

Translation and Dissemination of Yang's *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* From the Paratext Perspective

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Abstract

Liaozhai Zhiyi, one of the masterpieces in classical Chinese literature, has been translated into various languages and has an international influence. Based on the paratext theory, this paper attempts to analyze the paratexts of Yang's English version *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* and the role it plays in the translation and dissemination by exploring the epitexts including translators' identity, autobiography and the magazine *Chinese Literature* as well as the peritexts such as the book cover, titles, annotations, preface and postscript, in hopes of revealing inspirations for "going out" of the Chinese culture.

Key words: *Liaozhai Zhiyi*; Yang Xianyi's English version; Paratext

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1. INTRODUCTION

Zhinguai novel (supernatural novel), with mythical fantasy and large reader base, thrives and prospers in the long history of the Chinese literature. The word "Zhiguai" comes from *A Happy Excursion*, the first chapter of Chuang Tzu, which means "recording supernatural

things". Mainly themed on things from gods and demon to magic and unnatural phenomena, the novel became popular in Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties (A.D. 220-589). Due to the prevalence of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, an increasing number of Zhiguai novels poured in as superstition on ghosts and gods was widespread. And novels with "Zhiguai" in the title varied such as *Zhiguai* by Zu Taizhi, *Zhiguai* by Cao Pi, *Kongshi Zhiguai* by Kong Yue and *Liaozhai Zhiyi* by Pu Songling.

Liaozhai Zhiyi is one of the masterpieces in classical Chinese novel with nearly 500 chapters and more than 400,000 words. Based on folklore and anecdotes, it is popular among Chinese readers for its fun and fantasy reflected in concise style, rich imagination and profound ideas. Moreover, it's one of the earliest Chinese classical novels to be translated into other countries and has the largest number of foreign editions. Among those versions, the English ones already have a history of more than 180 years, including 1 full English translation, 13 selected translations and over 100 incomplete translations. They have been widely spread overseas and are deeply loved by English readers. Among various English versions of *Liaozhai Zhiyi*, the *Selected Tales of Liaozhai*, translated by Yang Xianyi and his wife Gladys Yang, is the first selected translation published by China's press. It was produced in the 1950s and 1960s China. Influenced by the ideology at that time, the selected chapters mainly focused on revealing the darkness of feudal society, official corruption and social injustice, presenting a strong moral purpose.

According to CNKI, journals and theses on *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* are only of some ten, most of which are comparative studies of the translations. Ren Qihong (2005) discusses the influence of the translator's cultural identity on translation by comparing three translation versions respectively by Herbert Allen Giles, Yang Xianyi and Danis Mair & Victor H. Mair. Wang Yunhong (2005, pp.100-101) adopts a comparative study on the chapter

Luoshahai City translated respectively by Giles, Yang Xianyi and Danis Mair & Victor H. Mair, and came to the conclusion that translation was restricted by historical, social and cultural contexts. There are even fewer studies on *Selected Tales of Liaozhai*. Yang Qingqing (2015, pp.45-49) studies Yang's translation based on the interpretation of ideology in Lefevre's manipulation theory, and believes that ideology has a control and influence on the selection of chapters, translator's rewriting and strategies. It can be seen that studies on *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* are of small number and from single perspective.

From the perspective of paratext, this paper will take Yang's *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* as an example to explore the role of paratext in translation and dissemination and attract more attention on *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* in translation studies.

2. BRIEF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In 1979, "paratexte" was first used by French literary scholar Gérard Genette. It refers to "the verbal or other materials (prefaces, postfaces, titles, dedications, illustrations) and a number of other in-between phenomena that mediate between the text and the reader and serve to 'present' the work" (Genette, 1997, p.1). In 1987, Genette discussed the paratext in his book *Seuils*, including its definition, classification, function, effect and so on. He believes that in literary works verbal or non-verbal forms produced by the author, title, preface, illustration and other elements can reinforce and always be associated with the text, in which way the text is presented. He also points out that "paratext" refers to all the marginal or supplementary data around the text, and the paratext is divided into peritext and epitext. The former includes the author's name, title, preface, epilogue, acknowledgments, etc. while the latter includes elements beyond the boundaries of the book provided to readers by the author and publisher, such as interviews and diaries (Genette, 1997, p.5).

In light of its definition, it can be seen that paratext can help better present the text, and play a vital role in supplementing and expanding the research and understanding of the text. The same is true in translation. All kinds of translated paratexts are an integral part of the translation as the preface, epilogue, annotation and other paratextual elements are inseparable from the text. With paratexts, target readers are able to have a more comprehensive understanding of the text and the social environment as well as historical background. This is conducive to the transmission of cultural connotations. At the same time, various paratexts are also of great significance in translation studies. They can not only provide more perspectives, but also give clues in translation activities. They are supporting materials for

researchers to carry out research on translators' motives, translation thoughts and methods, as well as mirror translators' social and historical background.

3. ON THE TRANSLATION AND DISSEMINATION OF YANG'S SELECTED TALES OF LIAOZHAI FROM THE PARATEXT PERSPECTIVE

This part will focus on the analysis of the peritext and epitext of Yang's *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* and their roles in translation and dissemination. The peritext mainly includes the identity of the translator, translator's autobiography and the publication Chinese Literature. The epitext mainly includes the cover, title, annotation, preface and epilogue.

3.1 Epitext and Its Dissemination

Translator's professional and cultural identities are common elements in epitexts which are of great importance in translation studies (Liang, 2021, p.110). Yang Xianyi is a poet and an expert in foreign literature. He used to study in the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College in 1928 and in the Merton College of Oxford University in 1934. He studied Ancient Greek and Roman literature, Middle Age French and English literature. His wife Gladys Yang was born in Beijing to a British missionary family and later returned to England to have a further study in a missionary school. Admitted to Oxford University in 1937, she learned French Language and Literature, and then switched to Chinese Literature, becoming the first student to enroll in it. Therefore, the couple are equipped with a multilingual learning background and great achievements in literature. In addition, they come from countries of source language and target language respectively. When translating Chinese literary classics, Yang Xianyi was usually due to finish the first draft. And after Gladys Yang's modification and refinement, there came the final version. Such cooperation is a combination of Chinese and Western elements with which the translation can be presented more comprehensively in linguistic and cultural levels.

In his memoir *White Tiger*, Yang Xianyi recalled the period between 1950s and 1960s when he translated for the magazine Chinese Literature. He was "in essence employed merely as hired hands", and "selections had to suit the political tastes of the period", he also mentioned that he "was often lucky with his choices. However sometimes even classical poems were chosen for their 'ideological' or political content" (Yang, 2001, p.162). In the early 1980s, he considered translating Chinese literary classics as a way of transmitting Chinese culture to Western readers, so in the translation process he

would be conscious of the target language culture and readers' acceptability. When translating *Selected Tales of Liaozhai*, he also adopted foreignization to preserve the original color (Yang, 2015). Thus, it can be seen that the selection of texts and translation activities are closely related to the social and historical background, and are influenced by various factors of the period.

Selected Tales of Liaozhai was first published in the magazine Chinese Literature whose development may have an impact on the translation and dissemination of the texts. The Chinese Literature Press was founded mainly to promote the image of the new China in the 1930s and 1940s as well as after Liberation. However, after being incorporated into the Foreign Languages Press in 1953, it "began to rethink the role of traditional culture in foreign-oriented publicity" and "selectively translated and presented works of classical Chinese literature with the aim of 'making the past serve the present'. By attracting target readers with the charm of classics and arousing their interest in modern and contemporary Chinese literary works, the original purpose of presenting the image of new China can also be achieved" (Guo, 2017, p.173). Thus it can be seen that the translations published in the Chinese Literature in the 1950s and 1960s not only carried the then political ideology for the target language readers, but also the spiritual thoughts with realistic significance which reflected the Chinese society at that time. This can help both readers and scholars examine the translation works from a historical perspective.

With the help of the epitext of *Selected Tales of Liaozhai*, readers are able to understand how do translator's identity, social and historical background influence the process of translation, and keep an in-depth thinking on the work. Meanwhile, in the translation research, the epitext can provide many clues such as the motivation behind translator's translation strategies. For example, in terms of the translation of titles, Yang used both domestication and foreignization (Song, 2018), for which the translated text would be more fluent and easier to read, so as to increase the acceptability of the target language readers and give a full play to rich cultural connotations in promoting the dissemination of Chinese culture.

3.2 Peritext and Its Dissemination

Readers get their first impression from the cover where the illustration, the title, author's name, the Press and other information are presented. They are the first key for readers to know the book. On the cover, the author's name Pu Songlin and the title *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* are provided. There is also a portrait of Pu Songling sitting on a chair with a book in his hand, as if he were trying to tell the story. And at the bottom are the words "Panda Books". On the backcover is a brief introduction of the author, the subject, the idea, and the number of chapters selected. All of these can help readers quickly get the gist and spark their interest.

The title is the first clue for readers to get information before starting to read. *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* contains 17 stories, among which a total of 8 translated titles use directly the character's name in the source text with different translation strategies. From Table 1, it can be seen that the translator adopts both foreignization and domestication when translating these titles. For example, foreignization is adopted by transliterating Jiaona and Yingning to preserve the original flavor. Besides, an integration of foreignization and domestication is achieved by transliterating the names of Wang Cheng, Hongyu, Tianqilang and Ruiyun, and adding the personality or identity of the characters. These characters usually play an important role in the story, and the plot develops mainly to shape and enrich their images. Although the target language readers may not get a direct information from the titles, they can understand the deep implication of these names given by the author after finishing reading. As *The Exorcist Marries a Fox* and *The Chrysanthemum Spirit* mainly focus on the plot driven by characters, the translator takes the core content of the story as the title by adopting domestication so as to make it easier for the target language readers to understand the story and improve the readability.

Table 1
Characters' Name Title Translation in Yang's Version

Characters' Name Title	Translated Title
娇娜	Jiaona
王成	Lazy Wang
婴宁	Yingning
红玉	Hongyu, a Fox-fairy
田七郎	Tian the Hunter
长亭	The Exorcist Marries a Fox
瑞云	Ruiyun, a Famous Courtesan
黄英	The Chrysanthemum Spirit

The annotation can offer more information about cultural and historical background of the source language, which makes it possible for the target language readers to have a comprehensive and an in-depth understanding of the translated text. There are 18 annotations in the *Selected Tales of Liaozhai*, mainly involving religious belief, history and culture, to provide target language readers with supplementary information.

Example (1) ST: 后闻白莲教能为此术，意此其苗裔耶？(Pu, 1990, p.14)

TT: Later I heard that members of the White Lotus Sect can do the same trick—perhaps this man was one of them?

Annotation: A secret society which started in the 13th or 14th century. During the Qing Dynasty it developed into a movement against the Qing government which spread to several provinces but was eventually crushed. (Yang & Yang, 1981, p.8)

The sentence is from *The Rope Trick* in which the translator explains by an annotation that the White Lotus Sect is a secret organization as well as briefly introduces its origin and development. This not only gives readers information about Chinese religion and history, but also adds a mysterious color to the trick played by the father and son who reach to heaven and steal the peach with ropes. The annotation promotes readers' understanding of Chinese religion and history and strengthens the interest of the story.

Example (2) ST: 母择吉将为合巹，而终恐为鬼物，窃于日中窥之，形影殊无少异。(Pu, 1990, p.84)

TT: Mrs Wang chose an auspicious day for the wedding although, still afraid the girl might be a spirit, she watched her in the sunlight till satisfied that she had a shadow.

Annotation: A spirit or ghost was supposed to have no shadow. (Yang & Yang, 1981, p.47)

The example comes from *Yingning* where the mother Wang wants to know by the shadow whether Yingning is a ghost. This behavior is related to a Chinese folk saying that ghosts have no shadows. The translator literally translates out the behavior, and then explains the connotation behind it in the way of an annotation. This is conducive to not only retaining the rich connotation of Chinese culture, but also providing readers' with an exotic reading experience.

Example (3) ST: 七郎者，愤未尽雪，死犹伸之，抑何其神？使荆卿能尔，则千载无遗恨矣。(Pu, 1990, p.240)

TT: And how miraculous that Tian, who killed himself before all the wrongs were avenged, could slay his enemy after death! Had Jing Ke been able to do this, all would have been well.

Annotation: Jing Ke was a famous assassin who tried to kill the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty in order to avenge his lord, but failed.(Yang & Yang, 1981, p.85)

This sentence is from *Tian the Hunter* in which Tian Qilang died heroically by cutting his own throat. However, the moment the bribed magistrate looked at his body, Tian jumped up and cut off the magistrate's head, avenging the wrongful death of his friend. The story ends with a Chinese allusion of the The Emperor And The Assassin Jing Ke. In author's opinion, if Jing Ke has the courage Tian has, he may not die with a deep regret. In this way, the author highlights the courage of Tian. By reading the annotation, the target language readers will be able to understand the author's intention of quoting Jing Ke and get an insight into the thoughts and emotions the he wants to express.

The preface and the epilogue are supplementary information of the content that can help the target language readers learn more about the background and motivation of the text, so as to enhance further understanding and dissemination. The preface of Yang's translation mainly

gives a brief overview of the author Pu Songling, the content, the source of inspiration and the subject involved. It can arouse readers' interest and offer them a general information of the book. The epilogue is *Pu Songling and Tales of Liaozhai* written by Ren Huaiqiu. This paper first analyzes Pu Songling's historical background and personal experience to reveal his motivation for writing *Liaozhai Zhiyi*. Then she explains that Pu Songling has both conservative and radical attitudes in his creation under the constraints of the period and the social environment. Finally, this article discusses the style and artistic achievements of the book. The epilogue makes an enlightening analysis and interpretation of the author, the book and its context, not only allowing the target language readers to fully understand the types and styles of stories in *Liaozhai Zhiyi*, but also enabling them to realize the real and profound implications of these unreal stories.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR "GOING OUT" OF THE CHINESE CULTURE

The paratext of Yang's translation has enriched the context and culture behind the language, and at the same time revealed to readers the social environment and historical background of the author and translator, making the translated text more comprehensive. Besides, it promotes the dissemination of *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* and Chinese culture, which is of great referential value for Chinese culture to "go out".

First, the peritext is an important element for readers to get the first impression of a book. To stimulate the interest of target language readers, a careful design of the cover is necessary for it is the coat of a book that impresses readers at the first sight. The selection of the illustration and font should be thoughtful, while the backcover can contain a brief introduction including the information about the author and the main ideas of the work. Secondly, to deepen readers' understanding, a detailed preface is needed. It's favorable for it to cover the author's life and historical background, as well as an enlightening analysis of the theme, ideas and the influence of the work. At the same time, information about the translator can be supplemented appropriately, and the translator himself can write a translation preface to help the target language readers better accept the text with his own reading experience. Moreover, in the process of translation, while ensuring the fluency of the translation, annotations should be properly adopted to supplement the content and retain the rich cultural connotations of the source language so that the target language readers can understand the stories while having an exotic experience.

Second, the epitext is the first channel for readers to access to the Chinese literature and the Chinese culture. Firstly, the identity of the translator deserves attentions. In literary translation, the Chinese Literature Press has

cultivated a large number of excellent Chinese translators and foreign experts who speak English as their mother tongue (Wu, 2012, p.89). Thus, a mode of co-translation between Chinese and foreign translators can be adopted to promote Chinese literature's "going out". In the process of translation and dissemination of Chinese literary works, they can rely on their advantages in Chinese or English and cooperate with each other closely so as to avoid errors in understanding the original text and difficulties caused by language defamiliarization (Geng, 2010, p.85) as well as possible mistakes made in the conversion of cultural connotations or improper expressions. Secondly, translators and publishers should pay attention to their own behaviors. Translators should not only focus on their translation work, but also note their own relevant speeches, translations, etc. Publishing houses need to be careful with the selection of Chinese literary works and to form unique styles.

Third, the combination of the peritext and the epitext is an effective way to spread the work and ideology. "Only by maintaining an acceptable distance between literary translation and ideology, can Chinese culture be effectively disseminated" (Guo, 2017, p.173). A "going out" in the aim of propagating a large number of Chinese ideologies cannot fundamentally improve the influence of Chinese culture. In contrast, this may reduce the acceptability of foreign readers. "Take the Panda Series as an example. The literary content expressed is often distorted and deformed by ideology to some extent, which foreshadows the rough fate of the Panda series in the future." (Geng, 2010, p.83) Judging from the purpose's shift of the Chinese Literature from mainly propagating political consciousness to spreading traditional Chinese culture with Chinese classical literary works, it's clear that literary translation can be used as a tool to propagate ideology, but it is necessary to ensure that its literary content and cultural connotations are not lost. Only in such balance can Chinese culture really "go out".

5. CONCLUSION

The "going out" of classical Chinese novels and Chinese culture relies on not only the translator to provide a complete text but also the paratext to offer supplementary information for the translated text. As the first version translated by Chinese translators, *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* has achieved the desired effect both in promoting the acceptability of the target language readers and reserving cultural connotations in the original text, which owes to both the translator's skills and the paratext. Backed by the analysis of paratext of *Selected Tales*

of *Liaozhai*, this paper provides enlightenment for the Chinese culture's "going out": the peritext is an important element for readers to get the first impression of a book; the epitext is the first channel for readers to access to Chinese literature and culture; the combination of the peritext and the epitext is an effective way to spread the work and ideology.

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