twentieth century, British literature had transformed from traditional realism to modernism. The First World War accelerated the development of modernism. In this war, there were many young people died innocently. After the war, many people began to suspect of some basic ideas about human's nature which came from Renaissance. The profound changes in the ideas of social thoughts prompted the vigorous development of modernism literature. There were many outstanding writers in this period, for example, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and so on. After the Second World War, the society of Britain became peaceful while the power of this nation had been weakened seriously. British literature began to express people's anxiety and dissatisfaction of their life. In the 1950s, some new writers with realism tendency appeared who are called "Angry Young Men". Its representatives are Kingsley Amis and John Wain. They expressed their strong anger and disaffection of the cruel caste and the inequality between the rich and the poor. The characteristic of "Angry Young Men" was the new content rather than a new literary form. Later, the experimentalism appeared.

W.J.F. Jenner was born in 1940 in Britain. He is a leading sinologist and he began the study of Chinese at Oxford in 1958, where he graduated in oriental studies in 1962. From 1963 to 1965, he was a translator at Foreign Language Press, for which he translated *From Emperor to Citizen: The Autobiography of Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi* and he also began his translation of *Journey to the West*. From 1979 to 1985, he returned to complete *Journey to the West* and to do other translations. They included *Lu Xun: Selected Poems* in 1982 and *Miss Sophie's Diary and Other Stories* in 1985. He

also wrote many works including *Memories of Loyang: Yang Hsian-chih and the Lost Capital*, *The Tyranny of History: The Roots of China's Crisis*, *China Lives: An Oral History of Contemporary China*.

In this time, the biggest change of British translation theory is paradigm shift. People became not satisfied with pure evolutionary criticism and began to pay attention to the influence of cultural theory and critical theory. After the war, there are three main route of British translation. The first one is literary translation theory. The literariness of the literary works is the focus which is cared by translators. This route is mainly the translation of some classic literary works, especially poems. The second one is linguistic translation theory. This school thinks that translation is one part of applied linguistics and they think translation is the transformation between two languages. Chomsky's TG Grammar is the basic theory of translation linguistics. It pays attention to the accurate analysis of language structure and tries to find the conversion pattern between different languages. The third one is the cultural translation theory. This school thinks that translation is not only the transformation between two languages, but also the communication between two cultures. The translated text is no longer the copy of the words and sentences of the source text. It belongs to a certain situation and a certain culture. The text is no longer a static constant specimen in language. It is a creative reappearance of the source text after the reader understood the intention of the author. Translation is not only controlled by the culture, but also influences the culture. Therefore, translation regards as a rewriting, a manipulation and a kind of social behavior with clear purpose.

Translation, as a process of intercultural communication, can not be done without the participation of readers. Therefore, the readers' expectation and reception of the translation work should also be taken into consideration, which are influenced and regulated by the readers' poetics. According to Jauss, an important German exponent of the Reception Theory, reception refers not only to the producer as a recipient, but also to the reader as a productive interpreter of the meaning of a literary work. In the reception process, readers understand the literary work with their particular "horizon of expectation". Therefore, we can say that translation activities are not the monologue of the author or the source text but the "fusion of horizon" formed by the dialogue and communication which the interpreter has the "implied readers" with their specific "horizon of expectation" under the schematized structure of the text. Western readers are keen on the exotic things, but they will not enjoy the famous literary works in China as we recommend to. Jenner himself once said the status of Lu Xun and his works in China to Chinese students is quiet different from the foreign students to him and his works. Therefore, he thought literary works translated should be able to arouse their interests and offer them a different feeling in content and forms. *Journey to the West* would be a best choice.

Besides *Journey to the West*, Jenner also translated *Lu Xun: Selected Poems*. He thinks that the value of the literary works may not be discovered by foreign people who don't know anything or little about China. It is difficult to let foreign people accept the translations. Besides the words, when the foreigners read the translations, their contents should be interesting. That is, what can they get from their reading?

B. Jenner's Individual Poetics

Translator's individual poetics includes translation motive, principle, individual aesthetics and the characteristics of translator's type of writing.

Translation Skopos Theory is firstly put forward in German scholar Hans J. Vermeer's article *A Framework for a General Theory of Translation*. He put forward three possible purposes: general purpose (for example, making a living), communicating purpose (for example, teaching the readers) and special purpose (for example, using special translation strategy to represent the special structure of the source text). In a translation, translator should also consider the purpose of the sponsor's and readers'. Because of different benefit of each other, translator should balance both the sponsor's emotion and the readers' requirement. In above text, we know that Jenner is a leading sinologist. He translated a lot of Chinese literary works and wrote a lot of articles and comments on Chinese culture and literature. So his translation of *Journey to the West* is the performance of his identity of this masterpiece and Chinese culture. He thinks that if a translator wants to make his translation to be a success, he should choose a "different" literary work to translate. *Journey to the West* is one of Chinese four classical classics which is written by Wu Cheng'en and it is almost known by all Chinese people. Jenner noticed its social value. He wants to let foreign people learn about China and Chinese culture through translating this masterpiece. Meanwhile, economic globalization and the multi-polarization became the focus of international political problems. With the development of Chinese economy, more and more foreign countries put their attention to this ancient country that has a long culture and civilization. Many foreigners came to China and research this country's culture, including Jenner. And they want to know more about China and introduce the Chinese culture and literature to the foreigners. So Jenner's translation of *Journey to the West* follows the trend of the time. Before him, *Journey to the West* was only translated into Japanese and Korean completely. English translator Arthur Waley once translated some parts of *Journey to the West*. Jenner is the first European who translated it completely and filled the blank of the translation of Chinese literary works.

After confirming the translation purpose, translator should choose different translation principles to meet the need of the source text, the translated text and his own interest. We can say that Jenner used Savory's translation principles in his translation of *Journey to the West*. Savory has twelve translation principles and each two can form a pair. They analyze translation from the aspects of word, form, style, era, poem, additions and deletions. These are also Jenner's translation principles. Here we can conclude as follows: translation should be word for word or freely, Savory opposes the method of word for word and he advocates the faithful methods. He requires his translation should firstly fit his own

expressing habit. The translation reads like a translated one, but it should keep the flavor of the source text. The style of the translated text may be influenced by the author's personalities and the time when he live. Translator should try his best to reflect the author's style. He also claims the rhyming poems should still be translated to rhyming poems. But if it is difficult to rhyme, we should not to add or delete the meaning of the original poems. We can translate it to modern prose poetry and prose of poetry. It is easy to interpret the plots and meaning of the source text.

Translator's individual aesthetic is to discover translator's aesthetic tendency from the view of art content and form. The aesthetic subject of translation includes translator, reader, and the editor. Among these three subjects, translator has a main function in translation. The first step of the process of translation is the process of translator's reception of the information from the source text. In this step, translator should take part in using his aesthetic consciousness rather than accept negatively. Translator's aesthetic consciousness directly decides the cognition and understanding of the aesthetics in the source text. There are three kinds of the personality of creative subject: subjective type, objective type and the type of the combination of the two types. Different creative subjects have different aesthetic consciousnesses. Jenner is the third one. His translation of *Journey to the West* reveals the ability of grasping the whole literary conversion between two different cultures. What is more, he also performs very well using his individual aesthetic consciousness.

In the rich and complex social life, language can be used to solve the problems in daily life, deal with administrative affairs, propaganda thoughts and theories and so on. Therefore, people choose and arrange the language materials consciously in language communication. Thus, the system and methods formed. There are three language characteristics in the masterpiece *Journey to the West*: common sayings, fairy tale language and vivid dialogue language. As Sun Jianguang says that the translator in the translation must be fully faithful to the various stylistic features of the original as much as possible to maintain the original luxuriant. But the translation is not passive imitation, which will inevitably be stamped with the author's personal stylistic characteristics. So Jenner's translation should try to keep the original language characteristics and their effects, at the same time his own stylistic characteristics also are reproduced in his translations. The large amount of common sayings in the text enhanced the comic artistic effects. For example, in chapter 39, there is a two-part allegorical saying:

八戒闻言，走近前，就摸了一把，笑道：“这妖精真个是糟鼻子不吃酒——枉担其名了！”(Wu, 2006)

Jenner translated as follows:

Here this Pig went up to the creature and had a feel. "This evil spirit's got a bad reputation he doesn't deserve," he chuckled, "like a teetotaler with a red nose."

Here, the first sentence of Jenner's translation didn't express strongly, but in his second sentence, he used a simile to enhance the effect of Pig's ridicule.

Some language like fairy tale in this masterpiece made this work full of childlike innocence. For example, Wu Cheng'en described Pig in his text “呆子”. He described Pig's indolence, gluttonousness, and stupid. All these are Pig's fairy tale image. In Jenner's translation, there are also many descriptions about Pig's image. For example, in chapter 19, Pig describes himself, “I was born stupid, An idler and a slacker. I never nourished my nature or cultivated the truth, But spent my time in primal ignorance.” The translation deeply set up a fairy tale image of Pig.

In *Journey to the West*, there are many dialogues between roles in this book. These vivid dialogues can help to shape a character and show his personalities. For example, in chapter 3,

悟空道：“你这里若有披挂，索性送我一副，一总奉谢。”龙王道：“这个却是没有。”悟空道：““一客不犯二主。”若没有，我也定不出此门。”龙王道：“烦上仙再转一道，或者有之。”悟空又道：““走三家不如坐一家。”千万告求一副。”龙王道：“委的没有；如有即当奉承。”悟空道：“真个没有，就和你试试此铁！”龙王慌道：“上仙，切莫动手！切莫动手！待我看舍弟处可有，当送一副。”(Wu, 2006)

In Jenner's translation, it was translated as follows:

"A guest should not have to trouble two hosts," said Sun Wukong. "I won't leave without one." "Please try some other sea, exalted immortal---you may find one there." "It's better to stay in one house than to visit three. I beg and implore you to give me a suit." "I really don't have one," replied the Dragon King. "If I had I would present it to you." "If you really haven't, then I'll try this cudgel out on you." "Don't hit me, exalted Immortal, don't hit me," pleaded the Dragon King in terror. "Let me see whether my brothers have one that they could give you."

Jenner's translation showed Sun Wukong's spirit of brave, fearlessness and his naughty vividly. Jenner translated “上仙” to “exalted Immortal”. It showed that he followed the original text. While he translated “上仙，切莫动手！切莫动手！” to “don't hit me, exalted Immortal, don't hit me” showed the Dragon King's weakness. This character was not so clear in original text, but in Jenner's translation, it is apparent. It is a bright comparison between two characters' characteristic.

IV. CONCLUSION

Viewing the English version of *Journey to the West* translated by W.J.F. Jenner, it is obvious that poetics plays an important manipulation in translation activity. From the comparison between Chinese and western poetics, we can understand the meaning of poetics and the important role in translation of literary works deeply. We also studied the social mainstream poetics in Jenner's time and Jenner's individual poetics. These two kinds of poetics have their own manipulation in Jenner's translation. For W.J.F. Jenner, the education he received, the political environment, the cultural

reformation and so on, all had their share in his choice of translation strategy. Meanwhile, his translation embodied the peculiar characteristics of the literature and the society in which he lived.

Although great efforts have been made in the research, there still exist some limitations in this thesis. There are only a few researches on poetics in translation. As a result, it is difficult to make a deep study.

For further researches, the author of the present thesis will do more specific researches, for instance, from the aspect of the patronage of Jenner's translation and his aim. If possible, the author may do further researches on W.J.F. Jenner's other translation of Chinese literary works. It may be much valuable to make comparative studies among different translators and their different translated versions.

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