



The Accuracy and Defamiliarization Translation Strategy of Pearl S. Buck on *All Men Are Brothers*

LI Jiya^{[a],*}

^[a]Lecturer, PhD candidate, School of Foreign Languages, Southwest Jiaotong University, Chengdu, China.

* Corresponding author.

Supported by the Sichuan International Communication Research Center for Wine Culture (川酒文化国际传播研究中心), a key research base of humanities and social sciences among universities in Sichuan province (Project Number: cjcb2017-10).

Received 15 March 2020; accepted 8 May 2020

Published online 26 June 2020

Abstract

The living standard of the people in the Song Dynasty was high and the culture of drinking, tavern and drinking customs were popular at that time. Chinese classic literature *Shui Hu Zhuan* has a large number of wine cultures writing in the background of Song Dynasty; it proved the prosperous culture of Song Dynasty in details, and this masterpiece was repeatedly translated into English world. Pearl S. Buck's *All Men Are Brothers* received bad fame at the very beginning and since 2003 the version had been fairly evaluated. The author took Pearl S. Buck's *All Men Are Brothers* and Jewish American scholar Sidney Shapiro's *Out Laws of the Marsh* for example, studied the translation of tavern description, wine drinking customs and the name translation of wine from the perspective of culture, semantic and aesthetic, the author made a conclusion that the translator Pearl S. Buck is more familiar with the Chinese culture and during her translation, she reserved more accurate cultural terms and delivered a more exotic version of Chinese classic.

Key words: Pearl S. Buck's *All Men Are Brothers*; Translation of wine culture; Accuracy; defamiliarization

Li, J. Y. (2020). The Accuracy and Defamiliarization Translation Strategy of Pearl S. Buck on *All Men Are Brothers*. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 20(3), 40-44. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/11674> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/11674>

INTRODUCTION: DEBATE ON THE TRANSLATION OF PEARL S. BUCK'S VERSION *ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS*

In Song Dynasty, people's living standard was very high, drinking culture and restaurant culture prevailed. With the Song Dynasty as the background, *水浒传* (*Shui Hu Zhuan*) has a large number of writings about wine culture, describing the cultural scene at that time in detail. As a classic of Chinese literature, it has been translated into the English world for many times. Therefore, to translate *Shui Hu Zhuan*, a multi-level and multi-connotation classic, the translator's accumulation of Chinese history, literature and culture is of significant. The two English versions of *All Men Are Brothers* by American female writer Pearl S. Buck and *Out Laws of the Marsh* by Chinese American Jewish scholar Shapiro have great influence in the western world, but they adopt totally different translation strategies. There are also lots of researches and controversies about these two translators and their translations. In the academic circle, Buck's translation has experienced the process of criticism, pacification and affirmation. In 2003, it became an important turning point in the study of Buck's translation. The first is Ma Hongjun's "Correct Name for Pearl S. Buck's Mistranslation" published in the *Journal of Sichuan University of Foreign Languages* in May 2003; The second is Yao Junwei's "What Do We Study Pearl S. Buck Today?" published in the *Journal of Jiangsu University* (Social Science Edition) in October 2003. The publication of these two articles has changed the situation of "blindly criticizing" the translation of the Buck since the 1980s, which is of great significance to the study of the translation of Buck. (Zhong, 2008) The phenomenon of "dead translation" is not due to the translator's ignorance and misunderstanding, but because she strictly follows her own translation strategy. "The translator's clear purpose is obvious: through this extremely strange expression of the

translation, the reader can appreciate the unique or strange expression of the original text.” (Wang and Ren, 2005) Tang Yanfang (2009) also pointed out that “the English translation of *Shui Hu Zhuan* from Pearl S. Buck is either ignored or simply criticized as ‘incomprehensible’ or ‘distorted’, which has not been given due attention and high-level research, which has become a major defect in Pearl S. Buck’s research field.” It can be seen that since 2003, the relevant translation studies around Buck focused on her unique translation strategy, paying attention to the source language style and preferring to defamiliarization translation strategies, and few have conducted in-depth research and affirmation on the accuracy of Pearl S. Buck’s cultural translation.

After 2009, there have been many articles in the academic circle that have made detailed textual researches on the strategy of defamiliarization in Buck’s translated version, mainly focusing on the translation of syntax, language style, narrative form, nickname, vulgar language, idiom formula, Miscellaneous Poems and so on (Xu and Liang, 2009; Xu, 2009; Wu and Dong, 2015), rarely from the perspective of wine culture vocabulary to explore the translator’s style, which is also the gap that needs to make up for Pearl S. Buck translation researches.

For the translation of the cultural connotation of *Shui Hu Zhuan*, it is necessary for translators to make full efforts to be familiar with the cultural customs in Song Dynasty reflected in the works, the origin of the tavern, the famous wine vessels, etc. Based on the corpus and the key words of “wine”, the author attempts to investigate the translation of the two versions of *Shui Hu Zhuan* from the cultural, semantic and aesthetic aspects, and to evaluate the gains and losses of the translator’s translation of wine culture.

PEARL S. BUCK’S FAMILIARITY WITH CHINESE CULTURE: A CAREFUL EXAMINATION OF TRADITIONAL WINE CULTURE

The prosperous scene of Song Dynasty is fully reflected in *Shui Hu Zhuan*. Wine appeared 1900 times in this novel. There are descriptions of drinking, drinking utensils and restaurants in every chapter of the novel. (Ren, 2016, p.89) The original text describes Pan’s tavern, Pipa tavern, Xunyang tavern and other large-scaled taverns from the perspectives of geographical location, origin, plaque, wine flag and table and chair placement in the tavern, and repeatedly mentions the custom and dishes of wine. Therefore, *Shui Hu Zhuan* can be called a classic epic about wine in ancient China, which shows the rich connotation of wine culture in Song Dynasty. Whether it is to express one’s ambition by wine, to express one’s feelings by wine, or to narrate by wine, the cultural image

of wine is full of the rich emotional connotation of life, such as bitterness, sorrow, joy, separation and reunion, which has a very distinct literary symbolic significance. Among them, the classic characters and important plots related to “wine”, such as Wusong drunken fighting tiger at Jingyang Gang, Song Jiang and others drinking Yu Lou Chun in Pipa Pavilion, Lu Zhishen’s two drunken brawls in Wutai Mountain, are more well-known. *Shui Hu Zhuan* can be said to be full of “wine” shadow everywhere.

Peter Newmark (1988) put forward that semantic translation is applicable to literary genres, limiting the content of expression to the cultural scope of the original text, and not allowing to change the concept of the rich cultural color of the famous ethnic groups in the original text. semantic translation focuses on the semantic analysis of words and sentences, and the form of translation is closer to the original. Word by word, sentence by sentence to ensure the faithfulness of the translation, reflecting the desire of different languages to complement each other. However, there are great semantic differences between Chinese and English. When English words are used in different sentences, the meanings in different contexts are more flexible; the meaning of Chinese words is comparatively narrow, and the extension of meaning is small. Therefore, we must pay attention to the semantic differences between Chinese and English, such as lexical vacancy, semantic richness, equivalence, lexical image differences, etc. When examining the wine related dishes and customs in the Buck’s and Shapiro’s versions of *Shui Hu Zhuan*, such as 酒、精肉、嫩鸡、酿鹅 and restaurant couplets, it is found that the translation of cultural terms in Buck’s version is more accurate. Although her translation is an earlier version, it can be seen that Buck is more familiar with Chinese culture, pays attention to the accuracy of meaning, the integrity of information and the sentence form and tone with oriental aesthetic feeling. The following two examples are from the second, thirty-nine chapters of *Shui Hu Zhuan*.

Example 1: 潘家有名的酒店，门前挑出望竿，挂着酒旗，漾在空史飘荡。三人来到潘家酒楼上拣个济楚阁儿里坐下。(chapter 2)

Shapiro: a famous tavern run by a family named Pan at the foot of a bridge. From a pole sticking out over the tavern door a pennant fluttered in the breeze indicating that liquor was sold on the premises. They went upstairs and select a clean room.

Buck: The three then turned a corner here and there, and so came to the Bridge Of The Chou, where there was a famous wine shop kept by a man surnamed P’an. In front of the door was a flag pole on which hung the sign of this shop, and the flag blew back and forth in the wind. The three then went upstairs in the wine shop and they saw a little clean veranda and there they sat down.

Since the Xia Dynasty, the Zhou Dynasty, the Qin and Han Dynasties, and even the Tang and Song Dynasties, all of the drinking wine were cooked with fruit grain,

fermented with koji, pressed and then been produced. Therefore, the wine in Song Dynasty should be rice wine (fruit wine), while liquor is also known as “Shaojiu” and “Baigan”. According to the compendium of Ben Cao Gang Mu (Compendium of Materia Medica), “Shaojiu is not an ancient method. Since the beginning of Yuan Dynasty, it used concentrated wine and distiller’s grains to enter the steamer (referring to steamer), steam the air, and use the instrument to carry the dew.” Therefore, it can be inferred that China’s large-scale brewing and drinking of liquor began in the Yuan Dynasty (after Song Dynasty). Wine usually refers to wine brewed by plants or fruits, which is suitable for translating the popular “fruit wine” in Song Dynasty; Liquor generally refers to spirit, it was brewed on a large scale in Yuan Dynasty after Song Dynasty. Shapiro uses “liquor”, while Pearl S. Buck uses “wine”, which shows that Buck’s translation method is more in line with the actual situation of wine culture in the Song Dynasty, so that she has a more accurate grasp of Chinese history and culture.

Example 2: 少时，一托盘托上楼来，一樽蓝桥风月美酒，摆下菜蔬时新果品按酒；列几盘肥羊，嫩鸡，酿鹅，精肉，尽使朱红盘碟。(chapter 39)

Shapiro: The waiter went downstairs and soon returned with a jug of “Moon-light Breeze on Lovers’ Bridge”—a fine liquor, and a tray of vegetable dishes and tidbits to go with it. Then came fat mutton, crispy chicken, less-steeped goose and fillet of beef, all served on vermilion plates and platters.

Buck: The serving man heard this and he went down the stairs and in a short time he brought up a tray and on it was a wine called Wine Of The Southern Wind And Moon, and he brought meats also and all kinds of cakes and fruits. Then he poured out wine. He placed also dishes of fat sheep’s meat, tender chicken, goose cooked in the lees of wine and good meat. They were all on dishes red as blood.

In example 2, Pearl S. Buck and Shapiro’s translation of 嫩鸡 and 酿鹅 are quite different. Buck translated them into “tender chicken” and “goose cooked in the lees of wine”, while Shapiro translated into “crisp chicken” and “less stepped goose”. From the perspective of cooking methods, Buck’s translation of “tender chicken” is more in line with the literal meaning. In order to make western readers understand, Shapiro has changed the form of food. Shapiro’s “crispy chicken” is in line with the common western fried cooking method, which reminds of the most common western dish, fried chicken. Although the cooking methods of Song Dynasty were very mature, the mainly cooking techniques are burning, baking, frying, exploding, sliding, boiling, stewing, salting, brine, steaming, and waxing, and frying was relatively rare. the plot about people eating geese appeared in *Shui Hu Zhuan* for many times, and 酿鹅 mentioned in thirty-eight chapters is interpreted as 糟鹅 in the literature interpretation. According to Song’s Health Record, 糟鹅 is “geese been cut arms and legs, and sealed in the lees

of wine”. it is a delicacy in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, which is simply understood as the goose pickled by wine. “lees of wine”, translated by Bucks, means the sediment and residue of wine, which explains 糟 accurately. Buck’s “goose cooked in the lees of wine” not only explains 糟 accurately, but also fully reflects the production process of stuffed goose, showing the special production method of traditional Chinese food. Shapiro’s “less steeped” failed to grasp the essence. It can be seen from these translations of food that Pearl S. Buck is more familiar with Chinese traditional culture and uses more accurate words when translating cultural vocabulary, although her version is earlier than the version of Shapiro.

PEARL S. BUCK’S TRANSLATION: ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO LITERARY FORM AND TONE, PRESERVES TRADITIONAL IMAGES

Pearl Buck paid attention to cultural details, not only reflected in the accurate grasp of cultural information, but also maintained a high degree of unity in the sentence form and tone of the work, such as the translation of the couplets on the white colored brand of the hotel in the 38 chapter:

Example 3: 门边朱江华表柱上两面白粉牌，各有五个大字，写道：“世间无比酒，天下有名楼。”(chapter 38)

Shapiro: On the carved vermilion pillars to either side of the door were two white plaques on which a couplet was written: Incomparable wine and A world-famous place to dine.

Buck: When Sung Chiang came to the front and looked about him he saw two red painted pillars on either side of the door and two tablets painted white. On each were written five large letters and these were, “Of all things on earth none can compare to wine; of all shops on earth the best is this one.”

In this paragraph, both Shapiro and Buck noticed the rhyme at the end of the couplet, they both set examples of how to express the antithetical form of couplet in English and pay attention to its sense of rhythm. According to “Of all things on earth none can compare to wine; of all shots on earth the best is this one” from Buck’s version, she used antithetical sentence pattern “Of all...on earth...; Of all...on earth”. The upper and lower couplets are unified in form; from the phonological point of view, the prosody of the original sentence is “strong-weak, strong-weak”, and the stress is respectively on 世 and 无, 无 and 有. Buck’s translation is also a “strong-weak, strong-weak” structure, and there are four stressed words corresponding to four positions, namely, “all” and “none”, “all” and “best”. In addition, “wine” and “one” at the end of the translation keep rhyme, which is quite musical and retains the rhythm of the original couplet.

Example 4: 玉壶春

Buck: Jade spring wine

Shapiro: Spring time in jade bottles

Example 5: 蓝桥风月美酒

Buck: Wine of the southern wind and moon

Shapiro: Moon light breeze on lover's Bridge

Pearl S. Buck adopted the strategy of image juxtaposition to translate the words with Chinese traditional images, such as 玉 (jade), 春 (spring), 风 (wind) and 月 (Moon). Pearl S. Buck is not the first one to adopt this translation technique. As early as in 1915 Pound's translation of *Shen Zhou Collection* adopted the method of image juxtaposition. He put aside the string of interpretation sentences and put back the word meaning juxtaposition, which led to the new poetry movement in the western world at that time. "As Fenorosa said, Chinese and English sentences structure are similar, it is very easy for the two languages to translate each other. It is often possible to omit English skits and translate them word for word, so that the translated English is not only understandable, but also the most powerful." (Zhao, 2013, p.220) Even the mainstream media such as *Times* also admit that Pound's poetry translation breaks the Western grammar convention, as it said: "we certainly don't want him to act like us. If he can keep his own nature, we will be most willing to, and benefit the most, so we think that Mr. Pound chose the most appropriate method in translation." (ibid., p.220) It can be seen that the image juxtaposition translation method from Chinese to English in poetry challenged the syntactic conventions of the West. The translation of new syntax brings different literary experiences to the western world, and the unique translation from oriental literature are also welcomed by the western sinology circle and the mainstream media.

Buck insisted on the style of literal translation, and did not make too many explanations for the "meaning" corresponding to the "image". Instead, she showed the most simple "image" itself to the western readers. She hoped that the readers could experience the artistic conception themselves, instead of interpreting the artistic conception, passing it to the readers by the hand of the translator, but letting the readers feel it. "Image" is an important carrier to express feelings in ancient Chinese prose, especially in ancient poetry. The "meaning" and "image" are the perception of aesthetic subject and the aesthetic object, which have essential differences. As Xie Tianzhen (2013, p.149) said, "Translators should believe that readers are increasingly frequent with the exchange of national culture and they are increasing exposed to foreign cultures. Today's readers have the ability to accept various cultural images with various cultural imprints. Not only that, they show more and more interest in foreign cultural images. Therefore, the translator does not have to act on his own behalf, but takes great pains to make bread into Mantou to Chinese readers."

If we can see from the background, the era of the existence of Buck's translation, it came out in the 1930s. At that time, the research and translation of Chinese novels in the west mainly served sociology, mainly focused on studying Chinese stories, answering Chinese questions, preferring to abandon the details of literary studies and paying attention to the plot. For example, the dream of the red chamber translated by Wang Jizhen deleted a lot of plots. However, Pearl S. Buck paid attention to cultural details, kept the Oriental juxtaposition syntax, and insisted on literal translation, which was extremely rare at that time when she translated Oriental novels to the west, breaking the reader centered translation norms at that time.

CONCLUSION

From the semantic level, the cultural level and the aesthetic level, the author respectively inspected the translator's translation of wine culture in Pearl S. Buck's *All Men Are Brothers* and Sidney Shapiro's *Out Laws of the Marsh* by adopting the research method of corpus search, parallel comparison and analysis of the translation, the author found that the translation from Buck paid more attention to the faithfulness and integrity of the semantics, and her translation of wine culture vocabulary was more accurate, reflecting its familiarity with Chinese culture. In the process of wine name translation, she deliberately chooses the defamiliarization translation strategy. Generally speaking, Buck paid more attention to the accurate transmission of sentence form and tone, kept the uniqueness of culture and form, and conveyed the Oriental literary beauty.

REFERENCES

- Buck, P. S. (1933). *All man is brothers*. New York: The John Day Company.
- Ci Hai* (6th ed.) (2009). Shanghai Dictionary Press.
- Newmark, P. (2001). *A textbook of translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language.
- Ren, X. F., et al. (2016). *Corpus translation stylistics* (Vol.2, p.89). Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- Shi, N. A., & Luo, G. Z., (2003). *Outlaws of the Marsh* (Shapiro, Trans., Chinese English comparison). Beijing: Foreign Language Press.
- Sydney, S. (1984). English translation of outlaws of the marsh (L. Miao, Trans.). *Chinese Translation*, (2), 29-32.
- Tang, Y. F. (2009). *Translation of Pearl Buck's All Man are Brothers*. Shanghai: East China Normal University
- Wang, K. Y., & Ren, D. S. (2005). The Transformation of Narrative Style and the Effect of Novel Translation -- a Case Study of the 47th Edition of *Shui Hu Zhuan*. *Foreign Language Teaching*, 26(4).
- Wu, W. P., Dong, Y. X., & Li, T. (2015). "A Study on the Translation Strategy of Defamiliarization from the

- Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication: a case study of Pearl S. Buck's English Translation of *Shui Hu Zhuan*". *Journal of China University of Geosciences: Social Sciences*, (6) : 153-159
- Xie, T. Z. (2013). *Translatology*. Nanjing: Yilin Press.
- Xu, J. P., & Liang, J. H. (2009). Aesthetic "Defamiliarization" Orientation in Literary Translation -- Taking Pearl S. Buck's English Translation of *Shui Hu Zhuan* as an Example. *Journal of Jiangsu University (Social Science Edition)*, 11(4), 50-53.
- Xu, Y. (2009). The Defamiliarization orientation of Pearl S. Buck's English translation of *Shui Hu Zhuan*: an analysis of the reasons for the success of the translation. *Journal of East China University of science and technology (Social Science Edition)*, 24(2), 106-110.
- Zhao, Y. H. (2013). *Travel of the God of Poetry: how China changed modern American poetry*. Chengdu: Sichuan Literature and Art Press.
- Zhong, Z. Q. (2008). An analysis of several important evaluations in the research history of Pearl S. Buck's English translation of *Shui Hu Zhuan*. *Foreign Language and Foreign Language Teaching*, (12), 49-55.